

Finders Keepers

September 18, 2016

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Freedom by Bethel Music

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship. You can go through it together or in groups in meditation and/or in prayer)

You came to set the captives free
You came to bring us liberty
My sin and my rejection met
Your blood and my acceptance
Now I'm alive to bring You praise

Your blood has covered every sin
Your grace empowers me to win
My pain and my oppression met
Your blood and my acceptance
Now I'm alive to bring you praise

Chorus:

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom
Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom
Every chain is broken through You, Jesus
Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom

Bridge:

I'm free I'm free, I'm free to dance and sing
I'm free, I'm free, I'm free to shout it out
I'm free, I'm free, I'm free to dance and sing
I'm free, Im free, I'm free to worship You
I'm gonna worship you.

Icebreaker

Describe a time when you have been misunderstood or you have misunderstood others.

Text for Discussion: Matthew 13:44-46

Turn in your Bibles and read the passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

We all carry within us certain assumptions about who Jesus is and through Him what Christianity is. This is as true today as it was two thousand years ago. Jesus used parables to help us reconsider these assumptions and to offer us a chance to step back and re-encounter the real Christ. Two of His shortest parables are found in Matthew 13:44-46. A man finds a treasure; joyful at his discovery, he sells everything to buy the field where the treasure is located. Similarly, a merchant comes upon a breathtaking pearl and sells all he owns, so that he might have it.

Before we consider what these images teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven, we must first identify our preexisting assumptions. Our religious mindset hears these stories and immediately believes they are teaching us to be entirely sold out for God – that we need to give Him all we've got. But this doesn't track with the rest of Matthew 13. In the other parables Jesus tells, God is the actor while we are fish, the soil, or the dough. So why would we presume that we are the actor in these two stories? To flip the narrative here is counter to what makes Christianity distinctive: grace. God initiates. Christ came and did what we were both unwilling and unable to do.

What if the point of these parables isn't about us being more sold out for God in order to receive His love? What if the whole point of our faith is that God is sold out for us? These parables aren't about our level of devotion to God but rather His level of devotion to us. We are the treasure that Christ would pay any amount for. Our identity therefore begins on what God has done, not on what we have done. God's love comes first, and it is not predicated on our effort or our level of commitment or our perfection.

What Christianity is telling us isn't that we need to be more devoted to secure our rescue. God saved us before He gave the law. The father ran to embrace the prodigal son while he was still a long way off. Christ died on the cross for sinners. The order of this matters. Grace comes first. That is the joy of these parables. And it is the joy that is

the engine for change. It is out of joy that the man sells all he owns to secure the field, just as it is out of the joy set before Christ that He endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2).

The agenda of grace is not just to rescue us but to then put the heart of God in us. Too often we hear this and recoil, unsure if we want to live a life that requires that much sacrifice. Yet in these parables, sacrifice couldn't be further from the minds of these men. The treasure before them is so precious that they are filled with joy, not the pain of what they've had to give up.

What God has done is the engine for our joy. And this joy enables the selling in these parables. Our faith begins with God's initiative and what He has done; it's not about what we do. But it's only as we begin to sell (as the men in the parables do) that we begin to take ownership of this joy. Through this we will gradually understand the depths of God's love. We start to uncover a love that is transformative – a love that offers us the opportunity to love as Christ loves us. And as we are filled with this love, our thoughts of sacrifice give way to an experience of joy.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

What is the identity that you are building your life upon?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- 1) What stood out to you in this parable (Matt 13:44-46)?
 - Do you see yourself or God as the main character? Explain.
 - In what ways do we change the narrative of scripture to align with our paradigm?
- 2) What preconceived notions do you have about being a follower of Christ?
 - How has that affected your relationship with God and others?
 - What does it mean to you that you are God's treasure? What might be the implications from that?
- 3) **Guiding Question:** What is the identity that you are building your life upon?
 - For Russ, he shared that it was his image that he held onto. What do you cling to for validation and assurance?
 - What does it look like to be free in Christ?
- 4) Does discipleship feel like a chore or a beautiful song? Why?
 - Russ preached that the agenda of grace isn't just to rescue us, but also to put the burning heart of God in us. Does this resonate with you? If so, how have you experienced this in your life?
- 5) How can we, as a community, remind each other of the joy of Christ?
 - How can we practically help each other experience the joy and freedom that comes from Christ?

Praying for One Another

(Here are some ideas from the study to help focus your time in prayer as a group. Use by themselves or along with other prayer requests.)

- Ask God to remind you of who you are in Christ: loved, cherished, and pursued.
- Confess the things that you look to for validation that's not God. Ask Him to uproot those from your life.
- Pray that our joy would be complete in Him (John 15:11).
- Pray that we will have patience and trust in God, as He makes all things new (Rev 21:5).