

**Seeking the Kingdom (with a stone in your heart)**

Matthew 13:44-58

Pastor Peter Hiatt

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[Movie clip from The Iron Giant:]

HOGARTH: Oh no . . . the missile! When it comes down, everyone will die. (Siren sounds)

BYSTANDER: There it is! (Sounds of panic from the crowd)

MOTHER: Can't we get to a shelter?

FATHER: It wouldn't matter.

HOGARTH: Giant . . . ?

Giant: You stay, I go. No following.

HOGARTH: I love you.

The Iron Giant blasts into outer space to intercept the missile. As he does, he hears Hogarth's voice saying, "You are who you chose to be." At that he says, "Superman," and then detonates the bomb. The explosion looks like a star in the sky. The crowd cheers.

The Iron Giant descended into our world from some other world. He was befriended by a lonely boy named Hogarth. The government was afraid of the Giant yet wanted to possess his technology. The Iron Giant could obliterate the world but chooses to die for the sin of the world instead. A frightened government agent launches a nuclear missile at the Iron Giant, forgetting that the Giant is *with us*.

But the Iron Giant says to Hogarth, “Where I am going, you cannot follow.” He’s “lifted up,” shot into space—the “superman.” In Greek, that’s “eschatos Adam”—ultimate Adam. He’s blown into a million pieces. The explosion looks like the bright morning star. The pieces rain down on the earth, in fields and lagoons and oceans deep and distant glaciers. Though Hogarth would like to find the body of the Giant, and although the government would like to harvest his technology, they could never find all the pieces. They’re hidden all over the earth.

Well, it’s just a silly kid’s movie, but at that scene I started bawling in the theatre. I wasn’t weeping over an animated robot; I’d stumbled onto something else, something new and old.

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Lord, we pray that you would help us to  
preach your kingdom and see your kingdom,  
to seek the kingdom. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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In Matthew 6:33, Jesus preaches, “Seek first the kingdom.” A kingdom is a king’s dominion. “Seek first the kingdom,” and it would be nice if Jesus told us where to look.

*We* suspect that the kingdom is to be found by following a particular program, attending a seminar, following some principles, or obeying some rules.

*We* suspect it is to be found at church, or better yet, seminary.

*We* suspect that to find it you must be outstanding in some field. That's what Jesus said:

Matthew 13:44:

*“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”*

See, I told you. This guy was just out standing in some field, and he found the kingdom. He probably wasn't standing but walking. Maybe he was plowing the earth in order to “eat bread” by “the sweat of his brow,” like Adam in Genesis 3:19. He's thinking to himself, “This ground is cursed!” when all at once, *clunk*. The plow hits a box. It's the kingdom of heaven. It's *treasure*.

Well, who buried the treasure? If it was the guy who owned the field, why would he sell it? Well, who buried the kingdom in the fields of the earth? And how did he do it? And why?

Proverbs 25:2 says, “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.” Maybe God is playing hide and seek, like John Fischer just preached.

When I was a kid, I loved hide and seek. And here's something to ponder: Whoever was being sought became more valuable because they were hidden and we were seeking. So the snotty-nose kid from the other block that no

none liked became treasure, because he was hidden and we were seeking. He must've loved that.

If God is hiding,  
it must hurt terribly if no one is seeking.

Well, the fellow in Jesus' story just bumps into the treasure. But seeing the treasure, he sells everything and buys the field with joy. What's the field? Well, in the preceding parable, it's the world. Even more specifically, it's the heart of man.

You remember God breathed His breath into dirt from a field making man. Paul writes that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." The man in the story bought the field (the dirt). But there's no way he could afford the treasure. Who could even begin to pay for the kingdom of heaven? Yet every one of you could afford the dirt its hidden in.

In 258 AD, the Bishop of Rome was martyred by the emperor Valerian who then demanded that the chief deacon hand over all the church's treasure. On the third day, that deacon presented to the emperor on the steps of his palace the church's treasure: thousands of lepers, orphans, widows, blind, lame, sick, and elderly . . . like bodies broken and blood shed.

"Here!" cried Deacon Lawrence, "Here is all the church's treasure, for the church is truly rich, far richer than the emperor." Lawrence is now known as St. Lawrence, for with that comment, Lawrence was martyred. *More treasure.*

Ouch! Treasure? How can such pain be treasure?

Matthew 13:45:

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”*

You know that a pearl is a treasure (the greatest treasure in Jesus’ day). It’s found in an oyster buried in a lagoon. The pearl forms around a wound in the oyster’s body. An oyster first experiences a pearl as pain. We seek the kingdom and complain to God that there’s pain in our hearts.

I’ve been haunted by this song this week. Just listen:

there is a woman in somalia  
scraping for pearls on the roadside  
there’s a force stronger than nature  
keeps her will alive  
this is how she’s dying  
she’s dying to survive  
I don’t know what she’s made of  
I would like to be that brave

she cries to the heaven above  
there is a stone in my heart . . .

-Sade Adu, “Pearls”

Maybe the stone is the pearl of great price—faith, hope, and love wrapping themselves around a painful wound. Better yet, grace covering sin.

It's my experience that people will desperately seek the kingdom of heaven in Bible studies, workbooks, programs, and schools, but they're not really seeking the kingdom as much as running from the pain in their hearts.

But maybe the pain in *your* heart is the pearl.

If you surrender your pain to God—your dirt and your sin—then the grace and love of God covers the wound and makes a pearl. Not just *your* pearl; that place of pain becomes Christ's place of pain, the place where He is crucified. Your wound becomes His wound. And so you fall at the foot of His cross in worship.

The church wraps herself around the wound of God, which is Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and she becomes His pearl. His pearl is formed in the dirt and pain of this world.

Revelation 21:21: "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls," like the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles. Twelve is Christ's church. So people enter the kingdom through your testimony of God's grace covering your sin. Surrendered pain is great treasure.

But perhaps you say, "It's worse than pain; it's chaos and evil!"

Matthew 13:47:

*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; when it was full, men*

*drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.”*

Well, if you know much about Scripture, you know that the sea represents the realm of chaos and evil, and the Gentiles. Yet now there is some sort of incredible dragnet dredging the heart of the sea, drawing treasure out of the chaos and evil. Perhaps you're holding on to your own private hell, terrified to acknowledge it, confess it, or walk through it.

Instead of surrendering chaos and evil to God, we're constantly tempted to order the chaos—control the chaos—ourselves. So instead of a wild journey of faith, instead of walking on water in a storm, instead of following a pillar of fire and cloud through the heart of a crazy sea, discipleship becomes filling in the blanks at the end of a workbook, praying long enough to get a new car, or working forty hours at a church with good benefits and pay.

But the kingdom is found  
in the dirt  
and the pain  
and the chaos.

I can think of few places more chaotic, painful, or dirty than a third world prison. La Victoria in the Dominican Republic is the home of our sister church and the Dominican Federal Penitentiary. During the floods, the

guards would sit on the roof and shoot prisoners trying to swim away.

Three weeks ago for the first time, we got to go inside the prison (about thirty of us, including two of my kids.) As the guards checked our passports and frisked us, I remember thinking, “If I don’t get my kids out of this hellhole, I am *so busted* there’s no point in ever going home again.” We walked through an outer courtyard and then into the inner prison yard where all at once we were surrounded on both sides by prisoners holding hands, forming a gauntlet.

It turns out they were Christian inmates parting the sea and providing safe passage into the cafeteria where we had church. My kids and others led worship, I got to preach, and I honestly don’t know if I’ve ever felt as at home in church as I did in that place. It was like I was surrounded by hundreds of pearls, once hidden but dredged from the heart of the sea. I told them we were one church—one body. You see, something had drawn us together from the chaos.

Our freaky weird verse for the day is 1 Peter 3:18-20:

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us [draw us] to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey . . . in the days of Noah . . . .

Wow! That makes it sound like there is a net which is dropped so deep it can actually dredge the depths of hell and find treasure! Next verse, Matthew 13:51:

*“Have you understood all this?”*

(the four soils, the wheat and the tares, the reason for parables, the mustard seed, the leaven, the hidden treasure, the great pearl, the dragnet)

*“Have you understood all this?” They said to him, “Yep!”*

I love the disciples because they’re such *morons*. I can relate to them. But why is it important for them to understand this stuff?

Well, maybe if you understood there was treasure in a field or some bag of dirt, then you’d sacrifice everything for that dirt bag and do it with joy. It’s one thing to sell all if you have to; it’s another to do it with joy.

And if you understood there was a pearl being formed in pain, you’d go there and endure.

And if you thought treasure was dredged from chaos and evil, you would never turn tail and run in fear.

In fact, if you ever found yourself outside the walls of the great city standing in some field in a place of great pain surrounded by chaos and evil, you wouldn’t run in fear; you’d seek the kingdom.

So Jesus says, “Have you understood all this?” They say, “Yep.” And He said to them, “Therefore” (which can be translated “Allrighty then”) . . .

*“Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”*

The kingdom is old yet forever new.

In Revelation, the great city is old yet forever new. The kingdom is not only spread throughout space; the kingdom is spread throughout time.

So “everything that was written in the past was written to teach us,” writes Paul. The new covenant is in the old covenant, and the old covenant always testifies to the new covenant. So Jesus says, “Guys, some new stuff will be happening. But pay attention, because it’s *old*.”

A tree will be planted

A lamb will be slain

The captives will be set free

The world will be judged

The kingdom will come in a field, in a place of great pain, surrounded by chaos and evil.

In Luke 18:31, Jesus takes the Twelve and says:

“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon; they will scourge him and kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” But they understood none of these things . . . .

Have they understood all this? Nope, not at all.

Matthew 13:53:

*And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, and coming to his own country he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?" And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.*

They “took offense at Him” (in Greek, “scandalizo”), for he was *familiar*. They couldn’t believe the kingdom of heaven could show up in a *familiar* field or a *familiar* pain or a *familiar* bit of chaos or even at a *familiar* time: not only old or fashionably new, but *just now* . . . mundane, everyday *now*.

And, you know, it would have been kind of insulting to have spent your whole life seeking the kingdom—studying the workbook and obeying the Torah—only to find the kingdom was there all along; in fact, hiding in that snotty-nose carpenter’s kid from the next block over. It would be insulting to find the kingdom

was hiding in the last place you wanted to look: your own dirt, your own pain, your own chaos.

In Luke 17:20, Jesus said to some Pharisees looking for the kingdom:

“The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.”

That was probably the *last* place they wanted to look: their own dirt, pain, and chaos. *Scandalous!*

At table on the night that Jesus was betrayed, Matthew records Jesus saying, “All ye shall be offended [scandalized] because of me this night . . . .” In other words, “You’ll run, you won’t look, and you won’t seek me.” That night was the last night of the old covenant. The Twelve were the remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel. So with their failure, none had sought, none had understood, and none was righteous, no not one.

In the morning, Christ would be crucified outside the city walls in a field, in a place of great pain, surrounded by chaos and evil, on a tree planted before the foundation of the world.

The entire kingdom was mysteriously present and indeed born in that place and time, but the disciples were afraid to look. They thought the kingdom had failed.

Yet that morning Christ’s body was lifted high above the earth as He sacrificed Himself for the sin of the whole world, body broken and blood shed. The night before, He’d given them His body broken and blood shed, saying, “Take and eat.” Once they had digested His body

broken and blood shed, by the power of His Spirit they began to *see*, and they began to *seek*.

“Have you understood all of this?” Don’t say *yep* too quickly.

Romans 3:10: “As it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God.’”

Well, if *no one* seeks for God, what is the point of the parables? Maybe we missed something.

1. In the parable of the treasure in the field, the man doesn’t seek the treasure; he stumbles onto it. It’s almost like someone put the treasure in his path so that on seeing it, he’d sacrifice everything in joy, die to himself, and live to the treasure. The man can’t afford the treasure, but only the field.
2. But did you notice that the pearl merchant not only *seeks* the pearl; the pearl merchant can *afford* the pearl. Well, what man can afford the kingdom of God? Only *God*, the God-man Jesus. Who seeks when no one seeks? Jesus. He’s always the point. And did you notice Jesus didn’t say the kingdom of heaven is like a pearl, but that the kingdom of heaven is like a *pearl merchant?*—seeking with all His kingdom the pearl of great price.

We are the pearly gates in the eternal city.

We are the bride of Christ the king.

We are Christ’s treasure.

He sacrificed His kingdom and hung on the cross to obtain His pearl. His pearl is His people wrapped around

His wounded body, worshipping at the foot of His cross by the power of His Spirit.

The King seeks His pearl with all of His kingdom, as if “all things work together for the good of His pearl.”

So maybe it really *is* all about you, because the King (the Point) is all about you and seeks you with all His kingdom.

All about you by grace (painful grace).

3. And Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet” that draws all things to itself for judgment.

In John 6:44, Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him . . .” That is, no one seeks, but the Father seeks and the Father draws. How? In John 12:31, Jesus said:

“Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” He said this to show by what death he was to die.”

His death is the dragnet.

In John 21:4 after the resurrection, the disciples go fishing. Jesus appears and tells them to cast the net on the right side of the boat, and they can’t “draw it in” for all the fish. We become fishers of men using the same net.

At the cross, Jesus descends into hell and dredges the depths of the God-forsaken sea. He descended into hell

for the love of *you*. At the cross, God damned *God* for the love of you! *Seeking you*.

You must be treasure.

This is the plan for the fullness of time. It's old and it's new. It's eternal. And it's familiar. He grew up in your town. So don't run from your own dirt, your own pain, your own chaos. The kingdom is hidden there. It's *there* where you meet the King. So seek and you will find, for you've already been found.

We can seek the kingdom in our dirt, pain, and chaos, because Christ first sought us on His cross. In fact, they become the very same place!—His cross and our pain.

What I'm trying to say is, the kingdom seeks the kingdom and will not fail. The kingdom is heaven, and heaven is the New Jerusalem. And the New Jerusalem is built with people (living stones and pearls). She is the bride of Christ and the body of Christ. Jesus died and is resurrected. Yet in some way, Jesus must still be rising in space and time in us—His body—like leaven rising in dough, or as Peter says, “The morning star rising in our hearts” (2 Peter 1:9).

So you are His body finding the rest of His body by the power of His Spirit within you. You are His body broken but coming together, one part finding another part finding another part. You are joined at the places of dirt, pain, and chaos.

That is, you are joined at the wounds:  
wounds on the body of Christ.

That is, the body comes together where it was torn apart at the cross (torn apart like bread torn and distributed at His table).

Surrender the wound, the tear, the dirt, the pain, and the chaos, so you can be joined to Him. Surrender and you find a treasure, and the treasure is the whole kingdom and its king. The treasure is the whole body and its head. You not only fit together uniquely with Christ (as we said on Easter); you fit together uniquely with the rest of His body.

Your particular weakness is filled by another's particular strength. Your particular strength (through Christ) fills another's particular weakness.

You administer Christ's particular graces to particular wounds, not totally unlike a particular groom makes love to a particular bride. Their bodies join in a great joy which bears life. And that's only a taste—communion—in the kingdom.

But the kingdom finds the kingdom. God seeks God and finds God in us. So get the picture:

- The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.
- The king was lifted high on a cross in 30 A.D. where He gave His body broken and blood shed.
- His body and blood rained down on the earth throughout space and throughout time, landing in dirty fields, muddy lagoons, and even the depth of the sea, landing in us, buried in us.
- When we ingest His body and blood in faith, we become His body and blood in reality. We die

with Him, and He rises in us seeking the kingdom.

At the end of The Iron Giant, Hogarth is given a broken piece of his dead friend. He places it in a box by the side of his bed. It's his treasure, and the box is his heart.

Of course, it's a very painful treasure . . .  
It must've felt like a stone in his heart.

Well, this is how it ends: Hogarth awakens in the night. The piece from the Iron Giant has rolled to the window where it's beeping and tapping on the window pane.

Hogarth opens the window, and the piece rolls out into the snow as Hogarth calls, "See you later!"

Suddenly we see parts on a distant glacier in Iceland. A foot is hopping into the distance. An arm is clawing its way toward something. Then we see the Giant's head. As the music reaches a climax, the Giant's eyes open. He smiles, and the movie ends. The body is resurrected and coming together.

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So on the night He was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Take and eat. Do this in remembrance of me." And in the same way after supper, He took the cup and said, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me. I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

So if you love Him, if you want Him, if you believe in Him (even a little bit), come to the table and surrender . . . surrender your dirt, pain, and chaos. Confess it to Him and confess it one to another. I know it's frightening, but that's where you'll find the treasure.

[Closing prayer and benediction:]

So, Father, before the foundation of the world, you planted a treasure in a field, and we were walking in that field one day and stumbled upon it, and the treasure that you planted was your very own Son who suffered, died, and gave Himself to us. Lord, you have given Him to us that we would sell everything, die to ourselves, and live to you in love with you.

So, Lord God, we thank you. In Jesus, we thank you. Holy Spirit, we thank you, for you are better than our wildest dreams. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Sometimes it's hard to surrender the dirt, pain, and chaos. God uses His body to help us do that. If you look around and see nothing but dirt, pain, and chaos in your life, but you came to this table in faith, *have courage*. You swallowed a homing beacon. So seek and you will find, for you've already been found in Him. This is how Paul put it:

For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life

appears, then you also will appear with him  
in glory. (Colossians 3:3-4)

Believe the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.

-Proverbs 25:2

“For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness . . . .”

-Matthew 6:32-33a

“Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

-Matthew 7:7-8

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

-Matthew 13:44

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us.

-2 Corinthians 4:7

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

-Matthew 13:45-46

there is a woman in somalia  
scraping for pearls on the roadside  
there's a force stronger than nature  
keeps her will alive  
this is how she's dying  
she's dying to survive  
I don't know what she's made of  
I would like to be that brave

she cries to the heaven above  
there is a stone in my heart . . .

-Sade Adu, "Pearls"

The master became a legend in his lifetime. It was said that God once sought his advice: "I want to play a game of hide-and-seek with humankind. I've asked my angels what the best place is to hide in. Some say the depth of the ocean. Others the top of the highest mountain. Others still the far side of the moon or a distant star. What do you suggest?"

Said the master, "Hide in the human heart. That's the last place they will think of!"

-Anthony DeMello

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

-Luke 17:20-21

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.

-Revelation 21:21

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth."

-Matthew 13:47-50

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. . . . Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." This He said, signifying by what death He would die. . . . But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?"

They answered Him, “No.” And He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

-John 6:44, 12:31-33, 21:4-6

By the time he had been hanging there for a while, he had no tears left to weep with and no more sweat, his tongue so dry he could hardly wrap it around the words which are among the few he ever spoke that people remembered in the language he spoke them in probably because having once heard them, they could never forget them no matter how hard they tried, and probably they tried hard and often: “My God, my God, why have you—” and then the Aramaic verb from an Arabic root meaning to run out on, leave in the lurch, to be the Hell and gone. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” (Matt. 27:46). My God, where the Hell are you, meaning If thou art our Father who art in Heaven, be thou also our Father who art in Hell because Hell is where the action is, where I am and the cross is. It is where the pitiless storm is. It is where men labor and are heavy laden under the burden of their own lives without you. Where they cut themselves shaving and smoke three packs a day though they know the surgeon general’s warning by heart.

-Frederick Buechner, Telling the Truth

“Have you understood all this?” They said to him, “Yes.”

-Matthew 13:51

And taking the twelve, he said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon; they will scourge him and kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” But they understood none of these things; this saying was hid from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

-Luke 18:31-34

And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

-Matthew 13:52

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

-Romans 15:4

And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, and coming to his own country he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?" And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

-Matthew 13:53-58

As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one." . . . Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."

-Romans 3:10-12, 10:20

"I would not seek you, if I had not found you already in the depth of my heart."

-Augustine

For I want you to know how greatly I strive for you, and for those at La-odicea, and for all who have not seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. . . . For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

-Colossians 2:1-3, 3:3-4

Better than hide-and-seek, I like the game called Sardines. In Sardines the person who is It goes and hides, and everybody goes looking for him. When you find him, you get in with him and hide there with him.

Pretty soon everybody is hiding together, all stacked in a small space like puppies in a pile. And pretty soon somebody giggles and somebody laughs and everybody gets found.

Medieval theologians even described God in hide-and-seek terms, calling him *Deus Absconditus*. But me, I think old God is a Sardine player. And will be found the same way everybody gets found in Sardines—by the sound of laughter of those heaped together at the end.

“Olly-olly-oxen-free.” The kids out in the street are hollering the cry that says, “Come on in, wherever you are. It’s a new game.” And so say I. To all those who have hid too good. *Get found, kid!* Olly-olly-oxen-free.

-Robert Fulghum,

Everything I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten

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