

“Finding the IT of our lives”

July 27, 2008

Text: *Romans 8:26-28, Matthew 13:31-33, 44-49*

I.

In the movie, *City Slickers*, a comedy released back in 1991, Mitch, played by Billy Crystal (the principle *city slicker*), has this encounter with **Curly**, played by Jack Palance. Curly is the tough, old-school trail boss on the cattle drive the *city slickers* have signed up for. Although they eventually bond, at the start Mitch and Curly don't like each other.

One day, after another *testy* encounter with Curly, Mitch asks him, ***Okay, Curly, what's the secret of life?*** To his utter astonishment, Curly holds up one finger, the index finger of his right hand.

What do you mean, said Mitch? ***You mean your finger is the secret of life? What are you talking about?***

No, said Curly, ***the secret of life is knowing the ONE thing ... the ONE thing that's more important than anything else.***

When we know that ONE thing, everything else falls into place. (Curly has a point, doesn't he?)

Finding the IT of our life and then *knowing* that we've found it ... and then—still more—*committing* to it. Friends, that's what our lives as Christians are about.

In the **Parable of the yeast**, the yeast, mixed in with the flour, transforms the entire mixture. The yeast, we're told, is like the **Kingdom of God** at work in the human heart and spirit: it makes everything better. It builds up ... it transforms ... it renews, reinvigorates, re-energizes and on and on.

That's what the **Kingdom of God**—which Jesus talks about more than anything else in the gospels—that's what it does.

- It's a presence in the human spirit that nudges us toward God's purposes.
- And when we sense its presence and know it for what it is, it becomes the focus and the purpose of our lives. It *is* the ONE thing, the IT of our lives.

II.

In two of the other **parables** in Matthew 13, FINDING the *hidden treasure* in the field—in the one parable—and then the *valued pearl* in the other parable, changes everything.

Immediately the *hidden treasure* and the *valued pearl* become the dominant focus of the one who finds them. They see the value—right away; and they take action to retain the value, to hold on to the prized treasure or pearl.

Again, having a sense of the **Kingdom of God** is like finding the *treasure* or the *pearl* and knowing in your heart and spirit the *value* of what you've found.

It's like discovering the IT of your life; or, having a sense of *God's purposes*. When we find this IT, this *main thing*, it becomes the core of our life-purpose.

It becomes the light that we follow; the path we pursue. Everything we do—all the decisions we make—are done and made with this *life-purpose* in mind. It's the IT of our life.

When we give ourselves to God's purposes, we make everything and everybody around us better. That's what God's purposes do. They become for us ...

- a guiding principle ... a sense of direction ...
- a moral path to follow ... a cause and purpose to live for.

III.

Back to the parables; why do the man and the merchant in these stories suddenly go, sell everything they have, and spend so decisively? The one buys the entire field where the treasure had been hidden. The other buys the precious pearl.

They act in such a decisive manner because they both—each of them—now have a specific focus for their lives. They know what's important. They've found their IT.

For all of us, isn't this one of the critical elements in our lives, friends? To know what is truthful and good and revealing of God's purposes; to be able to sort things out ... and make distinctions about things that matter; to get our priorities in line ... to know who we are and where we are going ... to know what our lives are about.

But that's not all; there's more. The *more* is that when we have a sense of God's purposes for our lives, and that we commit. We have to make commitments in our lives for our lives to have meaning ... commitments to the IT, to the purposes to which God calls us.

We can't just hang out on the sidelines of life ... waiting, waiting, and waiting for something to happen ... for some elusive good news to come our way. We have to make commitments and then follow through.

IV.

So, for us this morning, the question becomes: do we have a sense of God's purposes for our lives? Do we understand the IT of our lives? Do we *get it*?

We may not. Because—always—there's a lot that can hold us back in life.

- Sometimes, we get too caught up in our own little world ... to the point where we lose our sense of community ... our sense of the larger life.
- Sometimes, it's the obsession with upward mobility and income and long-term security concerns ... to the point where that's all we do ... everything else is secondary.
- Sometimes, we've gotten off track because our ideas our bad ... they're old, worn out, and no longer adequate for the times ... we've allowed ourselves to stagnate ... to become irrelevant.

Still, the IT of our lives is always THERE to be discovered. As Jesus reminds us—the **Kingdom of God** is near. In fact—always—it's as near as we dare to believe.

- Friends, what the **Kingdom of God** reveals are the power, truth and the Spirit of the living Christ, which is the *way of sacrificial love*.
- That's the essence of the Christian life. Always, the deepest meanings of the Christian life are linked to the CROSS.

For the **gospel of Jesus Christ**, this is where it always gets prickly. For the *way* of the Christ is the *way of sacrificial love*.

And what that love is about is *compassion, forgiveness, generosity, and humility*. These are the four PILLARS of Christian love ... pillars which, if lived out, can change the world. Why? Because they change the human heart.

1. *Compassion* draws us in to each others' lives. It links us and connects us.
2. *Forgiveness* keeps us from getting stuck and gives us a new chance—a fresh start, when we need it, to move on with our lives.
3. *Generosity* frees us from clinging too much to things and softens our heart along the way.
4. And *humility* keeps us honest and faithful to the BIG PICTURE of God's purposes.

V.

What's both alluring and tragic about the human situation is that there are countless people—people like some of us, perhaps—who spend our lifetime trying to find the IT of our lives ... our sense of purpose in life, the meaning of our lives ...

But, so often, we look for it in the wrong places.

Amazingly, the KEY all along, says Jesus, is that it's right before us: the IT that we've been searching for. It's right here; not in our earthly possessions, not in our impressive resume.

- It's the awareness the man came to in the field when he discovered the *hidden treasure*.
- And the awareness the merchant was awakened to when he found the precious pearl, sold everything and bought it.

It's the awareness of what's really important in our lives; and then, upon embracing the awareness, doing something about it, making a commitment.

VI.

When we find the IT of our lives, friends, it becomes a way of life, a journey. But it's also a trusting of the Spirit along the way.

Again, as the **parable of the yeast** reveals, the Spirit builds up. When we open ourselves to it and give it a chance to work in our lives, it makes everything better. As Paul reminds us in Romans,

All things work together for good for those who love God.

And again, as Christians, we show our love of God by giving ourselves to the purposes of sacrificial love.

We become, like **yeast** in the world.

- Building up, renewing, reinvigorating ... making things better ...
- We never know the full extent of the good we do when the sacrificial love of Christ becomes the *way* of our daily living.
- *Compassion and forgiveness ...generosity and humility.*

Everywhere, the love that we do makes a difference. And it moves us closer to God ... and it makes us feel better inside, in our heart and spirit.

So, to each of us, Jesus says, the IT of your life is here; it's the **Kingdom of God**. It's *compassion and forgiveness ... generosity and humility*.

That's IT! That's the *hidden treasure*; that's the *pearl*. That's what our lives are to be about. And what Jesus says to us this morning is: ***live it!*** And ***do it!***

Because when we do, in the process, we, too, are changed. And the world around us is reborn and reshaped.

All praise be unto God! Amen!

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