

SERMON FOR JULY 30, 2023

TEXT: MATTHEW 13: 44-52

THEME: GOD COMFORTS YOU

**44** “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. **45** “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, **46** who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. **47** “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. **48** When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. **49** So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous **50** and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **51** “Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.” **52** And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

In the name of Jesus:

There are times when we all need comfort food; food items that we can eat that will just make us feel better about things. What is your comfort food? Perhaps it is a big plate of macaroni and cheese, for others it might be a big bowl of ice cream with hot fudge. Maybe you don't have a favorite food that you eat which makes you feel better. Some of you might like to go to a favorite place, Aaplace that will make you feel better. Perhaps you have a favorite vacation spot, a favorite beach that you go to, or a cabin that you stay at.

Whenever you are feeling down and out, you go to your favorite place to make things feel better.

There are times when we need comfort, aren't there? You need a word of encouragement, something to reassure you that despite what you know to be true, that everything will work out. The disciples of Jesus were no different.

Jesus in our text today is talking to the disciples. Previous to this Jesus spent time with the crowds, but now He takes the disciples aside and He is speaking solely to them. The disciples are concerned, because they now notice that hostility is increasing toward Jesus and those who follow Him, including the disciples! Jesus is being rejected and there is a plot ongoing to attack Jesus and put Him to death. The disciples know of these efforts, and they feel the rejection of being a follower of Jesus. Perhaps the disciples are wondering if following Jesus is really that great of an idea! Maybe they were questioning their own commitment, they have left everything to follow Jesus but in the following of Jesus, things have been difficult! Even though Jesus had fed thousands, healed the sick and raised the dead there were those around them who rejected Jesus and were seeking Jesus' destruction. The disciples thought, hey, we didn't bargain for this! This isn't how it is supposed to be! The disciples were feeling vulnerable and under attack. So Jesus here takes the

time to tell His disciples that they are valuable, and that following Jesus is worth it!

Have you ever felt like the disciples felt? That this isn't the way that it is supposed to be, that because you follow Jesus you should be blessed, but instead it seems as if following Jesus means that you are under attack? Do you know, or realize, that following Jesus in many parts of the world means that your life is actually at risk all on account of your faith in Christ?

But this type of anger and rage against Christians takes place on our shores as well. On college campuses and in the classrooms of universities professors openly attack the Christian faith. Christian professors may not get the promotion or the raise that is coming to them because of their Christian faith, convictions, and values. You don't have to look very far to see that Jesus' name is systematically being removed from everyday life.

Christians today are just like the disciples of Jesus' day, in that followers of Jesus need some comfort food, they need to be comforted, reassured, and strengthened for the daily battles that they face. You need to be comforted, don't you, especially when you hear about the war in the Ukraine, or tensions in the Middle East, when you hear the diagnosis of an incurable disease, or the death of someone you hold dear. You wonder, you are confused, you are discouraged when you see the crowds of people who don't believe in Jesus

growing bigger and the people who do believe in Jesus dwindling smaller. You need, like the disciples, some comfort food.

Jesus gives you comfort today as He gave comfort to His disciples by giving His Word. He tells the story in two short parables of how valuable you are in God's sight. Jesus says: **44** "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. **45** "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, **46** who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Jesus is the man who has found the treasure. Jesus gave up everything to gain this treasure. He set aside His glory for a time to become a finite human being. He submitted Himself to earthly authority, He lived as you live your life yet Jesus did so perfectly. And in the end, Jesus was crucified on a cross, dying a death that you deserved because you have sinned against God throughout your life. Jesus lived His life for you and then gave His life for you as the payment for your sins, as the price to make you a child of God. He gave up everything because you are His treasure!

The disciples understood that Jesus paid a great price so that they might be children of God. That is why Jesus said to His disciples that they were the pearl, and that they were a treasure in His eyes. You too are valuable in God's

sight! You too are God's treasure, you are the pearl of which God would pay the price of sending His one and only Son to be Savior from sin, Satan, and death. God spared not His one and only Son but sent Him so that by believing in His name, you are a child of God and precious in His sight.

What great words of comfort for you and others who believe in Jesus. Jesus wants you to know and remember that you belong to Him. Even though things in your life occur which cause you anxiety, disappointment, fear and pain, God wants you to know that He is at work and that His will WILL be done in your life. Note what the Apostle Paul says in that great section of Romans 8: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. **29** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. **30** And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." "**31** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? **33** Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. **34** Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God,

who indeed is interceding for us. **35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? “

There are indeed times where it seems as if evil wins out over good on this side of eternity. But God reminds His children today, He reminds you that on the Last Day God will sort everything out, on the Last Day He will reign and truly bring justice to those who face injustice in the name of Christ today. He will bring about His comfort today to those who trust in Christ. True comfort food, God's comfort food, is given through His Word and in the Body and Blood of Christ at the Altar. So come to God where He can be found, to His House where He offers true comfort, for here God gives faith in Christ, forgiveness of sins, the certainty of life in and with Christ, and the hope of heaven. When you need some comfort food, come to receive God's Comfort Food given in Word and Sacrament, for here He builds you up that you might know once again that you are God's precious child. For in Christ you know: “**37** that in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our

Lord.”

Amen