

Close your eyes.

Imagine yourself as having found a treasure. Perhaps you want to think of yourself as a pirate with an eye patch. AARGH! And, you've stolen jewels and gold from the high seas

Or, more likely (since we are virtuous people), you imagine yourself having found a different sort of treasure, such as the cultured pearls your mom wore on her wedding day. Or maybe you've found the first gift your child made for you at school that maybe you'd put in a drawer and hadn't thought about for years.

After finding the treasure, you are pleased with it for a while. You spend a lot of time with it. If it's gold, you keep running your fingers through it because you like the shine. Or, you keep the pearls or the child's gift close to your chest with your fond memories.

Then, after a while, you go back to your regular routine. You have a schedule to keep. You have a job to do – whether volunteer or otherwise. You shuffle your kids or your grandkids around. Maybe your eye finds another treasure that makes you happy, such as a new car or a new living room suite. You don't want to lose the first treasure you found, but you want to get back to your routine. You want to go after other treasures, too.

So, now imagine yourself burying the treasure. Maybe you dig a hole in the ground and place your treasure chest of gold in the hole. Or you put your mom's pearls in a safety deposit box. Or you put the gift your child gave you back into the box at the top corner of the closet where you need a step stool to reach it.

Then you can protect your old treasure while pursuing something else. At least that's what you think.

Now, open your eyes. Keep the visualization in the back of your mind while we focus on today's Scriptures.

The parable and words of warning that Jesus told were aimed primarily at the Pharisees. The Pharisees were supposed to be helping to lead the Israelites in the way God wanted them to go. They were guardians of the treasure of being God's chosen people. But they let other things take their focus away from treating people fairly. They did what helped themselves, going after money and popularity among the wealthy people in society. They put the love of worldly things, especially money, ahead of a relationship with God.

The Israelites had gone that way previously. The Old Testament passage can be interpreted as God speaking and the prophet Jeremiah speaking. They lament how the people have strayed from the treasure of a relationship with God. The people have let self-interest blind them to the needs of others. They've made other things their God instead of the real God.

In both these cases, the people have buried their treasure. They've put their relationship with God on the high shelf where it's unreachable or buried in the sand.

We do the same thing sometimes. We let ourselves become too busy. We are overscheduled. We chase after more when we have enough. We are in too big of a hurry to see the person in need. We are in too big of a hurry to spend time with God.

God loves spending time with us. Being able to spend time with God is a priceless treasure. We start off in the right relationship with God but then let something else attract our attention away from that treasure. We bury our relationship with God.

Now, close your eyes again. You've buried your treasure, and you want to get it back. You look, and you look, but you can't find it.

How do you find it again?

You need a map. You need something that reminds you where you buried it.

Here's the map.

1. Come back to church. Be part of the worshiping community.
2. Pray and read your Bible every day. You can pray the daily office, which is in your prayerbook. Or you can use Forward Day by Day. Or you can pray a psalm every day. Or you can meditate silently in communion with God using Scripture before or after your meditation. Use whichever route works best for you, but do it every day.
3. Decide on one new thing that takes the focus away from yourself and, instead, focuses on others. Do that one thing regularly.
4. To shake the hold of the world's imperfect treasures and focus more on the real treasure, give just half a percent more of your money to God's work through the church.

Now, imagine yourself, map in hand, going directly to that buried treasure. Find that buried treasure and make it the focus of your life again.