READY TO USE ALL-AGE SERVICE

# The treasure and the pearl

MEETING AIM

To consider what the parables of the treasure and pearl reveal to us about the kingdom of God.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 13:44-46

BACKGROUND

This service is designed to be used with a congregation in a church building. However, with some adaptation, you should be able to use it on Zoom or other video-conferencing software.

The events of the past few years may have helped crystallise or even change what people think is important. Relationships, hobbies, friends or even just the freedom to do what you want might have emerged as the most important, but these two parables challenge us further. What is the kingdom of heaven like?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## WELCOME – 5 mins

As people arrive at the service, welcome them warmly. You might want to serve refreshments at the start, as this will ease people who don’t come regularly into an environment they may feel unsure about.

## OPENING ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

**OPTION ONE: Treasured possessions**

**You will need:** volunteers who are happy to bring in their most treasured possession

A couple of days before the service, ask some volunteers to bring their most treasured possession with them to the service (if they can; if it’s something like a grandfather clock, they could bring a picture, or you could find another volunteer!).

Invite your volunteers to come to the front and show their possession. They can describe why it means so much. It could be of sentimental value, rather than being worth a lot of money. If you have some time, you could invite the congregation to break up into smaller groups and chat about their own treasured possessions.

**OPTION TWO:** is it worth it?

**You will need:** pictures of various items; the prices of those items

Before the service, get pictures of different items, such as a sports car, a lawnmower or a necklace, and find out how much each one costs.

Show the pictures on-screen one by one and ask the congregation to guess how much each one costs. After you reveal the price tag, ask if people think that the item is worth the cost and why (not).

## BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** a hat; lots of possessions (such as pots and pans, cushions, chairs, duvets – the more outlandish the better!); a marble; a volunteer to be the person selling the pearl

Make sure your possessions and pearl seller are at the side of your stage area, just out of sight. Then tell this story:

Jesus loved telling stories. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells lots of stories to show his friends and everyone listening to him what it was like to live in the kingdom of heaven. This is one of them.

Jesus said: “The kingdom of heaven is like when a merchant goes looking for fine pearls. After a finding a very precious, valuable one, he sells everything he owns so that he can buy the pearl.”

It’s a short parable and it’s very easy to miss what’s going on. Let’s hear it again.

Jesus said: “The kingdom of heaven is like when a merchant goes looking for fine pearls.” *Put the hat on and pretend to be the merchant. Walk around across the front of your meeting space, as if looking for the pearl.* “He finds a very precious, valuable one.” *Your pearl seller appears, holding the marble aloft. You should admire it and the pearl seller should comment on its rarity and beauty.* “He sells everything he owns so that he can buy the pearl.” *You should disappear off-stage, get one or two belongings, bring them back and give them to the pearl seller. Continue until you have handed over all your belongings. Then the pearl seller should give you the pearl. Don’t rush this; the longer this goes on, the bigger the impact.*

## SMALL GROUPS – 10 mins

**You will need:** copies of the questions below; Bibles

Encourage people to discuss these questions in smaller groups. Give each group a copy of these questions and a Bible, if they don’t already have one:

* What’s your favourite part of the story?
* What would you give up *everything* for?
* What do you think the pearl represents?
* Read the story of the treasure (v44). How is this story similar (or different) to the pearl?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

## REVIEW – 5 mins

**You will need:** roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback on the questions from ‘Small groups’, using a microphone to hear people’s contributions if your meeting space is large.

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting space or in different breakout rooms.

**OPTION ONE:** Discussion

**You will need:** ‘Chelsea and the charity shop treasure’

Read the retold parable. Chat about the similarities and differences between this and the parables in Matthew. Ask people how they would rewrite the stories in their own context.

**OPTION TWO:** Creative response

**You will need:** art materials

Encourage people to create a piece of art or writing that reflects what God is saying to them through this parable. Invite the congregation to continue listening and talking with God as they work.

**OPTION THREE:** Prayer

If possible, put people into one or more smaller groups to chat about what they have discovered today and to prayer for each other.

## CLOSING – 5 mins

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

**ALEX TAYLOR**

is an experienced children’s and youth worker living in Milton Keynes.