

Luke 12: 32 – 40

'Where your treasure is'

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.

If something is highly prized, the human impulse is to work very hard to find it. Think about the times when you have lost something precious. For those items there is no handy treasure map with an 'X' to tell you where you left it but, when it's valuable or important to you, you will search as hard as possible to try and find it.

In other words, whatever – or perhaps whoever – we value has high priority in our life. Whatever 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, 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 – and everyone is invited to share it.