Grace and Peace to you from God Our Father and from the one who bought the farm for us, Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Have you ever heard the phrase, “bought the farm”? It’s actually a slang phrase first made popular in the Air Force. When a pilot gets in trouble in the air and has to either eject or crash land, he or she will try to avoid crashing in populated areas to minimize the loss of life when the plane goes down. That means usually crashes occur in more rural areas. If the plane goes down with a large amount of fuel it renders the field unusable for many years to come. Inevitably, that particular field is always the farmers most fertile and profitable field and the government gets sued or settles for much more than the market value of the farm. So, it became the Air Force thing to say when a pilot crashes that he bought the farm. Most of the time the pilot paid for that farm with his or her life.

As we continue reading through the parables of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel, today we come to the mother lode. Five parables in just 12 verses. Volumes can be and have been written on each one of these. The thing that holds them all together, along with our previous parables from last week and the week before, besides the fact that Jesus is making his best attempt to describe the Kingdom of Heaven for the disciples back then and for us today, is the ideas of smallness, and hiddenness. God’s kingdom is hidden from human vision and small in the eyes of the world. I love to people watch when I’m out in the public. I try to guess what a person does for a living or what they’re like as a person. I’ve discovered it’s almost impossible to tell who the real Christians are. I can’t tell by looking at someone what they believe. There is no medical test. You can’t X-ray someone to discover in what or whom they believe. You can’t tell by what a person looks like, or by where they live, what language they speak, how they dress, or even what jewelry they wear if they actually believe in Jesus Christ as their lord and savior. You can’t even really tell by what a person does or doesn’t do. My point is, God’s kingdom is hidden and in the eyes of the world, the kingdom of God is also small.

Christians are often considered weak in the eyes of the world. Former Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura famously said Christians are weak-minded people who need the crutch of religion to make it through life. Saturday night live, a show I seldom if ever watch anymore, often portrays Christians as geeky, out of touch, social misfits. You see, God’s kingdom is hidden from human vision and small in the eyes of the world. However, at the same time it’s growing and influential, like the mustard seed and the yeast, and invaluable like the hidden treasure in the field and the pearl of great value…

To deal with humanities struggles of unbelief and our sin, Jesus “bought the farm.” Through His death, Jesus paid the mortgage on our sin, the fullness of our penalty. He would go to the cross, suffering and dying there, at the hands of those who did not believe in Him, to erase the sin of their unbelief so that all might believe and have life everlasting.

Later, in Matthew’s Gospel, right after the crucifixion, the Roman centurion and the other guards standing with him who saw the miraculous signs of that day said, “Surely He was the Son of God.” We’re not sure, exactly, but it’s at least possible these soldiers became believers in Jesus right then and there. Maybe it was simply out of fear of God’s judgement for being responsible for the slaying of one whom they now realized was most definitely an innocent man or maybe it was because they were eyewitnesses to the way he died, loving even those who nailed him to the cross and praying for their forgiveness. Either way, through the Law and God’s wrath or through the Gospel and God’s unconditional love, when the Kingdom of God is revealed to a person, when it becomes unhidden and looms large in their lives, the result is always the same. The revealing of the Kingdom of God produces faith and trust in Jesus Christ and His ability to do what He said He was going to do. His resurrection is the payment in full for you and for me. Jesus didn’t want there to be any doubt about who He was. Just three days after His cruel murder, He rose from the dead, declaring to the world He was indeed innocent. He was indeed the Son of God. He had indeed “bought the farm”, paying the full mortgage price with His life.

Even though He “bought the farm”, He didn’t “buy the plot.” He was not buried in a tomb of His own. He merely took up borrowed space for a short time. Joseph of Arimathea placed the dead Jesus in his own grave. It was really only rented space. The grave could not hold Jesus. Right there, the fact that Jesus rose from His grave demonstrates how God deals with our graves too. Our graves will only be rented space, just like Jesus’ “final resting place” wasn’t a tomb, neither is yours or mine. Because Jesus bought the farm for you and for me, we too have been raised to new life. Our eternal lives are guaranteed because of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.

Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, His kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field or like a merchant who found a pearl of great value. We are willing to part with anything and everything to just have our small part in it. It’s only God who can work in us the will to want to be part of His kingdom. Because Jesus bought the farm we get to lay claim to the Kingdom, we get to make it our own, to seize and hold it. Thank God for you here today who get that reality! Even before I became a Pastor, it never occurred to me not to come to worship God every Sunday I was able to do so. It never occurs to me even not to watch the clock to see if we’re running a bit over time. To me, the Kingdom is valuable and this is the place I feel closest to the reality of God’s Kingdom. Why would I want to miss out on being near when the Kingdom is so close?

When I survey the cultural landscape of our country these days, I find precious few pearls like we have here. If the world out there is the field in Jesus’ parable, then what I see, more often than not, is a field full of land mines, not buried treasures or pearls. I mean come on and think about it, our society can’t even agree on who should use which bathrooms, how are we ever going to find consensus on the big items like health care or even bigger issues of soul care?

At the risk of sounding like I’m patronizing you, I sort of feel like the merchant who found the pearl of great value or the one who found the treasure buried in the field. In the social and religious landscape riddled with pit holes and landmines, the pearl or the treasure I’ve found among all the cruelty and badness of the world is this Church and you all in this congregation. Right here in this place I have found a little slice of what the Kingdom of heaven must be like. We’re not perfect, but most of the time, most of us are much more concerned about others than we are ourselves. Almost any day of the week this congregation is busy working in or advancing the Kingdom of God in some way. Trinities many ministries give purpose, meaning, and plenty of job security. Being a part of this congregation has opened my eyes to what God’s reign really looks like in the world and it’s truly a pearl of great price.

We may never get complacent in our faith. May we still feel the excitement and the joy like we did when we first found the buried treasure of faith. May our joy overflow and affect everyone around us for the positive. May you always remember when everything is stripped away, when you have nothing else in this life, you still have Jesus, who “bought the farm” for you. Thanks, and praise to the One who bought the farm, Amen