

One of my all-time favorite movies
as a kid was, Goonies.



My neighborhood had more boys than girls
when I was growing up,
which meant my childhood
was filled with less tea parties
and more full contact red rover games.

We rode our bikes everywhere
—like a little pack—
from one house to the next,
up and down the street,
exploring vacant wooded lots,
streams, creek beds
and up the hill we'd ride to a small lake which is now,
the Winthrop University Athletic Complex.

Our made-up adventures
were full of danger and mystery
heroes and villains.
Which of course, sounds just like The Goonies.

In case you aren't as familiar with the story,
The Goonies were a bunch of friends
who discover a pirate treasure map
in one of their parent's attics.

In an effort to save their neighborhood from developers
they use the map to find the pirate,
One-Eyed Willie's vast treasure.

Of course, a family of criminals
is hot on their trail, the Fratellis,
and as soon as the kids find One-Eyed Willie's treasure,
the Fratellis are there to steal it.

In the dramatic last scenes,
the treasure is wrestled from the kids
but the Fratellis forget to check
one kid's jacket pocket
and there he has hidden some of Willie's treasure.
The neighborhood is saved.
The storyline was mesmerizing.

The idea of hidden treasure
is so appealing isn't?
How many of us
have hoped that we'd find a Van Gogh
hidden at our neighbor's yard sale?
Or have you scoured your great aunt's attic
for that Ty Cobb baseball card
in excellent condition?
We are fascinated by the idea of treasure.
Think of the tv shows we watch;
American Pickers,
Storage Wars,
Pawn Stars.



The PBS program,
Antiques Road Show
is basically a show for adults
about finding treasure.

Or maybe we could even stretch
that metaphor a tad
—most of these shows are all about
looking at the stuff you've inherited,
bought at auction or flea market
maybe even the stuff
that has been collecting dust in the basement,

all the earthly stuff
you've been storing—
these shows are all about
finding out whether
that stuff is treasure or not.

Jesus's words about treasure follow here
on the heels of the Lord's Prayer
which makes it is safe for us to assume
that Matthew is making a connection
between the prayer and Jesus's advice
about worrying, fasting,
judging, and treasure.

To Jesus's point,
if we pray, *thy will be done*
on earth as it is in heaven,
we are praying for our lives
to match God's will
then that means the reign of God's kingdom
here and now
is realized and actualized.

If God's will is to pierce our reality
and burn away the clutter,
then we'd better be ready
for some hard-hitting advice
about how this kingdom prayer,
is to be lived out.

AJ Levine calls the Lord's Prayer
a centering prayer.

She explains that it is a kind of guide,
'a start here with the words of this prayer',
and anything that follows
will be easier to complete or bear.¹

¹ Amy-Jill Levine.... pg. 91

And in using the Lord's Prayer as your center,
it becomes easier to recognize our priorities
and then be prepared
to find the treasure that awaits
when our priorities are aligned with God's.²

A few chapters later,
after the Sermon on the Mount
and the Lord's Prayer,
Jesus mentions treasure again.

He tells a parable
about the kingdom of heaven
being like a treasure hidden in a field.
Someone finds this treasure
and goes out and sells all that he has
and buys that field.



Now, if you think about it,
that's an odd story isn't?

The kingdom of heaven
is like treasure that is hidden in a field.

It's almost like picturing an older man,
with his plastic visor
and his metal detector.

His wife hands him coffee
as he heads out the door
for another day of hunting.
So, every morning he goes out
to see what he can find.

And one day,
it just so happens
that he finds something!
And like Jack and the beanstalk,

² Ibid. pg. 92

he sells everything they have
to buy the field.

Now, if this man,
sells everything he has
in order to buy a field...
wouldn't that make him poorer?
Are we to assume that the treasure he finds
is greater than whatever
he currently has?

What treasure would you have to find,
to compel you
to use your life's savings and pension
your home, your car, your stock holdings—
in order to possess it?
Because if he's sold the farm
to get the field,
he won't have any oxen to till the soil
and work the ground
or have any tools
to dig that treasure out!

And even though now he has treasure,
what will he do with it?
Won't he have to sell off
part of the treasure to eat?
Won't he now have to spend part of the treasure
to have a roof over his head
and a bed to sleep on at night?

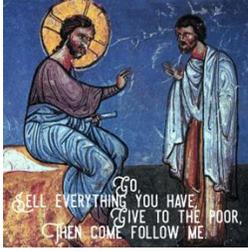
In these two examples,
treasure is supposed to be good.
Heavenly treasures are better
than earthly ones in our first example.
But in the second example,
what kind of treasure
should we presume the man finds in the field?



What would it look like
to find a treasure in a field?
Is it heavenly or earthly?
I don't know which it is either.
And it seems easy enough
to hear Jesus's advice
about not storing up earthly treasure for ourselves
as his admonition
against greed and materialism.

Because as soon as he is mentioning
earthly treasure he is telling us,
No one can have two masters.
You can't serve God and serve money.
You can't rely on stuff
while also claiming to rely on God.
So, in a few chapters
when Jesus tells the parable
of the man who finds the treasure in the field,
and sells all he had to buy the field
and possess the treasure
we are left wondering,
what did the man do?
What did he do
with the treasure he found?

Jesus mentions treasure in heaven again,
much later in the gospel of Matthew.



That's the story many of us are oh so familiar with:
the story of the man
who has a lot of things
and asks Jesus what deed he must do
to get eternal life.

In that story Jesus tells the man
to sell all that he has

and give his money to the poor,
“...go, sell your possessions,
and give the money to the poor,
and you will have *treasure in heaven*;
then come, follow me.”²²

When the young man heard this word,
he went away grieving,
for he had many possessions.” (Matt. 19:21-22)



He went away grieving
for he had many possessions.

Boy, doesn't that line stick to us
like peanut butter in your mouth?

Like the man who sold all that he had
to buy a field when he discovered treasure,
we are left wondering
what did the man with lots of possessions,
what did he do

after his encounter with Jesus?

He walked away grieving,
but what did he do after that?

It seems clear that Jesus is saying,
having too many earthly treasures
that will rot, rust, or get stolen
means that you will have less heavenly treasures.

And as Christians,
we who are trying to follow
the way of Christ
in the world,
now the question turns to us.

What will we do?
What will we do with these words from Jesus about treasure?

We, who have many possessions?

We, who likely have many earthly goods stored up?

We, who, if by chance found for some great treasure,
might sell everything we have
so, we can possess it
...what will we do?

I don't have an answer to these questions.
But what I can offer us this morning
is a possibility.

I learned a new term this week,
a squared circle.
Apparently, that's an old term
for wrestling rings,
squared circles.



And maybe that's what this is.³
Maybe that is our possibility.

These stories,
the parable of finding treasure in a field,
the story of the man
who was told to sell his possessions
in order to have heavenly treasures,
they are both contrasted with the fact
that Jesus is telling us
that stuff isn't what life in him is about
...and so maybe this invites us
into a squared circle.

A space to wrestle⁴
with our materialism
and the reality of praying,
God, thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.

Because I know
we all know
that God's intent for life,
is that we have peace,
joy, love,
generous hearts,
mercy, forgiveness, gratitude

—and those things are experienced
in our lives
when we ask for God's will
to become our own.
Then heavenly treasure
becomes earthly reality.

³ <https://www.saltproject.org/progressive-christian-blog/twenty-first-week-after-pentecost-lectionary-commentary>

⁴ ibid

We might dream of grand adventures
—of hidden pirate treasure maps in attics
and rare baseball cards at yard sales
but the real treasure
is finding the joy of heaven
coming to us here and now
on the earth.

So, friends,
there is no real bow
to tie this up neatly.
There is no quick and easy gospel remedy
for greed and materialism
that will sit easily
with our lives and our culture.

But there is this prayer,
there is this sermon,
that can center our lives
and orient our priorities.

And there is this wonderful teacher,
who told stories and offered advice
which invites us into a space of
perhaps grieving,
perhaps reflection,
perhaps action,
it's space of wrestling
a squared circle—
where we can grapple with
our reality and the promise Jesus's words.

And this wrestling
is the calling we all have signed up for
as the followers of Jesus.

These words,
these stories,
these prayers,
they are the map we are to follow.
Which really, makes for incredible adventure.

