Proper 12A 2020 All In

Matthew 13: 44 – 52

In the card game called poker, players bet money or plastic chips against one another and the highest hand wins. When a player goes all-in, they are committing their entire chip stack to the pot. If they lose, they are done because they have nothing left. If they win, they claim the entire pot.

To say that an all-in bet is risky is an understatement. There is no riskier move! The player making the all-in bet has to be confident they have the highest hand to risk it all. Letting it all ride is not for the faint of heart.

As a Christian, would you go all-in for Christ? Are you prepared to liquidate all assets to remain a member of the church? Not that one could ever buy in but can anything compare with being a member of Christ’s body, the church?

The parable of the Hidden Treasure speaks of the incomparable privilege of belonging to the Kingdom of Heaven. Belonging to Christ is the highest treasure one can find. Selling everything for the sake of this kingdom, is a joy.

Oh really? When Jesus pointed out a poor widow giving all she had in the temple treasury, one doesn’t think about her playing poker. Yet she was all-in trusting that God would care for her and provide her next meal. The world calls her a fool. Perhaps mentally ill. Not well-balanced. That would leave her as one holding an empty coffee cup begging on a street corner. Is this the kind of life you want for yourself or your children?

Yet we all die, wealthy or not. Then comes the judgment. We will be sorted as Jesus pointed to a fishermen after a good catch, separating the edible fish from what we called the “junk” fish, meaning they were not for eating. The good eating fish are the righteous ones headed for eternal glory in heaven. The fish with too many bones, not worth the effort of cleaning or just plain taste bad, are headed for the fiery furnace, where there is no end to weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In that moment of judgment when God determines where you spend eternity, would you be willing to part with everything except believing in your dear merciful Jesus? Could you give up everything with joy now for the sake of Jesus?

What about my comforts? My daily needs? If that means going without my daily joys that I have come to live for, then repent. Life is not about piling up toys and ensuring daily pleasures. That describes the playbook of the prodigal son, who liquated the inheritance of his father, while he was alive, and spent it all on daily pleasure. He went all-in to live the high life.

That is a far cry from the joyous man who spent all he had on a field, that contained a buried treasure, the kingdom of heaven.

Which describes you? Do you deserve to belong to God’s kingdom? As the prodigal said after coming to his senses, “Father, I have sinned against you and heaven.” And when God sends his holy angels to separate those headed for eternal life from those headed for eternal death, which group will you be in?

If it comes down to how much you are willing to give up, then you could never give enough and would remain unworthy to belong to Christ. For we are getting what we deserve when we die, which means more than parting with our earthly treasure, and a parting of body and soul. No one deserves to be a member of the kingdom of heaven.

Yet hope remains in seeing Christ in the parable of the Hidden Treasure. If Christ is the one who found a treasure, and then gave all He had to buy the whole field that contained this treasure, there is great joy and comfort for sinners like us.

Christ founded the church on the word of his death for the life of the world. His church is the apple of His eye, that He loves very much. Christ Jesus gave all He had, no money or wealth, but his dying breath, so that we are forgiven and bought back from death and eternal fire.

Christ did it all. He has finished his saving work on the cross and delivered it to you at the baptismal font and at His Table. There is nothing for you to do to get in, but receive His undying love and mercy. Jesus still welcomes sinners into His kingdom. He went all-in at the cross for you and for all. He risked it all so that you might be declared worthy of eternal life.

That good news gives certainty and joy to every believing heart. When considering the parable of the pearl, if Jesus is the merchant who found me, a selfish sinner hooked on the world’s pleasures and not fit for heaven, and exchanged his life for mind and calls me a peal of great value, my heart is truly filled with joy. His love for you brings out your love for others in humility and thanksgiving. And gives you the confidence to know you are headed for heaven’s glory because Christ has done it all! He did go all-in!