

Thought for the Day, Tuesday 14 March
Matthew 13.36-58: Treasure hidden in a field



The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Funnily enough, we watched just the other day a film about treasure hidden in a field. The Dig is a beautiful film about the discovery of the Sutton Hoo treasure in a field in Suffolk in the weeks before war broke out in 1939. This was one of the greatest archaeological finds of the twentieth century in Britain. A mysterious earth mound turned out to cover the clearly visible remains of a ship burial from Anglo-Saxon times, and within the ship was an extraordinary hoard of treasure: a helmet, a gold buckle, jewellery, and lots of coins. This must have been the burial place of someone of the highest rank, quite possible the King of East Anglia.



The treasure was legally determined to belong to the owner of the field (because it had not been interred with the intention of being retrieved). The landowner, Edith Pretty, donated the treasure to the British Museum, where you can still see it.

Although Sutton Hoo was a find of exceptional importance, it is in fact surprising how much treasure lies buried under English fields, usually to protect it from raiders, invaders or robbers.

And at the time of Jesus too people must have been familiar with the idea of burying treasure. The fact that Jesus chose this as a parable theme shows that it must have been a situation which rang bells with ordinary people.

I can't claim to know very much about the first century Roman law of treasure trove, but clearly the man in the parable knew that if he owned the field the treasure would be his. So, realising that the treasure was worth far more than all his current possessions, he takes a rational decision and sells up all his other belongings so that he can purchase the field. Let's not worry too much about whether this was fair to the previous owner; we know that Jesus enjoyed telling

parables about people who actually were less than scrupulous.

But what is the point of this get-rich-quick story? Jesus is trying to get people to see just how important is the kingdom of heaven which he is bringing in. In fact it is more important than everything else put together; you have to make it your top priority.

In Jesus, God has come to sort out what is wrong with the world. You have a decision to make: to join in with Jesus's new kingdom, or to dither around outside; to become part of God's solution, or to go on being part of the problem. So don't let your chance slip by: act quickly and decisively like the man who found the buried treasure. You won't regret it. You'll get rich quick spiritually.

And a last thought: do look for The Dig on Netflix.

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