

REVOLUTIONARY STORIES OF JESUS

The Parables of the Treasure and the Pearl

Bottom Line: The Kingdom of Heaven is more valuable and precious than anything we have to give up to obtain it.

What is something that you saved up a long time to purchase? What all did you do to try and earn the money for it? How did the process of saving up for it affect your appreciation for it?

When you work hard for something, you appreciate it more. This applies to anything that requires an effort to attain: paying off debt, getting in shape, becoming proficient at a craft or instrument, etc. For all of these things, the value of them is inherent in themselves, you don't have to try hard to convince people of the value of financial security, health, or artistic expertise. But when you sacrifice time, energy, and resources to attain them, you better understand their value and you realize that the sacrifice you made was completely worth it. The same idea is true when applied to the Kingdom of Heaven. This is what Jesus emphasizes in the parables of the treasure and the pearl. These parables are meant to convey the immense worth of the Kingdom of Heaven compared to everything else. In the most simple sense, the Kingdom of Heaven is simply God's reign and influence on the Earth through His people. In essence, when you "find" or "enter into" the Kingdom of Heaven, you find or enter into salvation.

Read Matthew 13:44-46.

In the parable of the treasure, Jesus implies that it's possible for the Kingdom to be found by those who are not overtly looking for it. This is something that God explicitly predicted would happen in Isaiah 65:1, saying "I revealed Myself to those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me." This is probably the experience of most of us as very few people actually go "looking" for God (Romans 3:11). Hardly any of us arrive at a saving knowledge of Jesus after first comparing all other religious options, weighing the evidence, and finding the claims of Christianity to be most compelling or rational. Most of the time we are caught off-guard by the grace of God. Maybe it's a song we hear on the radio or an unexpected conversation with a friend that leads us to experience, understand, and accept Christ. Many people's testimonies are much like the man who stumbled across a treasure lying in the place he least expected it to be.

For those of you who weren't looking for Jesus, how did you come to "find" the Kingdom? Was it where you expected it to be? What hope does this give us in regards to our lost friends, family members, and loved ones?

If the Kingdom of Heaven truly is "hidden" like the treasure in the field (see 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 4:3) what is the appropriate way to react to our knowledge of the Kingdom? What is an inappropriate way to react?

In the parable of the pearl, the merchant is well-versed in his industry. He knows what makes a good pearl and has probably dealt with many fine pearls in his life. But although he is an expert in pearls, this single find so far surpasses any other pearl that he has ever seen that he

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considers it a *bargain* to sell off all of his possessions to acquire it. In other words, after years of searching for the Kingdom, the man has finally found it. This situation most closely resembles somebody who has spent most of their life in church, performing religious duties, and being a good person. They relied on their knowledge of the Bible and doctrine (the “Christian industry”) to justify themselves as an expert Christian. But when they truly encounter Jesus, they see that everything they had considered valuable before is actually worthless and they freely give it up for the sake of genuinely knowing Christ (see Philippians 3:3-11).

Did any of you find Jesus in this way? Is it possible that this could be you right now? What does the Kingdom of Heaven provide for us that is so much more valuable than anything that can be offered by the world?

The characters in the two parables both found the kingdom in different ways, but both experiences shared something in common: they *joyfully* and *willingly* gave up everything they had in order to obtain the treasure. They didn’t count what they gave up as a *loss* but a *bargain*. They enthusiastically gave up everything they had to receive their treasure.

Think back to when you were saved. What was it about Jesus that convinced you to give your life to Him? We live in a time when our perspective is easily dulled by the things around us. What kinds of things stand in the way of our ability to see the true value of the Kingdom of Heaven?

According to Jesus, the Kingdom of Heaven has all-surpassing value, but that value doesn’t come without cost. There is no way that we can come to Jesus without making a sacrifice. We must lay down our lives if we want to truly follow Him. But the good news about losing your life for the sake of Jesus and His kingdom is that your experience doesn’t stop there. When we lose our lives, we truly find them (Matthew 16:25). Whatever we might sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom we will find, in the end, is nothing in comparison to what we gain.

Why does finding and embracing the Kingdom of Heaven always involve a measure of sacrifice? What kinds of things do we have to sacrifice, or give up, if we are to gain the Kingdom? What sacrifices have you made for the sake of gaining Christ?

Reflection

Jesus said to seek first His kingdom (Matthew 6:33). Is this true of you right now? What are some of the things, that might not necessarily be bad things, which you might be seeking instead of His kingdom?

Is there any practice you can introduce or eliminate from your life this week that would help you see the true value of the Kingdom of Heaven? How can you hold the kingdom in its rightful place of value in your family? In your social circle?

Have you grown dull in your affections for Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven? What can you do to “return to the love you had at first?” (Revelation 2:4).

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