

Matthew 13:44-46

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[0 : 00] And let's turn in our Bibles to Matthew chapter 13 and verse 44 to 48.

It reads,

And he is so worth it. And there was this poor year-and-a-half-year-old, probably thinking, you know, what is wrong with Dad? He's gone mad. But it's true. Sometimes when we make costly decisions, we can wonder, was that worth it?

And nowhere is that more true than in the Christian life. The devil and the world and the flesh, all of them will be saying, this is a waste of time. This is stupid. This is nuts.

But Jesus has told this parable to teach us that simple truth. The truth that we need to hear, whether it's for the first time or the thousandth time.

[5 : 10] That knowing Jesus will cost you everything. That he is worth more than anything in the world. Those are my two points for this evening, and we'll work through them one by one. Firstly, knowing Jesus will cost you everything.

It's one of the most obvious common features of these parables. Verse 44, it says, Then again in verse 46, Who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had.

And the point is, if you want to know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, they are the pearl, the treasure. There is a sense in which you must sell all too. Now that would be very obvious to us if we lived in somewhere like North Korea or Afghanistan.

Where to put your faith in the Lord Jesus so very clearly might cost you. But here it might not be so obvious. After all, many people live in this country and call themselves Christians, and it costs them very little indeed.

No, I have done that. We know many people, I imagine. Many people who say to Jesus, You can have my Sunday morning.

[6 : 34] Maybe even I'd give you a Wednesday evening. I would try and be a nice person too. But how I use my money, who I date, how I bring up my children, what job I do, is for me to decide.

Many people in this country take the name of Christian and effectively treat Jesus like a good mate whose advice they can take or leave, or a genie in the sky to grant their wishes and forgive their sin. But Jesus is not a good mate. He is not a genie in the sky. He is the king of heaven. These parables begin, The kingdom of heaven is like, The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of pearls. How does one enter the kingdom of heaven? Well, it's not so much that we go to a geographical place. It's that we submit our lives to the king of heaven, and that costs everything.

There are some people whom to know it costs. An obvious example of that would be your boss, if you have a boss. When you enter the boss-worker relationship, you are sucking eggs really, but you promise to do X number of hours, to do Y duties, perhaps even be a certain sort of person, and that costs.

[8 : 05] Another example would be your spouse. Maybe this doesn't need explaining, but to have a spouse, you have to promise.

I will honor you, love you, protect you, and be faithful to you until death do us part.

No matter what, all that I am, I give to you, and all that I have, I share with you. And in my case, when I made that promise, it wasn't very much at all, but you know, you get the point.

It costs to know your boss, it costs to be married to your spouse, and it costs to know Jesus. And it costs us everything, because the relationship we have with him is not simply that of a worker with a boss, or even simply as a bride of a bridegroom, though he is that to us, but as our king, who demands our life, our souls, our all, everything we have, everything we do, everything we love, he demands rule over.

He demands to rule over our work, our school lives, our investments, our money, our relationships to friends, and parents, and children, and spouses. He says, whoever would be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me.

[9 : 28] And he tells these stories about men who sold everything to teach us that we must surrender all to him. It may not mean that we literally sell all that we have, but it certainly means that we ask, what would Jesus have me do with all that I have.

He even demands of us whatever the equivalent is of the favorite fez with a feather. And I don't know what that might be for you. It might be a collection of cash, would be a common one. Maybe an ambition, a career, a relation, a grudge. I remember very clearly when I discovered that Jesus had to be my king. I'd just gone to university, I had two great loves in my life. One was my girlfriend and one was badminton. The Lord very kindly sorted out my badminton for me. I didn't make the university team, I didn't even get close, so that was very simple. But I remember as I came under the preaching of God's word, and what I wanted to say to God was like, look God, you can have all these bits of my life, but you can't have her. I wanted to ring fence her. You can have this, but not her. But of course, Jesus did not accept those terms. And maybe that is you right now.

[10 : 45] At the start of a new year, you know that there is an area of your life you are trying to say to Jesus, I don't want you to have this. But we can only know Jesus on his terms.

And his terms are the terms of a sovereign Lord. He demands everything. Knowing Jesus costs everything. And when you give him everything, that can look crazy. It can look absolutely mad. It's one of the reasons I really love the story. It just brings it out so well. You know, I remember as a child seeing it, you know, there's a man kicking his legs together with a pearl and nothing but his boxes.

And you're like, what do you want a pearl for? Why did you get rid of, I mean, the freezer's full of food. He's got sausages and chips. Why would you do that? You can imagine, you know, there he is selling his stuff.

Imagine he had a wife. Dear wife, why are you getting rid of the furniture? What do you mean you're selling the house? Are you, to buy a pearl?

[11 : 51] Are you nuts? And you can imagine her leaving. And I probably don't need to tell many of you this. You already know the cost and the crazy looks.

Maybe you come to church every week, read your Bible and pray and your family wonder if you've been brainwashed by a cult. Maybe your colleagues think you are daft for living the lifestyle you do. Maybe you have a very high-powered job but you don't live a high-powered lifestyle. You give so much away and you're kind to guys at work you know one else's and they think you're a little bit nuts. You wonder if you have a screw loose somewhere.

Or maybe your friends think you're crazy because you gave up your promising career to be at home with the children and you submit to your husband. What a thing. I beg your pardon.

Or maybe it just might be whether it's at school you don't join in the gossiping. You don't join in the drinking. Or you're ready to say you're pro-life or something like that.

[12 : 54] And there are people like what? What is up with you? Are you mad? Are you insane? Jesus, is he really that precious? I don't think he's precious at all.

And sometimes that can get to us. Sometimes we can think maybe I am mad. Maybe this is nuts coming out here on a New Year's Day through the rain to come and listen to a guy you've never met before.

What is that about? I mean, Paul didn't tell you that. No, you didn't know that. But this is silly. But the whole point of the story is that in the end, if all your family called you mad and all your friends left you and you lost all your wealth, your career, your home and ended up persecuted and beaten and imprisoned and so all you had left in this world was your boxes and the Lord Jesus Christ and then you lost your life, you would still have everything.

At the end of the story both men have nothing but a field and a pole that cost them all and they are over the moon because though knowing Jesus will cost you everything, he is worth more than anything in the world.

And that is the main thing that this parable wants to teach us. Verse 44, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up then in his joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

[14 : 31] Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls and finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had and bought it.

It's funny, you know, joking about, it was a joke in my head, but joking about it costing to know your spouse. It's a strange thing.

Having a spouse is very costly. Even a wedding is very costly. It's very expensive. And it costs a lot as you go on. I mean, when you have kids, boy, that's a costly thing.

But have you noticed that weddings are very rarely mournful occasions? Here they are making all these costs, paying all this money, saying all these hard promises and people aren't miserable. They're rejoicing. This is good news. Same when you have a child. People don't say, ah, people didn't say to my mom, I'm so sorry, Pauline. Ed is going to be so hard work, which mom likes to remind me of regularly.

[15 : 32] Even with me, they didn't say that. I'm sure they didn't say it to your parents. They would say, congratulations. Because some things are worth the cost.

And knowing Jesus, well, what does Paul say? I consider all things lost compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ, my Lord. With a wedding, we celebrate something that's so good that all the costs are worth it.

Indeed, sometimes the costs themselves aren't bad for us, but really good. you think about what does it really cost you to know Jesus? For one thing, it costs you your sin.

Your sin that was ruining your life. We can think that obedience to Jesus Christ is going to weigh us down. But what we tend to find is that when we start to obey, it's similar to what it must be like for a whale who spent all its life on the beach finally making its way back.

to the ocean. It is true, obedience requires us to deny ourselves. But in a sense, in denying ourselves, we find ourselves.

[16 : 45] At the heart of self-denial is love. And by loving, God restores us in his image. Submission to the king of heaven, it fits us for heaven.

And it makes us heavenly. my wife, if you asked my wife, Hannah, who is the person who has the most influence you in your life, she would say, without even thinking about it, she would say, my grandma.

That's her mother's mother. She was called Rosemary. She went to India to be a missionary doctor. She spent about 18 years out there. While they were there, they saw absolutely no one converted. Zilcho. It cost them a huge amount to go. It cost them a lot to come back again. I only met her a couple of times. She was one of the most patient and lovely people I've ever met.

One of the things that particularly I remember before is always offering you a biscuit. If you were around at her house, you were not allowed to be there if you did not have a biscuit in your hand. That was very memorable. But I never saw her angry.

[17 : 51] I always saw her grateful even though she was in a lot of pain at the time. And wonderfully, the Lord eventually used their work and brought many to Christ. But obedience to Christ is no loss for you.

Becoming like Jesus is a great gain. It costs you your sin. It costs you your ease. But you were not made to live an easy life. And to come to Jesus sometimes costs you good things.

Good things. But the reality is that these things can never satisfy. And these things we will lose anyway. It's a great irony that the very things we try and ring fence from the Lord Jesus are things that will be lost to us anywhere.

I remember another story. Another guy I knew, he, well, at university, he fell in love with a man. He was a Christian.

He walked away from Christianity to go and be with this guy. After one month, they broke up. I was so gutted. And even then, he didn't wake up.

[18 : 56] But even if they'd had a long and happy, I don't know, relationship together, they just all lost each other in the end. Everything we try and ring fence, we will lose in the end.

But he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. and you will never, ever lose Jesus. And I don't know what you guys love.

I don't know you guys very well at all. And I don't know what you've had to give up for Jesus. There may be all sorts of people here who've given up all sorts of things for the Lord Jesus Christ.

There may be reputations or careers or countries or family members. Think about the thing that Jesus Christ has cost you most. And if it's a person, because people are the most precious, think

they are lovely and beautiful and funny and you have memories of joy together.

If you ask the question, from where did they get their beauty, their loveliness, their joy from? The answer is always from the Lord Jesus Christ.

[20 : 17] If you sacrifice anything for him, you have in him the source of whatever it is that you sacrificed. You have the one who painted their beauty.

You have the one who imagined their humor. You have the one who gave them their personality. From where does their loveliness, their goodness, their truth come from? If not from him who is eternal and infinite love, truth and goodness.

How lovely must he be who is the source of all goodness, truth and beauty. If you have the Lord Jesus Christ, you do not simply have something in this creation but the creator himself who now mediates his goodness to us in a million of ways if we could only have eyes to see them.

But one day we will see him. and that one look will make up for all the sorrows that we face in this life.

My friends, if we had our heads screwed on, we would not ask is following Jesus worth it? Of course it's worth it. Of course he is the pearl of great price.

[21 : 29] Of course we want him. He is the life of our lives. He is the light, life of our lives, the light of our eyes, the treasure of our souls. The question we would ask is why on earth would he, the king of heaven, want anything to do with me?

A sinner who has done wretched things, who has ignored and disobeyed him, who has continued to treasure things more than him, who deserves nothing but the fire of hell.

But the wonderful thing is there's another way of reading this parable. The main way is so obviously to give up all to take Christ the treasure. But in another sense, Christ is the one who sold all for us to make us his treasure, us of no worth.

Not ceasing to be what he was, he became what he was not. The eternal made in time, the infinite made finite, God become man. And his family did call him mad.

And all his friends left him. He had no wealth, no place to lay his head. He was persecuted and beaten. He was mocked and slandered. His clothes were stripped from him and his career led to a cross.

[22 : 50] But there he died for our sin to make us his treasure. He died to bring us who deserve hell to the loving arms of the Father and save us forevermore.

He died that all who believed shall be his and he shall be ours. And so, my friends, there is no greater treasure than the Lord Jesus Christ.

this year, let us put our trust in him. No matter who we are, no matter what we have done, let us come to him as our Lord and our God.

Let us follow him, submit our lives to him, no matter what it costs, because he is worth everything.

And if we find ourselves disheartened and discouraged at the loss, let us remind ourselves we have the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is ours. And we are his and in him God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who is worth more than anything in the world. Let's pray.

[24 : 01]