

i dream of reconnect... relevant

Reconnect – October 4, 2009

Series/Morning Intro:

- Welcome to Reconnect Barrhaven, where we want to be a church that loves God, helps people and builds community
- This morning we continue to “dream of reconnect” – looking to the future while thinking about our core values, those things that we want to guide our every move
- As we do, we’re considering a quote from the author of the book The Little Prince, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry:

If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

- When you hear the word “relevant”, especially in church, a lot of times it means “popular” – what’s hip, what’s now, what’s trendy outside the doors
- But this morning we’re going to look at relevant from a different angle – the idea of something that *connects* people – that people have a shared interest or stake in – that kind of “relevant” – this morning we dream with “relevant” in mind

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[Jesus said,] “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.”

Matthew 13:44-46, NLT

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Text: Matthew 13:44-46

Key Thought: To be relevant is to keep connecting our own life-giving experience of God with our common experience as people searching for meaning and hope.

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Pre-Intro: Sweet Dreams (The Eurythmics) [video]

Intro: Finding treasure

- **[hide money under one of the chairs – have people look for it, someone finds it]**
- Finding money – it never gets old – what's the most money you ever found?
- It's the time of year for finding money – fall purses, fall coats, backpacks – your neighbour's car, if you live in my neighbourhood...
- The thrill of finding treasure – money or other stuff that's good - never goes away – finding when you didn't expect it is one thing, and it's maybe even better – maybe – when you find something that you've been looking for, for a long, long time (Hardy boys books, coins, whatever)
- It's why we like Goodwill shopping – eBay – even American Idol – the thrill of discovery
- And if you've ever felt that thrill – either of the unexpected or the long awaited – then Jesus has a couple of stories for you

Read Text: Matthew 13:44-46

[Jesus said,] "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.

- Jesus' context – every square foot had history – people had been living in that land for 2000 years
THEN
- Sort of like Jerusalem today – or Rome – we go to the US and think that THEY have history, but Rome, Athens, Jerusalem – these are cities that have history – where you can't develop ANYTHING without getting a historical permit on top of everything else
- A man – probably a day labourer – is working in a field – harvesting, or planting, or plowing maybe – and finds a treasure – not his field
- Today – well, there are strict rules about that – **National Post story about the man finding the Celtic treasure (read parts of the story)**
- But back then – well, what are you going to do? If the labourer goes to the landowner – then the labourer could well be completely shut out
- One way or another, that's not the point of the story, and if we get bogged down here, well, we just won't see it – Jesus tells stories about REAL people, not about perfect people – and that's why they're relevant

- So he hides it again, and then sold everything he had – and he was happy to do it – and sold all he had and bought the field
- You own the field, you own the treasure, and there you go
- Ever been in a store, found something that was either a great deal or something you REALLY needed – and you didn't have the money to buy it at that moment? Or you'd left your credit card in the car? Ever hid it in the store and then come back later? Of course I haven't... you have? Of course you have... pulling a video out of the lettuce display... or an on sale reference book out of the romance novels
- What justifies going to all the trouble and even pain of selling everything you own? The joy of knowing that what you're going to have is so much better – the sacrifice becomes much smaller in the light of the future

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.”

- Second story – somewhat like the first, somewhat not – instead of a lucky find by someone who isn't looking for it, it's a lucky find by someone who IS looking for it
- A merchant – a buyer and seller – who does this for a living – comes across a rare pearl of great value – maybe it was huge, likely it wasn't – it was probably flawless, rather than large and flawed
- Today when you buy pearls – real ones – they are what are called “cultured pearls” – meaning that they are products of human intervention, grown in pearl oyster farms – the irritant, the nucleus of the pearl is injected into the oyster like it's artificial insemination, and then it grows there, and then they're harvested
- But pearls that are truly rare are natural pearls – wild ones – that have formed in oysters in places like the Indian Ocean – most of the time they're not round – but if a truly round, lustrous pearl is formed in the wild, then it's extremely rare, which makes it extremely valuable – and before about 1916, the only pearls that there were, were wild ones – which made them extremely valuable – you could harvest a ton of oysters and find only three or four natural, valuable pearls
- And imagine their value before the cultivation process began, because of their rarity – in 1917, Pierre Cartier buys a mansion in New York City on Fifth Avenue – and pays \$100 for it – at the same time, and from the same person, he buys a pearl necklace for a MILLION dollars
- The people of Jesus' day would have had pearls coming up from the Persian gulf, where they had been harvested since ancient times – as well as from further east – exotic, mysterious – when we think wealth in gemstones today, we think diamonds – but then, you might well have thought pearls
- So this merchant is no dummy – he's looking for pearls, he knows what he's looking for – and he finds one that's perfect – naturally perfect and incredibly rare – and he knows he can sell it for more than the asking price
- So again, in the same way as the labourer with the field, he goes away, sells everything and comes back and buys the pearl – and he's happy to do it, even if he's probably haggling the whole time

Different methods, same discovery:

- Two short stories, similar, but not quite the same – and Jesus says that this is what the kingdom of heaven is like
- The kingdom of heaven is like finding something you never expected – and it being so good – SO GOOD! – that you gladly give up everything you have or currently care about, because you know once you have it, everything will be so much better than it is right now
- The kingdom of heaven is also like finding something that you’ve been looking for your whole life – and whether you ever thought you’d actually find it or not, you kept looking – and then you find it – and again, you’re overjoyed and happy to pay whatever price to get hold of it
- Think about your own situation, your own history with God – or maybe it’s today’s news: are you more of a field worker or a merchant? Someone who wasn’t – or isn’t – really looking, but stumbled onto a treasure, a relationship with God, a promise of something so great that everything else paled in comparison? Or someone who has been searching for truth their whole life – meaning, hope, significance, for things to make sense – and then – or now – you found “it”?
- In fact, the two sides don’t even really get along, do they?
- The merchants – the truth seekers – the ones that read the philosophy, and the sacred writings, and investigate, and ponder – they look at people who have stumbled into it – been born into it, or just kind of wandered in – and wonder how in the world it ever happened?
 - Like people born with money compared to those who have had to work for every penny their whole life – old money vs. new money
 - Is it real? Is it really genuine? Will it last? It can’t be the same thing we’re looking for, right?
- And then on the other side – the ones who aren’t looking for it see the entire journey the merchants are on as futile – a waste of time – wandering down alley after alley, instead of just enjoying life and seeing what comes their way
 - Because even the “experts” get fooled sometimes – just on this past Thursday it was reported in the papers that there has been a scam in the US being run on coin dealers and jewellery store owners, using fake Canadian gold coins – our gold coins are the most pure in the world, and highly valuable – so the scammers would either show a real one, and then sell the merchants the real one plus a bunch of fakes – for huge money – or robbing them if they figured out the scam halfway through

Short memories:

- If you’ve found the treasure in the field – bought the pearl – then you know that we are all prone to having way-too-short memories
- The forgetting of what things were like at the start of our journey – or even in the middle – we get contented, we get fat, we get “riche” – and we stop really caring about others who are in the process of their search
- “Why do they need to look so hard?” we say about the merchants – and “Why aren’t they searching?” we say about the field workers – as we sit in judgment on both groups, secure in our treasure

- It's true that there is a very real change that comes, in finding the Kingdom of Heaven – the reality of God in the world – connecting with someone who made you, who loves you, who has always watched you and known you and wanted the best for you – having that relationship – it's incredible
- And sometimes it means that we leave others in their search or lack of search, at least for awhile, as we “sell everything” – as we make the leap necessary to a new perspective, or as we change and embrace what God has for us
- But we cannot be satisfied in our own “findings” while there are others who continue to search

Reconnect – as dissatisfaction

- As someone who had been “a treasure finder” since roughly thirteen, I had seen my circle of friends change drastically over the five years after that, to the point where I went to Bible College and the vast majority of my friends were in the same place I was
- Getting out, and working in a church was no antidote
- But it gnawed at me – I tried to make friends with people, tried to connect with people who were searching, who weren't searching – but the church culture I found myself in wasn't conducive to it
- Again – it was the “why aren't they searching” or the “they're looking too hard” that left them “outside” the circles
- And that wasn't good enough for me – and it continued to gnaw at me, worse and worse
- Relevance at one point – in that circle of the treasure finders – was seen as the latest crazes, the most popular fads “in the world” – the things that people were into, the current fashions, expressions, bands, books, movies, whatever – and to be “relevant”, well, you had to incorporate those elements into what you were doing in church – that would “build a bridge” to them
- But over time it has occurred to me that this sort of relevance is short-lived – everyone has different tastes – the way our culture has fragmented with the rise of the internet means that everyone is into something different – mass produced media is less and less applicable
- A better relevance is maintaining a connection – a connectedness – with the search, with what we all have in common – hopes and dreams and fears – and accepting that we have so much in common as fallen, flawed people who need God, whether we know it or not, whether we always act like or not, regardless of whether we've ever stumbled across a treasure or bought a pearl

Key Thought:

To be relevant is to keep connecting our own life-giving experience of God with our common experience as people searching for meaning and hope.

“...you are a chosen people... [God's] very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

‘Once you were not a people; now you are the people of God.

Once you received none of God's mercy; now you have received his mercy.’”

I Peter 2:9-10, NLT

Conclusion: It's bigger than nostalgia

- Reference "Field of Dreams" clip – James Earl Jones, talking about how baseball is a metaphor for all that has been lost from the past – the innocence, the purity, the meaning, the connectedness that has been lost today
- I play that clip, and I'm not thinking about baseball – although I love baseball – I'm thinking about the part of a person where they would connect with God
- And sometimes we know we're missing something, and other times, we are completely content
- But don't get me wrong – our idea at Reconnect of being connected, of connecting neighbours and families and friends and people to God, and church to community – we might sometimes talk about how we've lost something, or how "there once was a time" when people knew their neighbours...
- But let's be real – people of every generation have been just as good or bad as we are today – sure, our postmodern, hypertechnological lives move at a different pace, but it hasn't changed our hearts
- Reconnecting with God – being relevant to others – is not a matter of going back in time, back to the fifties or the forties or something – it's going back to when the connection was broken, and that is from the beginning of time – it's not that kind of backwards, it's the kind that backs up the truck to the place where the disconnect started in our lives, in our times – and the parts of us that long for things to be better
 - When we look at our children and want the best for them
 - When we look at our pasts and regret what's been
 - When we celebrate our wins and our accomplishments
 - When we are surrounded by the ones we love
 - When we screw up and lose big time
- I'm talking about the things that are transcendent – that connect us all as people – that's what we need to stay plugged in to, and that's what needs to be "reconnected"

Response: Q&A

- 1) Were you – are you – more of a field labourer or a merchant? Why?**
- 2) What sort of person do you have in your life? What sort of person do you gravitate to?**
- 3) How can we keep connected with what we have AND where we've been? What works for you? How well is it really working?**