

“Lasting Treasure”

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So, one of my favorite shows is called “The Curse Oak Island.” It’s about an enduring treasure hunt off the shore of Nova Scotia. Legend has it that in 1805 two brothers claimed to have “seen a light” coming from the woods. They found there a depression under a great oak tree- as if something was buried. They dug and found shafts, layers of oak logs, coconut fiber, and then at 80 feet a rock with curious symbols that one cryptologist read as “Ten feet below two million pounds are buried.” Alas, their shafts filled with water, the diggers barely getting out alive.

It is said that the treasure is cursed and that before the gold is recovered: seven people will die. True to the legend and those devoted to this mysterious treasure, many have bankrupted themselves, lost their families, and drove themselves mad trying to solve the mystery. At least six people have already died tragically in this quest. Even Franklin Roosevelt bought stock in the island and visited on multiple occasions in his own search.

Now two new brothers have taken up the hunt. They have discovered ancient shafts, unearthed evidence of gold, found jewelry over 500 years old, identified buried aqueducts and evidence of pirates, gathered human bones from the middle east, and excavated long lost foundations and roadways overtaken by hundreds of years of wilderness growth.

Like most History Channel episodes each is meant to leave you wanting more by postulating wild hypothesis alongside a steady drip, drip of real evidence. Just when you think the treasure is found, it’s not. Darn! The end of the journey is always just a little deeper, just a little more difficult, just out of reach, just not over.

Like all great mysteries and quests, the promise of discovery requires a choice endure, to remain faithful, and to stay the course.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Our scripture is about our greatest quest and most enduring search: discovering the depth of our heavenly treasure in Jesus Christ. In our hunt there should no question about the importance of prioritizing God. But the catch is that God is loving and gentle and wants us to choose to love and serve him freely rather than be forced into service.

For us Christians who have decided to give our lives to our faith journeys, there are many different things we could do. Many different mysteries to solve. Many priorities competing for our time. Some we half-heartedly believe, others we are willing to risk towards, placing everything on the line. And often we find that different things start to take over our lives ... not least when they make money or bring fame. Yet the path of Lent is not one of money or fame. But it is one of glory: the glorious way of Jesus Christ whose great mystery is being both fully human and fully divine. The pursuit of him, of our enduring treasure, is an invitation to climb into an ever-deepening shaft- plunging into God's love for us. Unlike most worldly treasures which ultimately cannot satisfy- Christ fully satisfies and has already sacrificed his life on our behalf for our freedom: our freedom to make the journey.

If you saw the light, would you venture to it? What kind of belief does it truly take to follow into the depth and darkness? What priorities tug at you, or have overcome you, that need to be challenged this Lent?

Everyone loves a good treasure hunt. Thanks be for the Good Shepherd who has secured for us the eternal richness of the glory of God.