

“WHAT’S OUR MOST VALUABLE TREASURE?”
2 Chronicles 1:7-12, 2 Corinthians 4:7-15, Matthew 13:44-50
February 26 & 27, 2022

“A man came to his Rabbi and said, ‘Since my marriage of 10 years has produced no children, I ask that you grant me a letter of divorce from my wife.’

“The wise rabbi, knowing his friend to be an impulsive man, urged him to go home and make a sort of feast in commemoration of the coming event. ‘I see no reason,’ the Rabbi said, ‘why a divorce should not be celebrated in some way, similar to marriage.’

“The man, who was willing to do almost anything to stay in the Rabbi’s good graces, went home and gave a banquet. As he ate and drank his spirits soared. ‘Wife,’ he said, ‘I am prepared to let you take the most valuable thing in the house with you as a sign of my good faith. I wish you long years and happiness.’

“After the guests went home, the man, tired from drinking and celebrating, fell into a deep sleep. The woman quickly ordered her servants to carry him to her father’s house. When he awoke the next morning, finding himself in a strange house, he demanded an explanation.

“I am only acting upon your word,’ the wife said softly. ‘Last evening you offered me the most precious thing in the house. You, dear husband, are of far more value than any item of furniture.’

“The man was deeply touched by his wife’s affection. The next day he again approached his rabbi. ‘My wife and I have come to ask your prayers on our behalf, so that the Lord will grant us heirs.’

“The Rabbi assured the man that he had already begun to pray for the two of them. Nine months later the woman gave birth to their first child.”¹

Have you ever considered what your most valuable treasure is? Is it a family heirloom that has been passed down from one generation to another and ended up in your care? Could it be the pictures of your wedding, or the growth of your children? Could it be the fancy sports car in your garage, or the house of your dreams? Could it be the hunting trophies that you have acquired or the

¹ (William R. White, *Stories for the Journey*, [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing Company, 1988] pg. 38-39)

athletic trophies that you earned over your life? It might be your position at work, or maybe even that cabin in the woods or the condo in the south. There are so many things that people put as being the most valuable treasure of their life.

When we look at our Old Testament lesson of 2 Chronicles 1, we see an interesting account of King Solomon being invited by God to “*ask for whatever you want Me to give you*” (1:7). God was testing his heart as to what was the most valuable thing that Solomon considered to himself.

An open slate of what could have been requested must have gone through Solomon’s mind, and of all the things he could have asked for, **Solomon asked for wisdom**. He says, “*You have shown great kindness to David my father and have made me king in his place. Now, Lord God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for You have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of Yours*” (2 Chronicles 1:8-10)?

Of all the things that he could have asked for, Solomon asked for wisdom in order to lead the people of Israel in a way that would bring honor and glory to the Lord God. And because he asked for wisdom, God delighted in giving Solomon wisdom and knowledge AS WELL AS the things that he didn’t ask for: wealth, riches, honor *such that no king before or after has seen*” (1:12). **Solomon made wisdom his most valued treasure and God blessed him in that decision.**

In this account we see that it’s an important thing to consider what your greatest treasure is, because it has been said, “*where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” (Jesus, Matthew 6:21). That which we determine to be our treasure will gain out attention and that will be the focus of our life’s endeavors. We pursue what our heart determines to be the most important thing for us, and that drives our life based upon that determination.

If we treasure material possessions, that will be our life’s endeavor. If we treasure pleasures and entertainment, that’s where our heart will lead us. If we desire success and fame, that will be the focus of our life’s work. If we desire power and authority, that’s where our heart will lead us. Whatever we

determine as our greatest treasure, that's where our heart will lead us. And we will put our minds and efforts into achieving that treasure with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

But let's take this to a greater degree. The Apostle Paul tells us, "*The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*" (2 Corinthians 4:4). You see, Satan desires that we become so enamored with the things of this world that we miss the image of God in Jesus Christ. **When we get so focused on all that this world has to offer, we miss out on the greatest thing that God has done for us.** And when we give up our heart to the pursuit of the material things of this world, we are blinded to the truth of the reality of what life is really all about. We blindly search for all that the world can give to us, but after all of that, our hearts will still be empty and found wanting. If we put our minds to searching for the treasures of this world, though we may acquire much in our lifetime here, it will always leave us empty and left wanting for more than what this world can offer. Some people spend their entire lives searching for the greatest treasures of this world, and at the end, they find that their whole life has been wasted on worldly pursuits. They miss the "*light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*"

But it is that "*Light of the gospel of Jesus Christ*" that Paul lifts up as being the greatest treasure that we could ever hope for. He tells us that when we let Jesus Christ become Lord of our lives, as we become servants of the Lord God, it is the greatest thing that we could ever search for and acquire in our life. And we will never be found wanting for anything when we let Jesus be Lord of our life.

But Paul says, "... *we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us...we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that His life may be revealed in our mortal body*" (2 Cor. 4:7, 11). These "*clay jars*" that Paul refers to are our bodies, not decorated glamorously, not expensive, not made of precious materials, but rather are fragile, easily broken, and common. **Clay jars are not really all that durable. They are temporary containers that hold what they are filled with,** and they are easily disposed of to return to the elements

from which they were made.

Such are our bodies - they are fragile; they are temporary; they are common; and they are made to contain what they are filled with. The spirit within each one of us fills our lives, but our spirits may have different “flavors” - either earthly flavor or heavenly flavor. If they are an earthly flavor, that spirit pursues all that is of the world, engrossed in all that the world has to offer, seeking to enjoy all that is of this world, and living to enjoy all that this life has to offer. But if that spirit is a heavenly flavor, it is set on the things that are above, the things of heaven, seeking the ways of the Lord God Almighty, and living according to all His ways. **Our bodies are merely the “clay jars” that hold the spirit within us.**

So if our greatest treasure is these clay jars, and if our spirits are of the earthly flavor, pursuing all that this world has to offer, then all our hopes and dreams are found in these destructible elements that are visible to us today. And when this earthly vessel is battered and broken and our earthly spirit is released, there is no hope for us to put our confidence in. Our life is wasted away and our reward will be an eternity of emptiness and want.

However, if our greatest treasure lies beyond these clay jars, beyond the things of this world, and if our spirit has a heavenly flavor, then we will find that *“with that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in His presence”* (2 Cor. 4:13-14).

You see, the clay jars are of no significance to the Lord our God. It is not these bodies that He is concerned with, but with what these bodies contain. Our spirits are eternal, and they are a blessing from the Lord, but the eternal fate of our spirit is based upon what we determine as to what will be our most valuable treasure. Seeking the earthly treasures results in separation from the Lord. Seeking the heavenly treasures results in being found in the presence of the Lord our God.

So the importance is in what it is that we seek, what we make as our greatest treasure. And we see this in Jesus’ parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl, found in Matthew 13:44-46. Listen to

these parables. (READ Matthew 13:44-46)

Jesus uses the example of a man finding a hidden treasure in a field (Matt. 13:44) to help us see that the kingdom of heaven can be found by anyone, and that its value has tremendous significance. The man is passing through the field, and somehow comes upon a treasure that had been hidden by the former owners. You see, as much transition as the land of Israel had throughout history, it was common for people to hide their treasures in secret so that at a later time, after the war or after the occupation of the land, they could return to recoup their property, rather than having it stolen by the marauding armies as booty. Just like the stores of pirates hiding their treasures in secret spots, so that they can return to them whenever they want to retrieve them.

The treasure may have lain in the ground for years, if not decades or even centuries. But the man does not own the land on which the treasure is hidden, so even if he found it, the owner of the land would be the owner of the treasure. To find the treasure, dig it up and then take it off the land as his own, would have been counted as theft.

So this man now has the knowledge of the treasure being on this property. In order for it to become his, he goes to the owner and offers to buy the field. Knowing that the field may come at a great price, the man then sells all that he has in order to gain the great treasure that the land contains. He is willing to give up all that he has, because he knows the value of that piece of property and the treasure that it contains. The treasure has become his goal, so he does all that he can to purchase the land so that the treasure might become his own. **His heart is so set upon getting that treasure, that he decided that nothing that he currently owned was worth more than the treasure in that field.** So he is willing to give up all that he thought was important so that he could get the most valuable treasure, that treasure in the field. His heart dictated the most valuable treasure, and it guided him to obtaining it.

Jesus wants us to make the Kingdom of God the most valuable treasure in our hearts so that we set our minds upon obtaining only that treasure. He is inviting us to give up all that we have here in this world to gain the more important eternal treasure with the Lord our God. The Kingdom of

God is worth every sacrifice we could make here on the earth. The Kingdom of Heaven is worth infinitely more than the cost of discipleship, and those who know where the treasure lies joyfully abandon everything else to secure it for themselves. Nothing in this world can even compare with the value of the Kingdom of Heaven. And those who make it their greatest treasure make it their number one focus for life.

Then Jesus moves on to another correlating parable, the Parable of Pearl (Matthew 13:45-46). Here we have a business man that has been searching for the most valuable pearl in the world. He has surrounded himself with the business of pearls, and one day he comes to find the most beautiful and valuable pearl he has ever seen. It does not belong to him, yet, but he recognizes the value of the pearl, so he is determined to have it for his own. **This pearl becomes the treasure of greatest value to him, and he becomes willing to give up everything else that he has in order to get it.** He has been surrounded with fine pearls, things of great value, but when he comes to the knowledge of the value of this one pearl, his heart becomes focused on getting it. Nothing else that he has comes anywhere close to the value of that one pearl, so he sells all he has to get that most valuable treasure.

“Thus Jesus is not interested in religious efforts or in affirming that one can ‘buy’ the kingdom; on the contrary, he is saying that the person whose whole life has been bound up with ‘pearls’...will, on comprehending the true value of the kingdom as Jesus presents it, gladly exchanges all else to follow Him.” (Frank E. Gaebelin, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, [Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1984] pg 329)

But Jesus doesn’t stop there. He goes on to let us know that the choosing of the treasure of our heart’s desire makes the eternal decision for us. The Parable of the Net and its interpretation (Matthew 13:47-48) drives home the consequences of that which we make as our most valuable treasure.

The net dropped into the water is capable of catching any kind of fish. When the fishermen pull in the net, whatever was in the waters being fished were collected into the nets. Many of the disciples were fishermen, and this was their method of catching the fish. They tended to stay in the shallow waters and they often used more than one boat, with the net strung out between them. Once the net was

pulled onto the shore, the process of separating the fish caught would begin.

What distinguished the fish kept and the fish discarded depended upon the size and species of fish. Some fish were highly desired, while others were not so tasty, and were counted as worthless. As the fishermen divided the fish, the ones they wanted were put into baskets to be sold at the markets, and the fish that were too small or the wrong kind, were thrown away, probably put right back into the water in which they came out of. Not all the fish were kept, but the net caught them all, and hence there was need for separation to take place.

Jesus uses this example of fishing to describe the Kingdom of Heaven. He informs those listening (as well as those reading) that not all the fish caught by the net are kept by the fishermen. Likewise, the Kingdom of Heaven distinguishes between the ones who are desired, and the ones who are discarded. There are standards used in determining which ones are wanted and which ones are counted as worthless. The parable went beyond the catching of fish, and symbolized the division of people.

Since Jesus was talking about the people making the decision of what their most valuable treasure was, **this parable brings the judgement of people based upon where their hearts have led them.** Jesus is letting us know that there are standards in place with regard to who receives eternal life and who receives eternal death; who is counted as the “*good fish*” and who is counted as the “*bad fish*.”

If the life of the person was spent seeking the things of this world only, in rejection of the things of the Lord God, they are counted among those who are worthless, since their heart’s desire was everywhere else except on the things of the Lord. These are the ones that have no regard for the laws and teachings of the Lord God Almighty, but fully focus on all that the world has to offer instead. They are the ones who have been blinded by Satan to only look for what they can gain or achieve here on this earth while they live here. They do not, and cannot, see the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ because their hearts are focused on everything else except on the things of God. Thus, these are discarded and will find themselves in the absence of the Lord. They will receive eternal death.

But, if the life of the person was spent seeking the things of the Lord, specifically following

the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, then they are counted among those who are desired to be kept and brought into the Kingdom. These are the ones that have found their most valuable treasures to be beyond this world, keeping the laws and commandments of God as their heart's desire. These are the ones who compare the value of the things of this world and the things of the Kingdom of God and decide that the greatest value, the priceless treasure, is found in all that God has prepared for them. They are the ones who set their focus on following God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and they are willing to give up all of the treasures of this world in order to obtain the treasures of the Lord through obedience to Jesus Christ. These are the ones who will be received into the Kingdom of God and will receive eternal life.

There is no middle ground here folks, no grey area in the standards set for us to obtain the Kingdom of God. This is the difference between darkness and light. These vessels of life cannot house both earthly minded spirits and heavenly minded spirits. We cannot live in both worlds. **We cannot have our focus on the things of this world AND have our minds focused on the things of the Lord. It is either one or the other; it cannot be both.** We have to make the decision of what the most valuable treasure of our life is and follow it to the fullest, realizing that there are consequences to that decision.

So we come down to the tough decision: Will we live focused on all that this world can give to us, become blinded by the god of this world, and become counted as the worthless, only to receive eternal death? Or will we live focused on all that the Lord God can give to us, filled with the light of Jesus Christ, counted as precious, and worthy of eternal life that only He can give? That is the decision of our entire life. That is what this life is really all about, and it is vitally important that each one of us consider the choice that we make.

But remember this; while you are still alive you can make the choice to change from death to life. It is never too late to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ to become your Savior, as long as you have life here. But once you die, when you take that last breath here in this world, the choice you made while

living will forever determine your eternity - life or death. **The Kingdom of God is there for all people, but we are the ones that make the choice.**

Let's pray: Father, thank You for giving us the choice of life or death. Thank You for the parables of Jesus that teach us the consequences of the decision we make as to what the most valuable treasure is for us. Lord God, continue to call to us so that we might hear Your words, and see Your ways and come to determine that following You is indeed the most valuable treasure for our life. Give us wisdom to follow Jesus with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, so that we might choose life in You. Then give us the courage to live our heart's desire, no matter what happens. Give us eyes to see Your will and Your way our whole life long, and provide us the strength to follow You. This we pray in the Name of our Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.