

How Much is Jesus Worth to You?

Matthew 13:24-52

July 24, 2011

Jesus continued to speak in parables:

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 'An enemy did this,' he replied. The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'"

"No," he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First, collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"
Matthew 13:24-30 (NIV)

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."
Matthew 13:31-35 (NIV)

Then Jesus left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.."

Jesus answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons (and daughters) of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons (and daughters) of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

"As the weeds are pulled and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.
Matthew 13:36-43 (NIV)

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

Matthew 13:44-52 (NIV)

When the disciples asked Jesus why he spoke in parables, he replied, *“The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him”* (Matt.13:11-12)

“The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.” Jesus not only spoke in parables, but he also seemed to speak in extremes and polar or direct opposites. He often seemed to speak as if there were only two sides. *“The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you but not to them.” “Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.”* Well, if you don’t have something, how can it be taken from you? Jesus often seemed to speak for effect. He didn’t always make sense to those he was speaking to. He had to explain over and over again to his disciples. Often they still didn’t get it. Which makes me wonder, do we really get it?

Why did Jesus speak in parables and stories? Why didn’t he just tell people straight up? Like, *“The kingdom of heaven is a secret which is only revealed to my disciples,”* or *“the kingdom of heaven is always in jeopardy because the Devil opposes those who would believe,”* or instead of the parable of the wheat and the weeds why didn’t Jesus just say that often in this life it is hard to tell the difference between those people who will ultimately be saved and those who will not. *“It’s not for us to try and figure out whose who, but to leave the judging to God, that which will come at the end of time. Those that are saved will spend eternity in a new heaven and a new earth which will be glorious and forevermore, and those that are not will spend eternity in hell.”* Of course at times he did tell people up front, but often he spoke in parables.

Most of Jesus’ parables are in reference to the kingdom. *“The kingdom of heaven is like . . .”* *“The kingdom of God is like . . .”* At the beginning of Matthew’s gospel we are reminded that John the Baptist’s primary message was a message of repentance (3:2), *“for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* When Jesus announced his own ministry (4:17), he too called for repentance, for *“the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* And then when Jesus sent out the disciples on their first mission (10:7) he told them to preach saying, *“the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* The kingdom

of heaven is clearly at the heart of what Matthew's understanding of what Jesus' mission was all about, as well as for all of his followers. Jesus' parables of the kingdom invite our participation into the kingdom.

Jesus spoke often in polar opposites because that is how he saw it. There is the kingdom of heaven ruled by God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and there is the kingdom of this world ruled by the Devil. The kingdom of heaven is met with great resistance by the forces of evil. Somewhere along the way we have lost that sense that we are in a battle. The apostle Paul said:

“For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”
Ephesians 6:12 (NIV)

Jesus spoke often in parables. He spoke many to the crowds. Some understood, some did not. Apparently his disciples understood some, but others needed to be explained, like *The Parable of the Sower* and *The Parable of the Weeds*. Some of the parables he apparently spoke only to his disciples. *The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl* as well as *The Parable of the Net* might have been shared only with his disciples. They come on the heels of Jesus explaining to them *The Parable of the Weeds*. But all the parables were meant to be taken together, to give a picture of what life in the kingdom is supposed to be like. That is, life in the kingdom of God:

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”
Matthew 13:44 (NIV)

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”
Matthew 13:45 (NIV)

In Jesus' day it was not that unusual for people to actually hide their treasures in a field. There were no banks. You wouldn't want to hide valuables in your house, so they would actually bury them in fields. Many did not own their own fields so they would bury them in fields owned by another. Occasionally someone would die without telling others where they buried the treasure and somebody else would stumble upon it. Imagine the elation of the one who found it. But what do you do if you don't own the field that the treasure is found in? *The Parable of the Hidden Treasure* represents someone who is not seeking but stumbles upon something of tremendous worth. It is in contrast to *The Parable of the Pearl*.

The Parable of the Pearl represent someone who was already seeking. Already searching for fine pearls, but when he comes upon one of great value, “he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. Again, the person recognizes the tremendous worth of that which was found and is willing to give up everything to have it.

What is the treasure hidden in a field and the pearl of great value? It is none other than Jesus himself. Some people find him by chance, even when they are not seeking, and others find him when they are seeking. Searching for the truth.

How do we know when you have really found the treasure or that the kingdom is within you? Because Jesus said that ultimately the kingdom is not something out there, but it is something within us (Luke 17:20-21). The treasure is always available, no matter what our circumstances or where we find ourselves. Unfortunately we spend a lot of our lives looking out there, never really finding it.

We know that we have found the treasure and that the kingdom of heaven is within us when nothing else here really matters. That it pales in comparison. That we're at least willing to sell everything. That we're willing to count the cost. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his own son, Isaac, for the sake of the kingdom.

Jesus began to teach in parables as the crowds were beginning to separate from the disciples. It tells us in Luke's gospel that large crowds were traveling with Jesus and turning to them Jesus said,

"if anyone comes to me and does not [put me over, or above] hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he (or she) cannot be my disciple. . ." Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it . . . *"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."*

Luke 14:25-33 (NIV)

The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the church at Philippi:

"whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. . . I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

Philippians 3:7-8a (NIV)

Jesus said in his *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5-7) which is all about what the kingdom of God is supposed to look like:

"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Matthew 6:33 (NIV)

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV)

The Hidden Treasure and the Great Pearl came at a cost. First and foremost it came at the cost of Jesus' life on the cross. Second, it comes as a cost to us. The fact that Jesus paid the price for our sin does not exclude the necessity of sacrifice on our part. We can pay nothing to God, but we can renounce sin and self and idolizing and trusting in all things but God.

The Bible has a rather unique definition for the word in which we in English interpret as perfect. Like, "be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect." If perfection is our goal, then we have all set ourselves up to be failures. But the Hebrew word, which is then carried over to the Greek, in which we use the word "perfect," also means to be singularly eyed, focused, and sincere. As when Abram was ninety-nine years old and the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless/perfect" (Gen. 17:1).

Up until that point Abram (who would become Abraham) was anything but perfect. He was capable of repeated shabby deceptions, which endangered his wife's reputation. He was by nature a man of little courage, all together too anxious about his own personal safety. He was also vulnerable to pressure, at his wife's insistence he fathered a child with her maid, Hagar, which would have repercussions to this day. Abraham was not by nature a man of strong principle and his sense of responsibility was somewhat deficient. But God in his infinite wisdom dealt with this unheroic figure in such a way that he would become the Father of our faith. The Father of all nations. He became a new man. How? What Abram needed most was to learn how to become singularly focused and to look to God for everything. He remembered the words which came to him in a vision earlier, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward" (Gen. 15:1).

Jesus is our shield, our very great reward. The more we become singularly focused on Him, the more the kingdom of heaven is revealed to us and through us.