

Hidden Treasure

Welcome back to week two of walking with Christ, where we are going digging for some hidden treasure!

Let me tell you about Olympic gymnastic competitor, Jana Bieger. The daughter of an Olympian, this 15 year old girl strives every day to “go for the gold.” She began conditioning when she was two years old, but was born in Germany... a country which didn’t have levels in which to compete. But after her family moved to the United States from Germany when she was 6, her gymnastics became even more of a priority. Speaking no English, but loving her sport, her career was born. Nowadays, a rigorous training schedule of two practices a day for a total of six hours doesn’t allow for a traditional school schedule. For this reason, Jana has been home-schooled for the last four years in order to work around her time at the gym. Jana usually studies at night, between practices and on the weekends. By being home-schooled, she is able to take days off for competitions and not fall behind in her studies. If she needs more hours for study, she works on the weekends and through the summers, sacrificing even more of her precious free time.

Now *that* is dedication! In fact, I feel like I’ve done my exercise for the day just hearing that story! There are treasures worth digging for, and for Jana, the Olympic gold and excellence in her sport is one of them. How about for you?



Fellowship

1. What is one thing you prioritize?
What are you willing to do to get it?



Discipleship

Whenever Jesus says something, it’s a good idea to pay attention! Well, in today’s passage, He tells a story with the same message... *twice!* Turn with me now to Matthew Chapter 13, verses 44-46, as we read it together.

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”

Jesus is saying that yes...there IS something worth having, and you should give all you have, sell everything you have, in order to get it! In the first parable, the man is so “happy”, that he immediately takes action. The treasure brings joy, happiness and satisfaction! Do you feel that way with what you pour your life into daily? Will you feel that way 30 years from now? The things you spend hours a day on now...will they be a priority when you are on your deathbed...or will you wish you had done things differently? Jana Bieger says, “Gymnastics is fun and challenging for me and it never gets boring or old.” Obviously, God has blessed her with an amazing talent. Yet when I look at professional athletes from all countries, and people who prioritize physical fitness, or outside beauty, I’m reminded of Paul’s words in I Timothy 4:8 – “For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for *all* things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”

We must take careful thought as to what we pour our limited time, resources and energy into...and make sure it is a treasure worth seeking. God is far more interested in who we *are* than what we *do*. In fact, in Philippians 3:8, Paul says, “What is more, I consider *everything* a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them *rubbish* that I may gain Christ.” *He* is the treasure! And becoming like Him should be our #1 priority!

The 2 men in the parable came to an immediate conclusion regarding “cost” and “reward”. They knew that no “cost” was too great, because the “reward” was immeasurable! Jana has sacrificed a typical high school experience and countless hours of free time...for what she considers a good payoff. It is worth it to her, the physical and mental sacrifice. So now we must ask ourselves: Is the treasure of knowing and being like Christ worth it to me? Is it worth giving up TV or computer time to dig for treasure in His Word? Is it worth making my career and extra hours spent advancing it subservient to time developing my *spiritual* nature? Do I spend more time thinking about God and His plans, or my own? Make a side-by-side comparison and ask yourself, “Will money bring me lasting happiness? Is there really enough prestige? Won’t my physical body rot within 100 years no matter how much time I put into it? Is there really a nice enough car or home that will bring lasting satisfaction?” I can guarantee you: no one has ever lain on their deathbed wishing they *hadn’t* spent more time with the King of Kings! But there are plenty who have breathed their last words, “If only I’d _____” or “I wish I’d _____”.

But Jesus never hides the fact that following him involves sacrifice. In Luke 9:23 and 24 he says that those who want to follow him must 1) deny themselves, 2) take up their cross daily, and 3) follow Him. Deny our agendas and goals, be willing to carry the cross (this painful instrument of death), and follow in His footsteps.

Matthew 13 isn't all about denial and sacrifice. Those words carry a depressing sound. Remember, the man in his *joy* went and sold all he had! He knew he was gaining from the exchange!! He did an evaluation of values—of what really matters...and the answer was obvious! Was he attached to the things he sold? I imagine so! Was he saying “goodbye” to things he would never be able to take comfort from or feel better for having? Absolutely! But for treasure to have any lasting value, it must endure! You see, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man or a woman who sees Jesus for who He really is. The treasure, not just of eternal life like something that happens after you die. Eternal life is a brand new kind of life. The Apostle Paul says, “Take hold of the life that is truly life.” It is a life filled with peace. A life filled with focus and purpose. A life worth giving anything for; truly, a hidden treasure!

2. Read Matthew 13:44, 45. Why do you think the Kingdom of heaven is compared to a treasure?
3. If salvation is free, why must there be sacrifice to get to the treasure?
4. What would you have to give up if you wanted to make God's priorities your own?
5. Being totally honest, is the “cost” versus “reward” worth it to you right now?
6. Read Luke 9:23. In Greek, the words “deny yourself” means to “disown yourself, forget, lose sight of yourself and your own interests, refuse and give up yourself.” What will be the most difficult obstacle you will face when you choose to do this?
7. What are the costs of disobedience, or lazy discipleship?
8. Jesus is willing to be your personal trainer! Studies show it takes 30 days to build a habit, so which of the following steps are you willing to try for the next 30 days?

Prayer: take a few minutes each day asking Christ to “train” you in how to live.
Keep a prayer notebook, with requests and answers.

Bible reading: go to www.suiglesiaencasa.com and get a daily bible reading schedule. Then, each day spend some time in the scripture.

Meditation: meditate on Matthew 13:44 or Luke 9:25 each day. Write them on a card, and placing it on your mirror or desk at work and you will soon have them memorized.



Ministry

9. Crosses are so much lighter if shared! Take a few moments to pair up into prayer/accountability partners for the next 30 days, committing to hold each other up before the Throne in this quest for true treasure and denial of self.



Evangelism

10. Is there someone you can think of that you wish were a member of your group? Maybe have lunch or coffee with them this week and invite them to join you. Spend two minutes silently praying about who they might be and commit to meet with them this week.



Worship

11. For those who have accepted Christ as Savior, you've already received the priceless treasure of eternal life and an incomparable Advocate in God! Share what God has done for you and spend time worshipping Him together.