

Weekly Devotion November 30, 2020
Pastor Matt Woods, Grace Lutheran Church

“The Greatest Find”

I have always been captivated by hidden treasure stories. I love any movie that has to solve the clues to find the treasure. I sincerely enjoy movies like The National Treasure movies where they find the hidden treasure of the Knights Templar for example. The main character played by Nicolas Cage along with his friends solve centuries old riddles and clues left behind by people of history. They overcome booby-traps and uncover secret places until finally they find the treasure.

Currently, I am hooked on a show called the “Curse of Oak Island.” Oak Island, in Nova Scotia, Canada, for 220 years has held secrets buried within it. Speculations have ranged from items from Solomon’s Temple to the original writings of William Shakespeare, to many other things. Supposedly buried deep within the island are secret tunnels that treasure searchers have been looking for over two centuries. Numerous theories mostly surrounding the Knights Templar have been presented. And much has been found that has captured the interest of a team that originated from Traverse City, Michigan.

A couple of Michigan boys lead the search—already off to a good start in my book. Two brothers, Rick and Marty Lagina banded together a team of experts to try and solve the Island’s mysteries. What strikes me is that they are men of science who have expressed a sincere and deep faith, believing something significant happened on this island. I’ve been watching the show since it started eight years ago and I’ve yet to see any sense of religious or especially a Christian faith. But they do express a faith that has called them to go to Oak Island; a faith that considers the theories and stories, and invest millions of dollars each year digging in the ground.

The Oak Island team are very methodical and sometimes frustratingly slow in their efforts to us who are fans. Each season I keep saying to myself, “Find some treasure already!” They have found plenty of evidence to believe historically significant things converged on Oak Island and I am convinced they are right. The most significant perhaps were a Templar Coin embedded with a Templar cross and a Lead Templar cross found on Smith’s Cove on the Island. It is believed that historically this Island was an active place long before the Americas were thought to have been discovered. They have found many items that keep the Laginas coming back with an ever-stronger belief that some kind of important find, a treasure perhaps, is still waiting to be discovered deep underground. How, after all, can there be so many pieces of evidence and then all the stories not be true? Right? Exactly.

Dr. Paul L. Maier a retired professor of Ancient History and chaplain at Western Michigan University-Kalamazoo, MI. has been saying the same thing for his entire career about the accuracy of the Scriptures. He regularly called attention to the accuracy of Locations and finds in Archeology that are consistent with Scripture. I would encourage anyone researching Jesus to consider anything he says on the subject. The evidence is in history, geography, archeology, and more. If a genuine searcher for the truth is to be seriously considered one must consider at least the possibility of Jesus as the Lord and Savior of the World. The Bottom line is simple for us today. We invest in what we believe. Believing in Jesus is an investment in a treasure that really is not so hidden. This treasure has no traps. Jesus has had more impact on history than any other figure, even upon the Knights Templar who in theory hid religious artifacts on Oak Island.

In Acts 17:16 and following Paul is in Athens waiting for his team to catch up to him. He tours Athens which is a hotbed of idolatry, literally an altar on every corner. Beginning with verse 22 Paul makes a case for Jesus. ²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

²⁴ “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else....

²⁹ “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

Paul calls on creation itself as a witness. As Paul Maier has said on numerous visits to our congregation about the historical and Archeological evidence, “The very stones cry out.” Romans 1:20 also says, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”

But Paul’s greatest piece of evidence?... Paul says, “God has given proof to everyone by raising Jesus from the dead.” By the time Paul was done he had convinced a handful of people including Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris. The greatest treasure is not hidden in the ground. The Tomb is empty. Jesus is a living Savior. Those who truly followed Jesus gave everything for Jesus. No one does this if they believe the resurrection was made up or a lie.

How ironic that Oak Island’s greatest theory for any hidden treasure resides in the idea of Knight’s Templars who were an organization of the Christian Church, albeit a very controversial one. Still, these knights were no doubt made up of devout believers in Christ. How ironic that a lead cross, the greatest and most defining Christian symbol in history, found on the Island’s beach would be evidence of something historically significant happening on that island. How ironic that this is the evidence that has led two brothers to have such a deep faith in the island treasure that something happened of great importance. This faith has led to their team spending a fortune on that island as many had done before them. How ironic that these men would rely on a stream of historical witnesses “a great cloud of witnesses” who have been documented that something real is on that Island.

As we begin this Advent season, I just encourage you to remember that your greatest treasure is your faith itself in Jesus. We always see a cross overshadowing the manger. Jesus was born to be our sacrifice for sins. And yes, Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus is historically significant and his church has shaped history for 2000 years. Galatians 4:4 tells us that He came in the fullness of time. But time will run on and run out. He is coming back for His people. His promise is that we who believe will also be resurrected. The two single most challenged facts about Jesus are His incarnation and resurrection. Many have tried to strip Jesus of His divinity but none will succeed. And so, advent begins with anticipation of finding treasure once more in Jesus. I encourage you to place your hope in Jesus once more and by the grace of God boldly Invest in the faith you have in Him.

Announcements: Advent Services Dec 2, 9, 16 Based on Micah 6:8 “To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Christmas Services will be in person and broadcast 5PM 11PM Christmas Eve/Christmas Day 10AM. Gifts for Kids
And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with His favor and give you His peace in Jesus. Amen.

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John 3:30