

2 CORINTHIANS 4:5-15
GOSPEL TREASURE

Have you ever done a treasure hunt? They come in all shapes and forms. The one I remember best was a car treasure hunt in which we took part as a family in Caithness. We began at Reay Golf Club and we were given a list of questions to answer by going out and about in our cars, pieces of information that we were to find and then when we had done that, there were some odd items to collect. We were given a set amount of time, not to come back too early, but for every 5 minutes over time, we lost points. I have to say, that these are the kind of things I love, a bit like doing crosswords or quizzes! Ok, I will admit there is also a competitive streak in me that wants to do these things well and yes, even win!

The pieces of information we had to find included the number plate of a broken-down combine harvester in field (part of the test was which combine harvester in which field because there were several!); the time of the postal collection, how many fence-posts there were on a particular stretch of road; so you'll see that none of these pieces of information is big, earth-shattering; these were all little, seemingly insignificant things to find. Then the items to collect: I can't remember them all, but one I do remember – a jotter with the times tables on the back of it. You need to be a certain age to remember school jotters at all perhaps, but certainly jotters that had the tables printed on the back; I suspect we had one in the attic; we may still have it, who knows! It was good fun, trying to solve the puzzles in the clues and then find items of 'treasure' that went with them. Yes, we even won! Not that that mattered at all, you understand; it is the taking part that counts!

It is that kind of spirit and adventure that lies behind Jesus' story of treasure in the field. In His story, the man is not out searching for treasure, but comes across it as he's ploughing a field. There is nothing surprising in that; if you watch Time Team you'll hear stories of people coming across all kinds of ancient finds in fields and then Tony Robinson comes along and digs up the whole field and finds nothing! A man is ploughing a field and the plough hits something buried in ground; the farmer stops to investigate and finds buried treasure, hidden in the ground. What does he do? He has 3 choices:

1) he can bury it again and forget all about it – but he is not going to do that because treasure gets to you, so that you want it; treasure is something of value that you want to have and to keep, so he's not going to forget about it!

2) he can keep it there and then, but field is not his, so just by keeping it there and then he would be stealing something that didn't belong to him and he would see that was wrong; he did not want to go that way; I understand that if we find treasure today, it belongs to the Crown and so we have to hand it in.

3) he can become the rightful owner of the treasure so that it is really his. This is what he does: *"When a..." (Matthew 13:44)* He put everything he had into getting that field, into getting treasure for himself; he sold everything he had to have enough money to buy the field without telling anyone what was there and when he had enough money, he bought the field, dug up the treasure and it was rightfully his.

"This is what it is like when God is at work!" Knowing Jesus is 'treasure'. Christian faith is treasure! The man in Jesus' parable was full of joy when he found the treasure and that is the point of the story; for us, finding Jesus fills us with great joy; it is a great thing to know Jesus and to believe in Him and to follow Him. There is a joy for us in knowing Jesus that no money can buy and that nothing else can give. Think about that for a minute. Have you ever thought of yourself as having great treasure? Well we do! Knowing Jesus is a treasure beyond price and we should learn to love Him. Paul talks about the 'unsearchable riches of Christ'; about 'treasure in jars of

clay'. He knew what he had found. Sometimes we give the impression that being a Christian means have to sacrifice all the fun in life, or you have to be miserable all your days because faith is such a struggle, or we have to go to boring Church services now and again! Well, if that's impression we give, shame on us, because we have this wonderful treasure that gives us life, joy, grace, peace, treasure that is Jesus Christ.

Have you ever thought of Jesus as treasure? Perhaps not! Our idea of treasure now is gold! We must have gold, money, possessions – these are the treasures that lots of people in our world try to find; that's not new, it has always been that way. Then the credit crunch comes along and all the treasure we thought we had has gone! What is valuable to us? We count our money as valuable, we need money to live and pay bills; can't live without it. Family and friendships are valuable to us, we could not do without them either, they mean so much to us. Our job, a sense of achievement, etc – there are other aspects of life that we value. But do we see Jesus as treasure? I'm not talking about valuing Church, though that is a huge part of this, but valuing Jesus Himself for who He is and what He has done for us; He is our treasure? Or He should be!

This treasure is for sharing. That was what Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians. The treasure he has is Jesus and knowing Jesus as Lord and the light that Jesus brings. This treasure is not for keeping to himself, but is for sharing with others; so he speaks about what he knows. My job is to "*preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" (Eph 3:8) What is the unpardonable sin for the preacher? What is the last thing you want me to be? Boring! How can someone make this gospel boring? It is treasure! It is great! It has a value beyond anything else in all the world. It is for sharing with our family or friends so that their hearts will be filled with the joy of knowing Jesus as well. Don't keep this treasure to yourself; don't hide it away, but share it with others. There are people out there who are longing to know something that will make their lives worth living, that will give their story some meaning and value – I believe that something is Jesus.

Lastly, give thanks to God for Jesus. Worship is really our proper response to the treasure that we have in Jesus. Worship comes in two parts: what we do here on Sundays, singing songs and hymns, praying, listening – that is part one of worship and it is great to be together to rejoice together in what God has done for all of us; what we do in the rest of the week is part two of worship, as we serve God in the world, as we are the kind of people He wants us to be, as we serve Him and serve others, and use the gifts we have to make a difference to the world. Sunday service and Monday to Saturday Service might mean different things, but they are both our right response to the treasure that God has given to us in Jesus.

Love Jesus; tell others about Him; give thanks to God for Him; serve Him – how much does this treasure mean to us? Then that's how much we will love Jesus and how ready we will be to tell others, give thanks and serve!