

# What Is the Prosperity of Zion?

Sermon Notes for July 30 2017 at Brentwood

Ps 128 & Matthew 13:44-52



**The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field,  
which someone found and hid;  
then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has  
and buys the field.  
(Matt:13:44)**

## Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- Careful read of Tina Block's *The Secular Northwest* – complex and nuanced portrayal of this region's indifference to and rejection of organized religion – key factors = individualism, materialism, mobility, and independence – what do we treasure most? – what are the gods of our day and place? – freedom, possessions, travel, choice? – are these the gods that we put before/above the God who came to embrace and redeem us in Jesus Christ and who continues to nourish us through the work of the Holy Spirit? – that's the question I think this passage poses for us this morning – as we realize more deeply how powerfully we are embraced by this God, how do we come to understand our true prosperity and how do we decide to use it in gratitude for that embrace?
- Three things to consider – 1) this prosperity is rooted in a positive, nourishing relationship, not in a bunch of things; 2) that relationship determines what we do with the things entrusted to us by the God who has initiated and who sustains this relationship; 3) the gifts God has entrusted to us are intended to serve his commonwealth of justice, peace, and joy
- how, then, do we exercise responsible stewardship over the prosperity God has provided? – I would suggest this morning that the key to this question is prayer - prayer is the ongoing conversation we have with this redeeming God – conversation in which the God who took flesh, became an individual in the material of a human body and in a community of other humans, guides us in the use of all that we possess – guides us into the prosperity that serves best that God's mission of blessing the whole of his beloved creation – guides us into ways of strengthening compassion in our circles of influence – guides us into ways of strengthening the work and witness of Brentwood - all to be considered in constant conversation with God – all of this fueled by our increasing appreciation for the pearl of greatest value – our relationship with God

### **At this point in our ponderings, then ...**

To see our relationship with God as the thing of greatest value in our lives is not easy – there is so much bombarding us in our culture that tempts us away from this core conviction – buy this, do this to make yourself more attractive, invest here to get this high rate of return, believe and do this to ensure that God will give you the prosperity you desire – but there is a radical simplicity to the prosperity Jesus promises in this and other passages – love God first and foremost, then use all your gifts and possessions to expand that God’s commonwealth in all of your circles of influence – God’s embracing love is the true prosperity of Zion