

## BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

### 36. THE HIDDEN TREASURE

Bible Base: Matthew 13: 44

Key Christian belief: The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.

Aim: To help children understand that God's love is the greatest treasure of all.

You will need:

- a treasure chest (if possible) hidden from view to begin with
- a label with the word 'everything' written on it tied to the treasure chest

#### Introduction

Have you ever made an exciting discovery? It could be something you had been searching for, or possibly something you weren't expecting to find but as you walked along the street, through the park or on the beach - suddenly; there it was! And you wanted to call everyone over and say 'Come here - look what I've found!'

Often we hear about exciting discoveries that are made - things that have been left in an attic, or lying at the bottom of the sea or buried underground for years. Today we are going to think about a story Jesus told in which a man made an exciting discovery.

#### An Exciting Discovery

*(Act out the story as you tell it.)* As the story starts, the man is out working in a field. We don't know who he was or what he was doing there, but we know it wasn't his field - so perhaps the owner of the field had sent him there to dig out the weeds or to clear the loose stones out of the soil.

Anyhow, as he was digging, suddenly his spade struck something hard. Maybe it was a big stone or a large piece of rock. He tried digging to the left and then to the right but he could not get his spade any further into the soil. Whatever was there was very big. So he began to scrape the soil away from on top of it, in order to see what it was. The more he did so, the more excited he became. It didn't look like an ordinary piece of rock or a stone...it looked like...no...it couldn't be...could it? It looked like an old treasure chest!

So the man kept scraping away the soil and then dug a big hole all around the treasure chest. Finally he was able to reach down and with a heave...and a tug...he was able to lift the treasure chest out of the hole and plonk it down on the ground in front of him. He rubbed his hands together and began to get very excited indeed.

Next he needed his penknife to scrape the soil away from the hinges and the lock. Then he used his screwdriver to unscrew the lock. Finally, with another heave...and a tug...he was able to open the lid. *(Make a creaky noise as you open the lid - towards the children, so they can't see inside.)* It was a very old and very rusty lid!

When the man looked inside, his heart started beating very fast, his eyes opened wide and his mouth fell open. Inside there were diamonds, rubies, pearls, gold...silver...coins... every kind of treasure you could possibly imagine. *(Produce a necklace, a brooch or some coins, for example, from inside the chest to illustrate what it contains.)*

This was a very exciting discovery indeed. Jesus is telling us that there is an exciting discovery that He wants us to make. He wants us to discover how very much God loves

us. Christians believe that the more you get to know about God and His love for us, the more exciting it is. It is even more exciting than all the treasure in the world!

### A High Price

The next thing the man did will surprise you. He closed the lid of the treasure chest, put it back into the ground and covered it up with soil again. Then he went looking for a stone with an unusual shape, one he'd be sure to recognise again, and when he had found one, he put it on top of the spot where the treasure chest was buried.

Next he went to the bank and took out all of his money. It wasn't enough. He went home and gathered together all the money he had there. It still wasn't enough. Next day he loaded everything he had on to a big cart and spent the day at the market selling it all. When he counted up how much he had made, it still wasn't enough, so the day after that he went round to the estate agent and put his house up for sale. A few days later, some folk called to see the house; they agreed to pay him what it was worth and gave him the money. He counted it up and at last he had enough money for what he wanted!

He went to see the owner of the field and asked him if he would be willing to sell the field he had been working in to him. 'That depends on how much money you are willing to pay' said the owner. The man showed him how much money he had collected and the owner smiled. 'That's a lot of money' he said - 'a very fair price indeed.' All right then, if you want it the field is yours!

At this the man ran to the field, looked all round for the stone with the unusual shape and when he had found it he began to dig furiously. Sure enough the treasure chest was still there - with all the treasure still inside it. The man lifted it out of the ground and this time threw his arms around it saying, 'The greatest treasure in the whole world - and now it's mine!'

He had sold everything he had to buy the field and own the treasure but as far as he was concerned it was worth it because now the greatest treasure in the world was his!

### Exploring Christian Belief

In this story, Christians believe Jesus is telling us that the Good News of God's love is like the greatest treasure in the world. Because of what Jesus came to do for us, all the wrong things in our lives can be forgiven and we can know God's love and friendship in our lives now and forever. I think there is nothing more exciting or valuable in the world than this! No amount of money could ever pay for it. Instead, when Jesus gave His life for us it is as if He paid the price so that this treasure could be ours - as His free gift to us.

But still there is a price for us to pay. The Bible says that the treasure of God's love is for those who trust and follow Jesus and Jesus says that if we want to be His followers, we must be ready to give Him everything we have. If we are His friends, our lips, our hands, our minds and our lives are not ours to do what we want with any more - instead they belong to Him and we must be ready to do what He wants with them.

The man in our story was willing to give everything he had in order to own the treasure he had discovered because as far as he was concerned, it was worth it. And many Christians would say the same. Following Jesus - doing what pleases God - is not always easy but it is always worth it because what He gives us is greater and more valuable than anything else in the world!

### Reflection and Prayer

Ask the children to imagine they have to sell everything they own. What would they miss most? What would they be willing to sell it for?

Finish with a prayer thanking God that His love is like the greatest treasure in the world and asking Him to help the children to show how glad they are of His love for them by using their hearts and minds, hands and lips to do what pleases Him.