

## What Do We Value Most in Life?

In this series of articles we're looking at two of Jesus' kingdom parables from the gospel of Matthew: The parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl of great price. In my last article we saw that the pearl merchant had discovered a pearl that was of a greater value than any other and he went and sold everything that he had to buy that pearl. As we consider this teaching, I'm reminded of the apostle Paul and his life in Judaism. He believed that he had everything he needed to be right with God and—*according to human standards*—he certainly had a lot!

In Philippians 3 he writes, "If anyone else thinks he has confidence in the flesh, I have more." Then he goes on to list all of his *earthly* "pearls." "Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee (the most committed group in keeping the Law); as to zeal, a persecutor of the church." Paul had everything; the right birth; the best biblical training; ambition. But notice what Paul says when he compares his former life to his new life in Christ. "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the *surpassing worth* of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as *rubbish* (the Greek word translated "rubbish" literally means "dung"), in order 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 comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith..." Paul came to understand that, the "hidden treasure" and "the pearl of great price," i.e., the rule of God over every aspect of our lives, is worth every sacrifice.

Jesus taught the parables that we've looked at in this series over a year prior to the night that he shared a Passover meal with his disciples and just hours before going to the cross. On that night Jesus said, "Take, eat this is my body; this cup is the blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." To believe this, to trust in Jesus by faith takes us into the kingdom of heaven, i.e., the kingdom rule of the king over our lives. If you're reading this article and you haven't yet realized the value of the kingdom, I pray that God will open your heart to see its worth. For those of us who know that we're in the kingdom, may we continue to pray that there's not one aspect of our lives that's not ruled by the Word of God. As we conclude this series I want to make three brief points of application.

—As we've seen in this series, the rule of God over every aspect of our lives is worth every sacrifice. Is there anything in your life that you're not giving

over to God? Is there anything that you want to rule yourself and you're unwilling to give God the priority in that area of your life? Are you still trying to rule your marriage *your way*, your finances *your way*, your time and your gifts that God calls you to use for others *your way*? *The kingdom is worth every sacrifice!*

—One important truth that's in our text (Matthew 13:44) that we could pass over too quickly is that, those who truly sacrifice everything are *joyful* people. This is not the type of sacrifice that causes ongoing discontentment. If you're regularly discontented with your life, if you lack genuine joy, you may be withholding some area of your life from God. What are you unwilling to sacrifice or unwilling to let go of in order for God to rule over that aspect of your life?

—We've heard in this series that the kingdom of heaven—God's rule over our lives—is not something that we can purchase. It's not something that we can earn by our good works and our obedience. It's a free gift given to those who trust Jesus by faith, but we must remember that it cost Jesus Christ everything.

As we conclude this series, may we be reminded of the fact that Jesus gave everything for his people—and yes—we want to pray that we're holding nothing back from him and his rule over our lives. May we rest in Jesus and may we rightly see the rule of King Jesus as our ultimate joy as well as that which we value most in life!

*Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois.*