

Echoes of Grace

UNTOLD TREASURE BY THE DOOR



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UNTOLD TREASURE BY THE DOOR

For years, Little Meadow Creek played the same soothing sounds. Chattering over the rocks and then under the bridge, it disappeared into the woods. Many times, many folk strolled past here going into town.

Young Conrad Reed usually sauntered by, greeting the creek as an old friend. But this day he stopped and looked into the water. Dad needed a doorstep and he would take home a heavy rock.

He saw one. It was just the right size to hold his weathered door ajar



on the hot August afternoons in North Carolina. It did seem heavy for its size.

Three years later, the boy's father, farmer John, took the rock to a jeweller who promptly paid less than a week's wages for it—less than four dollars in 1803. The doorstep was actually a 17-pound gold nugget and was sold again for 1000 times more. Of course, discoveries and excitement grew, and by 1832, more than 50 mines were operating in the state, employing 25,000 people.

Yet, the biggest lump of gold ever found east of the Rocky Mountains had sat unrecognized and undervalued for three years at farmer John's door. But in all those years its real value never changed. While the gentle creek quietly washed its rough but priceless features or while it sat daily by the door, its real and intrinsic worth was the same. It was merely unrecognized.

Could it be that the waters of time have slipped through your fingers and that you have missed the great treasure of God's salvation that's still within reach?

Years ago the Lord Jesus asked His disciples, **“Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?”** (Matthew 16:13). They answered, **“Some say that Thou art John the Baptist”** (Matthew 16:14).

But Jesus asked again, **“But whom say ye that I am?”** (Matthew 16:15). They quickly answered,

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). They knew “Treasure” when they saw it!

Today some see Him as a Galilean peasant, merely a carpenter. Some see a wise and good prophet and stop to hear a few words. Some see a good man and get nothing more from Him than the example of His life.

What is He worth to you? His real and intrinsic value has never changed. Many people, living in many other centuries, have appreciated Him. His words have stirred many minds and changed



lives. Sick people confined to bed, young people confined to jail, retirees passing the time on a golf course, businessmen pursuing one more dollar—all these have had encounters with the living Son of God. He has brought the joy of forgiveness and the comfort of the peace of God into the center of their changed lives.

Jesus spoke about **“true riches”** and told of God’s love for the unlovable, of God’s forgiveness that was offered to the contrite soul. Give His story a read. He has sat at your door unvalued for too long.

And please notice, you won’t have to change your life. As you already know, you can’t! Thankfully, that’s His part—He does that. You just have to value Him, receive Him. Then He brings you into His family.

The Bible says, **“To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God”** (John 1:12).

You’ll find out about Walter’s *Wasted Secret Stash* in the next story. You may find you have a hidden secret of your own. ◀

WASTED

SECRET STASH

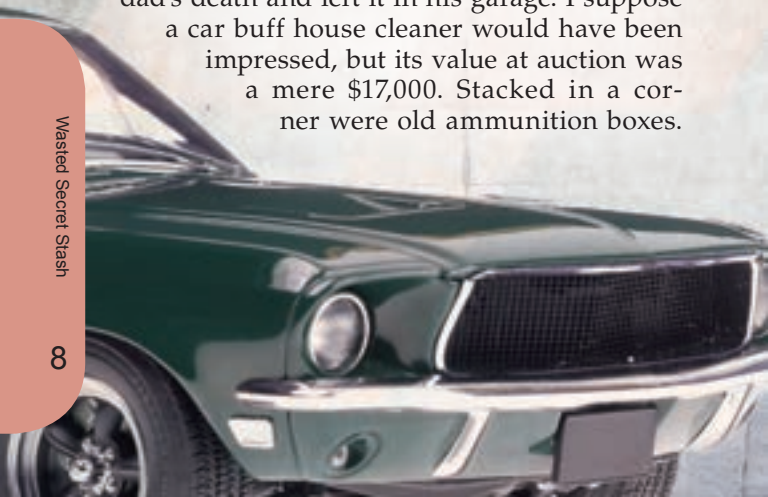
The brown patches on the lawn spread slowly until they began to engulf the unpretentious 1,200-square-foot ranch home in a quiet neighborhood in Carson City, Nevada. Apparently no one cared for the house anymore, no one really knew the owner, and now some were reporting a stench coming from the house. Authorities called in to do a “well check” and found Walter Samaszko Jr. dead.

The county coroner said he’d died with heart problems about a month before but no one had noticed, no one called, no one knew and no one cared. Walter was 69, unmarried, no siblings, his father had died suddenly in an industrial accident 45 years before and his mother had been gone for 20 years. His mailman hadn’t seen him, the neighbors never got into conversations with him and rarely made sightings. He left no will. County officials were going to have a really hard time finding a living relative—one who was in for a huge shock. When Carson County finally

contacted her, she ended up, in the words of one official, “so frazzled and so harassed.”

Cleaning crews came to work the home over and get it ready to go up for sale. Nothing spectacular there. The carpeting was vintage 70s orange shag, more landfill than landmark quality. The green tile wasn't going to make the cover of *Good Housekeeping*, especially since the whole thing wasn't dusted or vacuumed. The guts of electronic gadgets had been spilled out and picked over but never quite put back together. Maybe that was Walter's other hobby. He had a second hobby squirreled away in the garage.

Cleaning crews got out to the garage eventually. There sat a fine 1968 Ford Mustang—undriven. Walter bought it the year before his dad's death and left it in his garage. I suppose a car buff house cleaner would have been impressed, but its value at auction was a mere \$17,000. Stacked in a corner were old ammunition boxes.



These great big ten-cubic-foot metal boxes were labeled “books.”

In *Untold Treasure by the Door* you read about John’s unrecognized 17-pound gold nugget door stop. But Walter knew exactly what he kept in his supposed “book” boxes. He had exquisite records showing where each of the items had come from. He had more than what was in the garage, too, hidden away in the crawl space and in a decrepit washing machine.

In God’s Word, the Bible, there’s a parable about a man that most people would think of as much smarter than Walter Samaszko Jr. You’ll see what I mean in a minute, but first the parable from the Bible. **“The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”** (Luke 12:16-21). This wealthy

farmer planned ahead for his retirement. He struck it rich and planned to live it up. He'd carefully store his windfall and then have a wonderful time partying without the pressure of his business. His problem? He left God out of his praise and his plans. He gave himself the credit for his success and lived without concern for others or, more importantly, for God. God doesn't condemn wealth, but He wants us to remember that it comes from Him. He wants us to know it only has value for a limited time because death is the beginning of eternity and not the end of existence. He wants us to discover that all true gifts are from Him—both for this life and beyond.

Inside Walter Samaszko's boxes was a twist worthy of Charles Dickens himself—gold coins, thousands of them. There were 2,900 from Austria, thousands more from Mexico, old U.S. gold pieces dating to the 1800s, gold bullion and silver coins. There were even rolls of gold coins stuck between silverware settings. Alan Glover, in charge of the case, had to go to a neighbor and borrow a wheelbarrow to start hauling out all the gold. Between all the gold bullion and rare coins sold at two different auctions, there was about \$7,000,000 of gold and silver stashed in the modest little home. What did Walter do with it? Who knows, but he sure didn't spend it. He withdrew about \$500 from his bank account

every month, he paid his bills and that's about all we know.

The gold didn't appear to have done Walter or anyone else any good. Working from a 45-year-old funeral program, investigators located one surviving relative, Arlene Magdanz. She was working in California as a substitute teacher. Besieged by the media, frazzled by all the attention, she left her apartment and went into hiding. After the government takes their estate taxes, she will receive about \$6,000,000. Hopefully Arlene will put the bonanza to good use.

In reality, you have been offered a far greater treasure. In the Bible it says that you **“were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ”** (1 Peter 1:18-19). Unlike the fool who focused in on treasure and pleasure, you, right now, have the opportunity to learn more about Christ and the precious blood He shed so that sinners like you and me could be saved. Redeemed means to be bought back and set free. At least once in our lives you and I have been dishonest, ungrateful, angry or self-centered. All of these are considered sin that God won't permit in His home in heaven.

God's Word clearly states that **"the wages of sin is death"** (Romans 6:23). That means to be separated forever from God and all that is good.

But unlike Walter who hoarded his secret treasures in old ammo boxes, God gave what was most precious to Him so that your sins could be properly paid for. Jesus Christ came and suffered a cruel death on a cross. While on that cross He was punished by God for sin. God tells us why He did it: **"He hath made [Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"** (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Arlene Magdanz was shocked and harassed by all the attention surrounding her vast inheritance. I suppose she might have refused it, but that's pretty doubtful. God quietly, without fanfare, right this minute is offering you an unimaginably huge, untaxable gift. He says **"the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"** (Romans 6:23). Will you turn it down? Do you foolishly think all you need is to be a "good person" in this life and everything will take care of itself for the future? Do you live, as Walter seemed to, as though there is no future? God clearly says, **"Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"** (2 Corinthians 6:2). Will God's gift, far more precious than gold, do you any good?

Find out about another of God's wonderful gifts in *The Unappreciated Treasure*. ◀

THE UNAPPRECIATED *Treasure*

Around it went again, from hand to hand. Each person took what food they wanted. The pink porcelain plate migrated around the table at the Carlisle's home week after week for who-knows-how-many times.

The plate was strikingly pretty, with a central medallion of flowers and decorated with other blossoms. Thankfully nobody ever dropped it as it circled the table. The plate is worth millions!

Of course, the Carlisles would never have revealed that secret. Not because they were modest, but because they had no clue what it was worth.

You see, it was a hand-me-down that Grandma brought back from China on one of her trips. Although the secret "treasure" passed under the noses of children and grandchildren for a century, nobody suspected its value until an art expert saw it and had it appraised.

Surprise! Your fourteenth century Ming dynasty plate is worth maybe \$2,000,000 ... maybe

more. At the auction, in 2004, the British art dealer handed over \$6,000,000 for it. The plate doesn't get passed around the table anymore.

It is interesting to find a story like this about a treasure that simply sat under the undiscerning eyes of unsuspecting people. It does happen.

A similar story could be told about the Bible. It is that unappreciated kind of treasure. Somebody has said, "It gives help for the soul, harmony for the life, happiness for the heart and hope for the future." Could you put a price on those treasures? **"How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!"** (Proverbs 16:16).

And maybe that holy Book is sitting unopened not far from you under papers and junk. Dust it off; give it a read. Start in the Gospel of Mark.



That part was written for beginners. It will acquaint you with the coming of Jesus Christ and His wonderful actions. Enjoy.

It is a treasury — of stories, truth and reassurance.

It is indestructible — it has withstood the calculated assaults of cynics.

It is truthful — it comes from a God who cannot lie.

It is living — read Mark 1; see what I mean.

Don't understand it? Read it again, just as you would an exam question or a recipe. And really, you don't have to understand everything to get the drift. You can get that easily enough without all the details. If you don't understand it, pray that God will help you to understand. It is His book, and He Himself can help you get out of it the most wonderful treasure you will ever have.

Let its words challenge your prejudices, opinions and superstitions. Through it you can get to know the *Author* who gave us this treasure that has been, for too long, resting “just under your nose.”

He says, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me”** (John 14:6). ◀

ECHOES OF GRACE

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*“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).*

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