

Luke 12: 32 – 40

'Where your treasure is'

Introduction ...

There was a TV ad in 2021 for the Open University that invited us to set our ambition free. It pictured people trapped in 'dead-end' jobs who could take flight with an Open University degree. It suggested that our treasure is to be found in career success, a rising standard of living. But along comes Jesus who says, give it all away and find treasure in heaven. Is he for real? What does it mean to be given the kingdom and to live in open-handed generosity in a world of rising bills and prices?

A time-honoured classroom activity is to invite children to make a treasure map. You may well have done this yourself. Such a map almost always consists of a wobbly outline denoting the shape of a desert island, and is probably surrounded by shark-infested waters. The island will have mountainous areas, thick forests and beaches strewn with palm trees. But somewhere in this complex geography will be a small 'X'. And we all know what 'X' means. It marks the spot where the treasure is buried. Find the place marked, get digging and, if you are lucky, you will uncover a chest of untold riches.

The idea of buried treasure has captured imaginations for many years. One of the most famous stories must be Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island. In this story, young Jim Hawkins finds a map in a dead man's chest and takes a role as a ship's cabin boy in a thrilling search for the pirate gold hiding under the 'X' on his map. Enid Blyton's 'Famous Five' also have an encounter with a cargo of gold ingots. In this tale, the intrepid gang deal with ruined castles, hidden dungeons, shipwrecks and storms as they hunt for the treasure stashed on Kirrin Island. Even very contemporary stories use the treasure hunt as a major plot device. Amy, in Gillian Flynn's novel Gone Girl, set up little treasure hunts for her husband on their anniversary, a seemingly romantic tradition that turns very sinister when Amy disappears and she becomes the treasure he is hunting for. On a lighter note, the film Paddington 2 makes use of a hunt for treasure that takes the bear, his family and his nemesis, Phoenix Buchanan, on a search of London looking for a lost fortune.

Activity ...

Well, I have such a map this morning – for any children present (or adults). As they go off on their treasure hunt around the church, chat amongst yourselves, think about:

In what sense is your relationship with Jesus 'a treasure'?

(various ideas were fed back to Revd Judy)

Thought ...

One thing that we need to remember about these things, whether they be stickers or fridge magnets of 'Jesus loves you', or whatever helps us to know that Jesus loves us, a hymn or bible verse ... is that **PTO**

the treasure is not the sticker or magnet or the badge ... or the hymn ... or the Bible verse ... or the church service ... The treasure is the truth and the experience that Jesus does love us.

Conclusion ...

Whatever in life we deem to be our treasure naturally occupies our thoughts, fills our senses and often guides our behaviour and how we choose to spend our time. The challenge embedded in the Gospel reading is for us to see that the most precious treasure of all, the valuables marked by 'X' in the universal map of life, are the riches we gain from doing the work of God's kingdom. Real treasure is found when we draw close to Jesus to receive his love, and this treasure has a beauty and value that eclipses anything else.

And the exciting news is that this treasure is not buried or hidden, it's available right here, right now. The treasure is not in a hidden box but in a relationship with Jesus – everyone is invited to share it.

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