

## Buried Treasure



We now enter the business-end of summer. The year starts to feel properly underway, and the telling a re-telling of Christmas and New Year stories – of where we went, what we did and who we shared our time with, is coming to an end. The time of ‘catching-up’ seems nearly over.

For some it will be a relief that the season has passed and with it the inevitable questions: “So how did you spend Christmas?” “Did you go away?” “Just the main days, eh?” “Ah well, it’s pretty quite over January anyway”

As mundane as these conversations can become, the stories we tell about our holidays matter. Whether they are over the Christmas period or some other time of the year, how we choose to spend our free time matters. And it matters because it says a great deal about what matters to us. The stories give clues to where we find our treasure.

We live in a culture of unprecedented choice. From the house we live in, to the car we drive, to the milk we pour over the breakfast cereal we eat, at every step there is a choice to be made. But whether we feel inspired or overwhelmed by this, consumerist culture has something very important to offer us. It shows us what treasure is not. Consumerist culture seeks to derail our intuitive sense of treasure, and put in its place commodified versions of power, physical attractiveness and self-sufficiency.

Of course this is not something unique to the consumerist world. This year I’ve begun working one day a week in the remand prison in Deer Park. In a place where nearly one thousand men are awaiting trial and sentencing, fools gold abounds. So whether we look at the corporate world, or the construction industry; whether we are talking about grass-roots environmental movements or conservative right-wing lobby groups, false treasure is to be found everywhere. As much as these seek our attention, we know that real treasure cannot be bought or sold or traded for gain. It cannot be checked against a commodity price index, it is not affected by inflation, depreciation, aging or even death.

The problem of distinguishing brass from gold is not a new one. In the wisdom teachings of Jesus is found a story of treasure buried in a field. In a barren empty place treasure is found. It’s an important story. It reminds us that treasure is often buried, unseen, hidden in sometimes dark, silent and even dangerous places. In this world some of us will find our treasure early on, some on their death bed and some not in this life at all. But none of us will find it without some digging.

Happy digging in 2015!