

# Along the track

## Finding Treasure in the Field

A friend of mine spends a lot of his spare time looking for the treasure in the field, any field or creek or patch of bush will do. He joins many others who systematically scan sections of land using metal detectors, in the hope of discovering buried treasure. He hasn't found much but, ever the optimist, he continues to search for the elusive treasure.

In his book, the God of Surprises, Gerard Hughes tells the story of a friend who was teaching a group of young people about Jesus' kingdom, parables of the pearl of great price and the treasure in the field. *He asked them what they thought this 'treasure', this pearl was? They responded readily, and as is the style of young people, noisily. One girl had not spoken so my friend asked her: And Brenda, what do you think this means? In a quiet voice and with considerable shyness she said: "I am the pearl of great price, the treasure in the field". Reflections turned inwards as they considered the kingdom within them... p XIX*

There are a couple of important messages in this parable that are particularly relevant today. The person who finds the treasure in the field goes away, saves and saves, sells what he has and comes back and buys the field. Sometimes it takes commitment to look on the bright side, to find the treasure in ourselves, to find what is good in us and especially in others. But Jesus' message is "It is worth it!" Appreciating the wonder of each person, the treasure that lies within is an acquired skill. It is easy enough with our own children, our spouse, our friends but, as scripture says, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them (Lk 6:32)." Seeing the beauty and wonder of others, especially those who are different is a pretty consistent Gospel message. The trouble is our prejudice; our fear and suspicion can get in the road. We tend to keep at arm's length those we don't understand, those who are not 'one of us'.

Finding common ground, finding the gifts in the other person, in their beliefs and motivations, where they find fulfilment and happiness takes commitment, time and effort. The Gospels have a pretty clear message – everyone is precious in the sight of God, they are our brothers and sisters. Our world today is hungry for people with the courage to connect with others, for people who will build trust and community, people who will work for fairness and justice, people who are willing to accept and celebrate differences, and be more willing to sacrifice self-interest for the welfare of others. After all, the Gospels call on us to be are gracious, big-hearted, and understanding.

There are some today who play on this suspicion about others. It is too easy to join in, to be cynical in our conversations and in interactions and thus belittle or ostracise others who are different. Suspicion and fear cloud judgement. They tend to make us focus on protecting the status quo rather than improving it. Finding the treasure in each person means that every single day we have to find that treasure in ourselves by looking into our own hearts and asking ourselves honestly, am I doing my part to create the kind of world that all of us want to live in – a world of love and justice, fairness, acceptance, the world Jesus spoke about so often in the Gospels? He called it the reign of God. If we want to live in that sort of world, why wouldn't others?

So what can I do? What difference can I make? Imagine for a moment if we all chose to act with love over fear, courage over indifference, graciousness over hostility, genuine curiosity over indifference, dialogue over suspicion. Don't underestimate the ripple effect you set in motion when you decide that you will actively participate in improving the world you and others live in. So look for the treasure in the field by:

- recognising that I can affect positive change, I can make a difference
- taking opportunities to reach out to those who are different to us and trying to see through their eyes
- looking for the treasures in their fields
- refusing to buy into the rhetoric of fear, intolerance and division
- calling out those who preach it and recognise hate and bigotry for what it is, a symptom of fear
- spending less time blaming others and helping others to do the same
- showing the compassion needed to understand and heal the wounds that cause division
- choosing optimism over pessimism.

Regards  
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