

## The Message for Sunday, August 8, 2010

**Title:** “Buried Treasure”

**Scripture:** Luke 12:32-34

**I. Buried treasure...** When I was a child, I really got excited with the thought of buried treasure. I remember seeing a Hardy Boys serial on The Mickey Mouse Club called, “The Mystery of the Applegate Treasure.” (Based on *The Tower Treasure*, Franklin W. Dixon (ghost written by Leslie McFarlane), published by Grossett and Dunlap, 1927) It inspired me to bury all kinds of boyhood treasure in the back yard. Little did I know then that the potato chip and Ritz Cracker tins I used to bury my treasure had more potential value than what I put in them.

A couple of years ago, a musician from L. A. (Los Angeles) became intrigued after seeing the hit movie, “National Treasure.” And then, he read a book entitled, *Lost Treasures of American History*. In that book, he learned of a Spanish treasure ship that was driven up the Mission River by a hurricane in 1822. Supposedly, the ship eventually got mired in mud where half of the crew died when it came under attack by locals.

So, this L. A. musician started studying Google maps in the vicinity north of Corpus Christi. He thinks that he has found something in the shape of a 3-masted Barquentine in a creek that runs off of the Mission River. You can not guess the name of the creek. It is called “Barkentine Creek.”

The musician has been to court to see if he can get permission to dig. According to the *Houston Chronicle*, he is ready to hire diggers if the court will grant him permission. The question is whether or not the waters of Barkentine Creek are navigable. If they are, then this creek comes under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers—and they will have the last word.

Regardless of the outcome, the land owners want the treasure hunter off of their land. But, he has not only been interested in the Texas creek. He has also been looking for other buried treasures, including the Lost Dutchman Gold Mine. And, he claims to know where Jesse James buried his treasure. (<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/side/6186388.html>; <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,491007,00.html>)

**II. Treasure is exciting...** Treasure excites us! From time immemorial, it has inspired countless generations. Once, Jesus described the Kingdom of Heaven as a buried treasure. He told the parable of someone discovering a treasure in a field and selling all that he had in order to buy the field—with the understanding that whoever owned the field owned the treasure. (Matthew 13:44)

I gained a new appreciation of this parable when I was in graduate school. One of my colleagues was pastor in Rover. He knew of a family that had some very uneven ground. They wanted to do landscaping; and so they hired someone to come in with a bull dozer to level out the ground. What they immediately discovered was that this had been an equipment dump during the Civil War, and the uneven parts of their land were

actually piles of equipment that had been covered up in order to hide it from the enemy. Think of the treasure!

Jesus talked a lot about treasure. Jesus made it very clear that we were to be on our guard against all kinds of greed. In Luke 12:15 He said, "...for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Jesus also said that where your treasure is, there your heart will be, also (Luke 12:34). Later in the morning's scripture lesson, Jesus said not to worry about the material things of this earth. Rather, we are to worry about using our earthly things for helping other people. And then he said that when we strive for God's kingdom, God will supply all of our needs; and I should say, Jesus also implied that God will even supply some of our wants.

Now, with that said, I want to say three other things about treasure.

**III. Your greatest treasure...** The first thing I want to say is this. Obviously, many, many people are very concerned about money. Since the economy slowed down, our treasures have become increasingly important. Many confess to me that they are fearful of losing a job. Those who have lost jobs tell me they are worried about how they are going to provide for themselves and their families. And, there are a number who, like me, are concerned about retirement.

I am not going to retire tomorrow. But when I do, I would like to be assured that Dee and I will have sufficient housing. However, we have trusted God for so much else, we are going to trust God for this as well. And yet, I know that many people are concerned, about some aspect of their treasure—having enough to send children to college, having enough to keep the household going, and having enough to retire.

And then there are those who are just concerned about money in general. They like it, and the more they have, the more, it seems, they want. And yet, I believe that if I were to ask the average person this morning, my guess is that no one would say that their bank account is where his or her heart is. Their definition of "treasure" would not first describe money. Instead, I believe the average person would tell me that there are other things in his or her heart that take much more time and attention than money.

I recently read a story of an elderly man who lay dying in his home. However, any concern he might have had about his passing was suddenly interrupted by the smell of chocolate chip cookies coming from the kitchen. He loved chocolate chip cookies.

Drawing on his remaining strength, he lifted himself and slid out of bed. Leaning against the walls, he made his way out of the bedroom and to the kitchen, where he gazed upon hundreds and hundreds of his favorite food. Was he already in heaven, or was this one final act of the love of his life, his devoted wife?

With some effort, he inched his way toward his heart's desire. His hand could feel the warmth of the freshly baked cookie, and his mouth began to water. Just as his hand touched one of the cookies, his wife whipped around, hit his hand with her wooden spoon and said, "Stay out of those. They're for the funeral." (adapted from a story in "Twit-Schatology," a sermon based on Luke 12:32-40, 8/8/2010, [www.homileticsonline.com](http://www.homileticsonline.com))

Sometimes, I am surprised at what people *do* treasure. It is not always what you think. Have you ever heard of a "Masonic widow?" It is someone whose husband is always doing something at or for the Lodge and is never home. Some people's apparent

treasure is involvement in a club or fraternity. That is where their heart seems to be. For others, their treasure can be found on the nearest golf course. That is where their heart seems to be.

I could go on and on, but you get the picture. If people would be truly honest, we would find their hearts standing at treasure chests that have been buried all over the place.

Years ago, I discovered where my heart is. Many of you know of my love for cars, my passion for ancient coins, and of my great fondness for my easy chair, remote control and television. However, beyond my love for Christ and His Kingdom, there is no greater treasure chest in my life than my family. I believe that when I am in the winter of my life, the chocolate chip cookies will be for me! And so, in the first place, I suggest that if you have not yet found your heart, look at the treasure of family.

**IV. The church is a treasure...** The second thing I want to say is this. Modern generations have seldom heard of David Livingstone (1813-1873). He was born into an impoverished Scottish family and began work in the cotton mills at age ten. By the time of his death, he had achieved the status of a national icon in Victorian Britain. He was a physician, explorer, and an anti-slavery crusader. But, he became best known as disappearing into the unexplored wilds of Africa as a missionary.

Such was Livingstone's status that when no one heard from him, the *New York Herald* newspaper sent H. M. Stanley to Africa to find him. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, 1871, Stanley found the great medical missionary on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. The phrase, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume," is from that historic meeting. When Stanley found him, Dr. Livingstone was in failing health. And yet, he refused to leave Africa until he felt his mission work was complete.

Dr. Livingstone died while kneeling in prayer at his bedside in 1873 (May 1, of dysentery). Britain wanted to give him a proper ceremony and a burial place of honor at Westminster Abbey. The local African tribe refused to let his body be returned to England. Finally, they relented. However, they first removed his heart and buried it under a tree near where Livingstone had lived. When they allowed the body to be taken away, they pinned a note to it saying, "You can have his body, but his heart belongs in Africa." (from many sources: e.g., [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Livingstone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Livingstone))

If your heart were to be buried in the place you loved most, where would it be? Dee knows where I want to be buried. It is my desire to be buried at one of the churches I have pastored, because the church is the one place I love most here on earth. I am a product of the church. It is one of my greatest treasures. And after my family, it is where you will find my heart.

I know the church is not a perfect institution. And there are times when I get discouraged or disappointed with the church. But, I know the church is made up of human beings. At best, we are all sinners, prone to fall from time to time. And yet, I often wonder how much worse the world would be without the church.

What would have been there to keep you from doing some of the things you now know to be evil? I absolutely don't know. But this I do know: The writer of Hebrews in the New Testament says, "And let us consider how to provoke one another to love

and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day (of judgment) approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Because of the encouragement of Christians meeting together in the church, I am a sinner saved by the awesome grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. So are you. And so, in the second place, I suggest that if you have not yet found your heart, look at the treasure of the church.

**V. God’s treasure...** The third thing I want to say is this. Where do you think God’s heart is? We should not have to wonder. The most famous verse in the entire Bible tells us. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever might believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

We are God’s treasure. That is where His heart is. St. Augustine once said, “God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.” (<http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Christianity/2009/01/Christian-Quotes-About-God-and-Love.aspx?p=2>)

A modern-day theologian, Rick Warren, says, “God is love. He didn’t need us. But he wanted us. And that is the most amazing thing.” (<http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Christianity/2009/01/Christian-Quotes-About-God-and-Love.aspx?p=4>)

Psalms 8 says, “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than angels, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet...” (Psalm 8:3-6)

God has given us the universe and all that is in it; and He lets us attempt to run it as we please. How great a love is that? If God had a car, He would have a bumper sticker that says, “I ‘heart’ you.” The third thing I want to say is that we are where God’s heart is. We are His treasure.

**VI. Final question...** That leaves only one question? Do we live our lives as treasure, or have we made them trash?

So, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. [Therefore], where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Amen.

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