

COST OF THE KINGDOM
Matthew 13:44-46

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Richard Jordan had everything in life he ever wanted: cars, a new house, and a fiancée. Then, without warning, his fiancée said, “Farewell. So long. I’m out of here.” What did Richard Jordan do? To console his soul, he sold everything – sold his cars, sold his house. It took months to divest himself of all his possessions, but eventually he had \$75,000. Richard Jordan traded in everything to make a down payment on a Lamborghini Gallardo. Traded it all in – possessions, house, various vehicles – traded it all for one very expensive car, an Italian sports car. Retail: \$180,000.

And he just started driving. He didn’t really have anywhere to go, so he just went. One hundred thousand miles. Across America and back numerous times. Wandered from place to place, living in motels here and hotels there. Making new friends and even an enemy or two.

Oh yeah, the Lamborghini will go from 0-to-60 in just four seconds and has a top speed of 195 mph. During Jordan’s journey, he was able to collect 53 speeding tickets, and was eventually handcuffed by an Indiana State Trooper, who thought he was a drug runner.

Oh, you want to know the end of the story? All that hard driving and long miles caused the timing chain to stretch, crunching the valves and turning the car into a modern art sculpture that he just shows to his friends. In other words, an expensive paperweight – a Lamborghini paperweight. (<http://jalopnik.com>)

What would cause you to sell everything that you have? What one thing would you trade everything else to possess, to have, to hold?

Interestingly enough, Jesus himself tells a couple of stories kind of like Jordan’s journey – stories about two men who both sell everything to get one thing: the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price.

Look at Matthew 13:44

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.

I guess all of us, as children, dream of buying a metal detector, combing the beach or the countryside, and making a million. When I was just a child on the Carolina coast, my uncle bought such a metal detector. He told me I could borrow it. He showed me how to use it. I took a little shovel in my hand, went down to the beach, and walked seemingly forever as I listened to the buzz and the beeps of the get rich gadget. Much to my dismay, however, every time I responded to the

buzzing and beeping of the metal detector, I would reach down in the sand and dig with great anticipation only to discover that I had unearthed a bottle cap. My riches were nothing but bottle caps and beer cans – abandoned on the beach by a litterbug.

Oh, treasure hunting promises to be exciting. But be sure of your trove before you spend your time and money looking for something that is not all that it seems.

But there is treasure to be found.

Jeanne Horn, in the book entitled *You Can Find a Fortune: A Finder's Guide to Some of the World's Missing Treasures*, writes:

“Gold and silver treasure is literally all around you – buried pirate loot, lost mines, buried war loot, and sunken ships. You may have to travel a few miles to your location, but, with luck, a proper background of research, and the proper equipment, you could become a millionaire!”

Here in verse 44, the farmer stumbles over just such a treasure.

He was plowing in the field. The sun was very hot. His only goal was to make it through the day. If he could hold on, the day would end. He would receive his denarius – his day's wage – and then depart.

But all of a sudden, he felt a jolt in the plow. The animals were knocked out of their rhythmic plowing pace, and he yelled “Whoa!” Stopping, he bent down to remove another stone when he realized that he had struck a pot, a clay container. Then, upon opening the earthen vessel, he discovered that it was full of gold.

No one had seen him, so he quickly hid the pot under the earth and, with his heart racing, he went home.

That sort of thing does happen, you know. **On April 3, 1942, children found \$85,939 (in today's dollars). Four youngsters in Florence, Alabama, uncovered a pot containing gold coins. Lynn Scandlin, a taxi-driver, reported the discovery made by his two sons and two other children. The gold was probably hidden by local planters during the Civil War under the threat of Sherman's southern campaign. In the end, it became a dispute between representatives of the children and a person who claimed he owned the property where the find was made.**

But that's not the dispute in this parable. By ancient laws that governed the day, there was no question. The workman was not under any obligation to report his findings to any government official and not even to the land owner. In fact, he was completely within his rights to keep his find, his secret.

He was so sure of this treasure – so sure that he was willing to assume great risk in order to obtain it.

With no banks existing in the first century, this parable is very plausible – for one had to bury his valuables. And even today, archeologists still uncover such pots.

The laborer was not looking for treasure, but he found great treasure. And he appraised its value as being worth all that he owned. Covering the clay pot, he quickly sold all that he had and purchased the land in order to possess the treasure.

I ask you this morning: To what are you giving your all? What is the value of the thing that you are seeking ultimately to possess?

Before you devote your entire life – your time, your energy, your very self – be sure of your treasure.

True treasure is the kingdom of God, a relationship with Christ. Some of you here did not come to church seeking the treasure any more than the field hand was plowing for pots of gold. Today, your life is being interrupted by the understanding of the gospel, the story of Jesus – as the woman at the well was only seeking water when she had an encounter with the Living Water, the Christ. Or, when Paul was on the road to Damascus to persecute the church and was surprised by an encounter with God. You, too, are surprised today by an encounter with God. And as the farmer struck the earthen vessel full of treasure, you have found the story of Jesus.

After you're sure of your treasure, you'd better count the cost. Notice how much the treasure cost. The farmer sold all that he had. It cost him everything.

So it is with God's kingdom. If you decide to be a follower of Christ, realize the cost. Christ will want your time, your resources, your talents, your all to be devoted to His kingdom.

But as you read the story, you realize the farmer does not give his all begrudgingly. Rather, he gives his all with delight. The treasure that he has found is giving him so much joy that he gladly risks all to keep it.

So it is with God's kingdom. The joy that it brings (v. 44) is so wonderful that one is willing to risk all in order to obtain it.

We must give our everything for the kingdom, not just our pocket change.

I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please.

Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine.

I don't want enough of him to [really make any changes in my life].

I want ecstasy, not transformation.

I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth.

I want to buy \$3 worth of God, please.

How much of God do you want?

(Wilbur Reese)

Jim Denison, former pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, tells of his summer missionary experience as a college student. During one of their worship services in East Malaysia, a teenage girl shared her faith in the small warehouse that was used for a church. She was baptized that day in their baptistry, which was a bathtub, and glowed with the love of Christ. While all of this was going on, Denison noticed some worn-out luggage leaning against the wall. He asked a church member for an explanation of the suitcase. He pointed to the girl who had been baptized and said, “Her father said that if she was baptized as a Christian, she could never go home again. So she brought her luggage.” What a challenge for greater commitment. (*The Book of Acts, BaptistWay Bible Study for Texas, 2000*)

Christ calls no part-time disciples. He wants your all.

If the farmer was not seeking the kingdom, but accidentally fell into it, the next parable He tells is of one who was actively seeking the kingdom – the story of a pearl trader.

Look at Matthew 13:45-46

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

This gentleman was a merchant in the goods of kind. He knew a treasure when he saw it. Not a shop keeper, but a dealer on a grand scale. One who traveled to the pearl fisheries of the Persian Gulf or India in search of pearls of great price. What he bought in the East he could sell easily in the West for vast sums.

Pearls of grand scale were not unheard of. Pliny, an ancient historian, says that Cleopatra had two pearls worth the equivalent of \$4 million. Julius Caesar presented the mother of Brutus with a pearl valued at \$350,000.

Can you imagine the setting of this parable as Jesus tells the story in the Middle East?

The pearl merchant contacts a sheik of the pearl trade and goes into his tent. After the sheik is sure of his visitor, the visitor is invited into a smaller, inner room. The owner unfolds a soft sack and gently works the pearl out of the protective sack with his fingers. “Wow!” thinks the merchant to himself. He tries not to show his hand, but he swallows so loudly that he is sure he has given away his delight and dazzlement to the owner.

Let’s put the parable in modern terms. Let’s tell it like it’s when and where we live.

He asks the sheik what it might cost him to own the pearl. “All that you have, and the price is firm.”

“Well,” says the merchant, “what I have is five smaller pearls. They are surely not the size of your great pearl, but they are fine jewels in their own right.”

“Okay,” says the sheik. “Where are your five pearls? That will be the price if that’s all that you have.”

“Well,” says the merchant, “I’ll have to go to my car in order to retrieve my five fine pearls.”

“Oh,” says the sheik. “You didn’t say anything about a car. I told you the pearl of great price will cost you all that you have. It will cost you your five fine pearls, but it will also cost you your car as well.”

The pearl merchant didn’t like the price going up, but, after all, he had agreed to pay all that he had and the pearl was worth far more than his five fine pearls and his car together. So he agreed and said, “Okay. I’ll go to the car and get the pearls and give you the keys to the car. I guess my friends will”

“Friends?” said the sheik. “You didn’t say anything about having any friends. The pearl of great price will cost you everything. It will cost you your five fine pearls. It will cost you your car. And it will cost you all of your friendships as well.”

Well, the merchant did treasure his friendships, but the pearl of such magnificent value he thought he could pay the price. So he retorted (not having yet learned his lesson), “If I don’t have friends, I don’t know how I’ll ever get home.”

“Home? Home?” said the sheik. “You didn’t say anything about having a home. It will take your five fine pearls. It will take your car and your friends. It will take your home as well.”

You see the point in Jesus’ story. If you want to be a follower of Christ, to be a part of His kingdom, you must be willing to give Him your all.

You understand the points of the parable. Following Christ, the kingdom of God, is the ultimate call that will demand your absolute all.

For the farmer in the field, for the merchant of pearls – there was a decision to be made. And made urgently. **As N. T. Wright has said, “The gospel of the kingdom isn’t a pleasant religious idea that you might like to explore some time when you’ve got an hour or two to spare. It isn’t like an attractive object at a museum that you might visit and look at admiringly the next time you’re in the district. No, it’s like a fabulous hoard of treasure. It’s yours for the taking if you’ll sell everything else to buy the field where it’s hidden. It’s the biggest, finest, purest pearl that any jeweler ever imagined, and it’s yours for the taking if you’ll sell everything else, including all of the other pearls you’ve ever owned, to purchase it.”**

That’s the shock. That’s the new thing. That’s striking the pot in the field. That’s discovering the pearl in the marketplace.

So what about you today? Are you ready to be fully committed to the kingdom?

Maybe you’re here today and today, hearing these words, you have struck the pot. Maybe you’re like the merchant today, and you’ve discovered the pearl. Or maybe you’re still counting the cost. Don’t tarry – the opportunity is now.

You only have one life. And the only things that are important come down to three:

1. Have you devoted yourself to God? Is He your passion?
2. Have you gathered to worship and serve with His people, His church?
3. Have you loved and cared for your family?

There is only one pearl of great price, there is only one treasure in the field. It's the kingdom of God, the Lordship of Jesus. Give up everything else to get it.

And do it now!