

Finding A Fortune

Joe Slater

Jesus illustrated the immeasurable value of God's kingdom with two back-to-back parables in Matthew 13:44-46. In the first (v. 44), a man found a treasure hidden in a field. So precious was it that the man sold everything he had so he could buy the field and thus possess the treasure. Nothing would indicate that the man was hunting the treasure; he merely came upon it, recognized its tremendous value, and took the necessary steps to make it his own.

By contrast, the second parable (vv. 45-46) presents *"a merchant seeking beautiful pearls."* He's a man on a mission. He knows exactly what he wants. *"When he had found one pearl of great price, (he) went and sold all that he had and bought it"* (v. 46).

My own experience in finding the kingdom of God (i.e. learning and obeying the gospel, thus placing myself under God's reign) resembles the first parable more than the second. I really had no intention to subject myself to God. In fact, I resisted it. In time, however, I understood the pricelessness of what God was offering me, in contrast to the fool's gold the world held out. Then it wasn't hard to decide.

Others, like the pearl merchant, have deliberately searched for the truth. Upon finding it, they willingly part with any and all differing doctrines and practices. Nothing else is worthy to compare with the precious pearl of being in God's kingdom!

Whether one stumbles upon it, or finds it after a diligent, life-long search, God's kingdom is of infinite value! But you can't hang on to the world with one hand and the Lord with the other. As wise King Solomon wrote, *"Buy the truth, and do not sell it!"* (Proverbs 23:23).

What Is My Giving?

Scripturally it is a **requirement**. God expects us to give. Paul instructed through inspiration that each Christian at Corinth was expected to give (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Since Paul taught the same thing in every church (1 Corinthians 4:17), we know this applies to our church today, as well.

Mathematically it is a **proportion**. We are to give back a portion of what God has given us. While the tithe requirement is gone (cf. Colossians 2:14), we are still expected to give to God. Now the formula for giving is in proportion to our prosperity (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Morally it is a **debt**. We owe God so very much. We could never repay Him, but that does not alleviate our debt or our duty to give to Him. God expects us to give, and when we do not do so properly, we steal from Him (Malachi 3:8; Matthew 22:21).

Economically it is an **investment**. As strange as it may sound to some, giving is the greatest investment one could ever make! What we give is not forgotten by God and is returned many fold both here and in the hereafter (Luke 6:38; Matthew 6:20).

Spiritually it is a **blessing**. God can't wait to bless us. And in His word we are promised that there are spiritual blessings tied in with giving (Malachi 3:10; Acts 20:35). Maybe that is why we are to be so joyful in giving, even through tough times (2 Corinthians 8:1-2; 9:7)!

--Edd Sterchi (Campbellsville, KY) via *Bulletin Gold*

GOVERNED BY GREED

I once read of two unusual grave markers hidden beneath the brush of an old, long-forgotten English cemetery. Over one grave, the marker bears the curious inscription: "She died for want of things." Alongside that stone is another which reads simply: "He died trying to give them to her."

We live in a strange age of short cash, easy credit, and out-of-control covetousness. Confusing wants with needs, too many of us race through life in a mad scramble for more and more of less and less, never fully satisfied, never completely content. Ours has become a world governed by greed.

Jesus warns, *"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses"* (Luke 12:15). Paul teaches, *"Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows"* (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

Life is too short, death and judgment are too certain, and eternity is too endless for us to give undue importance to money and the things money can buy.

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

The world, *"lying in wickedness,"* may be obsessed with material things, but *"we are of God"* (1 John 5:19).

It's time we started acting like it!

--Dalton Key (Tulsa, OK) via *Old Paths*