

# OpenTheo

## Destiny and Value of the Kingdom (Part 2)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this piece, Steve Gregg discusses the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price, exploring the themes of sacrifice, discipleship, and the value of the kingdom of God. He notes that both parables highlight the need for individuals to forsake their worldly possessions in order to obtain the treasure or pearl, and emphasizes the idea that these possessions are not truly owned but rather stewarded. Gregg also suggests that the parable of the dragnet may refer to the church and the evangelism net used to bring in new believers. Overall, his discussion provides thought-provoking insights into the messages conveyed by these parables.

### **Transcript**

...bigger, I don't suppose. I don't know much about it. I guess maybe it multiplies.

I'm not very familiar with the process of how 11 does what it does, but the issue in the parable of 11 is not that the 11 gets bigger itself, but that the 11 affects a change on its host element, on its environment, and that change is presumably a desirable one, and so Jesus is saying that do not think that the kingdom of God is insignificant only because it's very small at the present time. It is, in fact, small, but very significant and has a destiny to conquer the whole world. All right, let's go on to a couple more parables here, equally short with these.

These are very short ones. I thought we'd only cover these, but I've said all I need to say about them, and might as well try to move ahead a little bit here. Look at verse 44, 44 through 46.

Once again, within three verses space, we have two parables, very short. Like the parables we've just considered, these two also are similar to each other, similar but possibly showing different angles. Verse 44, again, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid, and for the joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. Now,

very clear parallels in these two parables, although I'd like to suggest a possible difference in their meaning, a different angle or aspect that they're each giving. But the thing they have in common is that a thing of great value is discovered, and the person who discovers it recognizes its value and sells everything he has in order to obtain it.

And this is a picture, again, of the kingdom of God. Let's talk about this a little bit, these parables. The first one is the treasure hidden in a field.

The picture that Jesus paints here is one that probably most Jews would love to encounter, and probably most of them did not, though it would not be an unheard of phenomenon for someone to find a treasure hidden in a field. Because the Jews had possessed their land at this time for 1,400 years or something like that, and many generations of Jews had passed the same tribal portions down to their offspring, generation after generation. Now, if you inherited a portion of land from your ancestors, you wouldn't necessarily know all the history of that land.

One thing that is known about Jewish history is that Palestine was overrun with invaders constantly. They were overrun by the Babylonians, they were overrun by the Assyrians, they were overrun by Edomites, they were overrun by Philistines, they were overrun by a lot of different people, and they were overrun by the Romans. In the intertestamental period, wars were fought between Egypt to the south and Syria to the north, and the armies would march through Palestine to get there, and they'd do damage to the Jews on their way through just to express their malice.

And therefore, the Jews were a people who were continually subject to invasion. Now, obviously, if you have anything of value, and an invader comes through, he's going to steal it from you. There's a story in the end of the book of Judges about that, about some marauding people coming through and seeing these idols and stealing them, and stealing a Levite too, along with them.

Now, you know, when invaders come through, if you have anything of value and they see it, they're going to want to take it. They've got the upper hand, they're the ones in the bargaining position, and they can make their own terms, and usually that just means pillage and steal. For that reason, because the fate of every Jew was precarious, and especially in times of war where there were menacing nations, many Jews would bury their treasures somewhere on their property, so that they wouldn't be found by marauding armies.

I mean, it's the most natural thing in the world to do, to bury their goods, bury their treasures. Now, of course, it must have not been uncommon at all for it to be that a man would bury his treasures in his field, and then the next marauding army that would come through would kill him. He'd die, and no one would know that treasure was there.

His children would inherit the property, and his grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and

in all likelihood, nobody would know that that treasure was there. The owner of the property would own it, but he would have no idea what he had in it. Now, the picture of a man finding a treasure hidden in a field, the most natural way that would occur would be if a man was plowing a field.

Now, it's quite clear from the parable that the man plowing was not the owner of the field. When he found the treasure, he hid it again, and then went out and bought the field from the owner. I think we are to assume that the man who found it was a servant plowing his master's field, a hired servant, not a slave with no possessions, because this man had possessions to sell, but he was a hired servant just working for a neighbor and plowing the field, or through some other means, digging or plowing.

He hears a ker-chunk as the plow hits something solid, and he stops the mule and digs around to find out what it is. He begins to suspect he's found something of value there. He looks around to make sure no one else knows it's there.

He opens it up, sees for sure there's an immense treasure there that's worth far more than everything he's ever amassed, and he knows for sure that his master is unaware of its presence. Therefore, of course, the field with the treasure in it is worth far more than its face value. So he hides the treasure there again, hoping that he alone is the one who knows it's there.

He goes out and sells everything he has just to purchase that bit of acreage. Now, he, of course, can get the acreage cheaper because he alone knows its true value, and its true value is based on the presence of the treasure there. So the picture that Jesus paints is one where most of the Jews could imagine that happening.

It's possible that some of them had found buried treasures on their property before, and others no doubt dreamed of doing so. And the story probably would strike a chord with them. But here's a situation where, of course, the question arises, is this guy being honest? Shouldn't this guy hand in the treasure to his owner? I think that'd be a questionable thing.

That'd be a matter of questionable ethics. Recently I heard on the news somebody bought an antique piano or an old piano at a yard sale. When they got it home, it wouldn't play well, and they looked inside and there were like \$100,000, someone had shoved in the back of the piano and it was making it not play well.

And so they took it back and wanted their money back. No, they didn't want their money back. But the fact is that they took the money back.

They said, well, the person who sold this piano at the yard sale obviously didn't know this money was back there. It was in like \$100 bills or something. There were thousands of them in there.

And they felt like it was only ethical to take it back. Well, it's a generous thing to do and probably is ethical, although I'm not sure they were under legal obligation to do that. I'm not even sure.

I mean, that'd be an ethical question. If the owner doesn't know a thing has some hidden treasure in it and agrees to sell it at a certain price, and the buyer finds out that he got more than he bargained for, I don't know really that that's... I mean, maybe different people would come down differently than that. My friend Jim Soderberg, who's going to come here and teach King's in a few weeks to you, he bought... What did he buy? He bought something like a pup tent or something at a yard sale, or what he thought was a pup tent.

And when he got it home, it had this really neat antique rifle in it. And the person who sold it obviously had not opened this stuff sack or whatever the tent was in and didn't know what was there or the box it was in. And he realized the gun was worth several hundred dollars and stuff, but he wrestled with it while he took it back.

But anyway, this guy in the story doesn't take it back. He knows the treasure's there, and whether it's ethical or unethical is not the point of the parable. The point of the parable is that he buys the whole field in order to obtain the treasure.

And he does so at the expense of everything he formerly owned. He parts with everything he has. And he does so joyfully.

It's not some great sacrifice. For the joy of that treasure, he goes and sells all that he has. You know, when you hear of people selling all that they have and forsaking all to be... you know, to follow Jesus, some people say these people have made a noble sacrifice, that these people are really committed and really unselfish and so forth.

Well, that obviously is an attitude that... I mean, if you think that about such people, you obviously don't understand what Jesus is saying. Anybody who forsakes all that the world has in order to obtain the kingdom of God has made a trade that has made him richer, not poorer. It's not an unselfish thing.

I mean, it may at some level be unselfish, but it's not as if that person's made some commendable sacrifice. If you sell what you have that's of little value in order to obtain something that's of greater value, and you come out richer in the end, is that such a sacrifice? This is the point Jesus is making. And the parable of the pearl is similar.

It's shorter, but it has the same idea. The kingdom of heaven... Excuse me, it has two verses longer, but it doesn't have as many details. It's like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

And so, again, we have the same kind of idea here. He had other pearls. He parted with

all his previously obtained pearls in order to obtain this one pearl that was clearly... Since he was a pearl merchant, he knew the value of pearls, and he knew that this pearl was worth more than all the other things he had.

Now, neither of these parties is making a great sacrifice, although they both sell everything they have. The disciples forsook all that they had also to follow Jesus. Look over at Matthew chapter 19.

When the rich young ruler came to Jesus... We won't read the whole story. Jesus said to him in verse 21, Matthew 19, 21, Jesus said to him, If you want to be perfect, go and sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me.

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Now, some people would say this statement that Jesus made to the rich young ruler was one of the hard sayings of Jesus. What's so hard about this saying? If he had just said, Sell what you have and give to the poor, and that was the end of the statement, I could see that as being a little difficult.

Sell what I have and give to the poor. That's costly. But Jesus doesn't end it there.

He says, And you will have treasure in heaven. You sell all that you have to obtain a treasure, like the man who found the treasure in the field sold all he had to obtain the field and buy the treasure. Now, Jesus never advised people to make deals that would not be to their advantage.

The rich young ruler could not value the treasures in heaven because he was not spiritually minded. And therefore, it grieved him that it would cost him so much to obtain it, and he decided not to make the purchase. However, in the sequel, we read Jesus talking to the disciples.

And in verse 27, Peter answered and said to him, See, we have left all and followed you. Therefore, what shall we have? Peter asked. Now, he's one of those guys like the pearl merchant who sold all his pearls to obtain the kingdom of God.

He says, What are we going to have for it? Jesus said to them, Assuredly, I say to you, verse 28, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or fathers or mother or wife or children or lands for my name's sake shall receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life. Now, Peter says, We've left everything, Lord.

We've made this great sacrifice. How are we going to be reimbursed? Are we going to be the poorer for this? He says, No, you're going to be the richer. You're going to receive a hundredfold more and you're going to have eternal life.

In other words, you have come out way ahead. Now, as far as the meaning of the hundredfold, I realize that there are some people who take this in an extreme literal sense and say, Well, that means if you need a hundred dollars, you should give to the church one dollar and God will then be obligated to give you a hundred back because you're going to receive a hundredfold for everything you forsake. If you need a thousand dollars, give ten dollars and so forth.

There's actually television events who say this. You need money? You need to exercise some seed faith. You need to give ten percent of the amount that you want to receive.

Give it by faith. And you plant a seed and God has committed himself to give you a hundred times. Give a hundredth of what you want to receive or ten percent, either one, and you'll receive a hundredfold.

And, of course, this is picked up also by prosperity teachers who feel that this proves that God wants you to prosper. The disciples did forsake everything, but they got a hundred times much more. But first of all, I'd like to say that the hundred there is not a literal statistic, not intended to be.

And that's clear from the parallel in Luke where actually Luke has Jesus saying, we'll receive many times more. A hundredfold is just a hyperbole, really. I mean, some people might receive a hundredfold, literally more, but the fact of the matter is you're going to receive much more than you've given up, is what he's saying.

It's just a Hebraic way of saying it. In Luke's parallel, he says, those who have forsaken these things will receive many times more. By the way, I'd also point out that he doesn't say if you give a dollar, you're going to get a hundred dollars back.

He's talking about people who have forsaken all, like the disciples have. They've forsaken their houses and their lands and their families. Once you've forsaken all, you can obtain the treasure.

And that's many times more valuable than what you have forsaken. Just like the man who sold all his pearls to buy the pearl at a great price, or the man who sold all he had to buy the field. Now, as far as the application of the parable, the kingdom of God is what the treasure represents and what the pearl represents, but who is represented by the buyer? Now, there are two opinions about this, and I usually just kind of, to make peace, come down in the middle and say one represents one and one represents the other.

There's not really any great exegetical reasons for saying so. It's just sort of an instinct, and it may not be a sound one, so you can make up your own mind. But there are those who say that the kingdom of God is purchased by every man, or by us.

We want to have the kingdom of God, therefore we are the buyer. We are the pearl merchant who sees this pearl of the kingdom, and we have to forsake all that we have to

obtain it. There are others who say the pearl merchant, or the man who buys the treasure, or the field to obtain the treasure, is Jesus, and that Jesus saw us as a pearl of great price and as a treasure hidden in a field, and for the joy of obtaining us, he gave all that he had.

He released his privileges as God. He took on the form of a servant. He humbled himself even to the state of death, even death on a cross, and that was his giving up all that he had, selling all that he had in order to obtain the kingdom of God for himself, the church.

Now both of these things, of course, are true in their own way. The question is which is implied in the parable. I would like to suggest to you that both parables could be seen both ways, but it's possible that one parable applies one way and the next parable the next.

I only say this not because of indicators within the parables themselves, but because of what I sought to observe in a couple of other sets of parables. When we talked a moment ago about the mustard seed and the leaven, I point out that these parables both have something in common. They both speak of the growth of the kingdom from small beginnings, but one of them speaks of its extensive growth, and the other speaks of its influence in society, and while they both make the same point, they make additional points too.

They sort of show two aspects of the growth of the kingdom of God. Likewise, in the parable of the wheat and the tares, which has its partner in the dragnet, the dragnet brings in fish of every kind, and they're sorted out later. In both cases, both parables tell about at the end of the age, the son of man sends his angels, and they sort out the wicked, and they burn them in unquenchable fire, and so forth.

So we can see that the dragnet and the parable of the wheat and the tares are making sort of the same point, but they're different too, because in the wheat and the tares, the field is the world, and therefore it speaks of wicked people and righteous people growing up side by side in the world. Whereas the dragnet, as I pointed out when we covered it, arguably could refer to the church, since the fishers of men are fishing through evangelism, and the net they use is the gospel, and they drag in, through this means, into the church a great number, which later have to be sorted out once they're brought in. And so while both parables may teach a similar lesson, they may show different aspects.

One talks about the world, and one talks about the church. And both talk about the fact that wickedness will coexist alongside righteousness until the end of the age. So it's possible that these two parables, which on the face of them look identical in meaning, may have two angles.

I couldn't prove it, but it seems very likely to me. For one thing, the parable of the

treasure and the field has a number of factors that would appear to make it apply to Jesus making the purchase. This is not without arguments against it.

But the points I would make are the following. First of all, in order to obtain the treasure, the man had to buy the field. Now, that may just be a peculiarity of the story in order to explain why it was the man was able to buy a field that was really worth more than its value, more than the value he paid for it.

And that would be because he knew there was a treasure in it. But if we are the buyer in that parable, it's hard to know how it is that we buy a whole field in order to get a treasure. The treasure is all we're after.

The treasure is the kingdom. We don't buy the world, for example, in order to get the kingdom. But Jesus did.

Jesus is the propitiation for our sins and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world. It says in 1 John 2.2, John the Baptist said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Now, there is, of course, between Calvinist and Arminianist a difference of opinion about this, but Calvinists teach that Jesus only died for the elect and only for the church, but the Bible would appear to teach that Jesus died for the entire world.

He did so so that he might purchase the church. Paul says to the elders of Ephesus in Acts chapter 20, Take heed to the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood. It's true, Jesus purchased the church, but that doesn't mean he didn't purchase the world in order to purchase the church as part of it.

If we could argue that the church before he bought us, we were part of the world, like that treasure was simply part of the field, part of the real estate, then in order to obtain us out of the world, he'd have to pay the price for the whole world so that he could potentially take anything out of it he wants. This, of course, suggests that the atonement was unlimited and that anybody can be saved, potentially. Not everyone is saved, but Jesus paid a price adequate to cover everybody so that he purchased the whole world in order to obtain the treasure.

He purchased the field. That would fit well with at least the general understanding other than the Calvinist one of what Jesus accomplished. He gave everything.

He sold all that he had. He paid the price and he obtained the whole field, but only because he wanted the treasure. He didn't have plans for the field.

As soon as he owned the field, he took his treasure out of it and then the field was just another field. He probably sold it for the price he paid for it. Which, of course, is not necessarily to press.



But the point here is it also says in verse 44 that for joy over it, he goes and sells all that he has. We're specifically told in Hebrews chapter 12 that Jesus, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. And almost certainly, the joy that was set before him is the church or the obtaining of the pearl or of the treasure that he was after.

He endured the cross. That's paying all that he had. They did so for the joy that was set before him.

That is Hebrews 12, 2. In the middle of that verse. Hebrews 12, 2. For the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame. So the fact that the parable says for the joy over it, he goes and sells all that he has seems to have a verbal parallel there in Hebrews, although that may not be significant.

Jesus may not have been thinking about the book of Hebrews since it was not yet written. And the writer of Hebrews may not have been thinking about this parable when he made the statement. But there is a close enough similarity to make me think very possibly the buyer of the field to obtain the treasure is Jesus.

And it speaks of what Jesus paid to obtain the kingdom of God. Now, of course, in order to do that, we then have to decide if the pearl merchant in the next parable is also Jesus or if that's the other side of the picture. Now, there's not much in the pearl merchant story to indicate whether we should apply that just to Jesus or to ourselves.

And therefore, it's a little bit arbitrary. But I think that since the Bible also speaks elsewhere, as in the passage of the rich young ruler that we looked at a moment ago in Matthew 19, it speaks elsewhere of a person's need to sell all that they have, to have treasures in heaven and to obtain the kingdom of God, that this may be a point that he wishes to make in this second parable. We would be the pearl merchant in that case, and we sell all that we have or we forsake all that we have to become a believer and to obtain the kingdom.

Jesus said in Luke chapter 14, except a man forsake all that he has, he cannot be my disciple. And to be a disciple is to come into the kingdom of God, of course. That is in Luke 14.33. Luke 14.33. Now, it's interesting.

That's where he said... Yeah, 33. He says, So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has, he cannot be my disciple. Earlier in that passage in Luke 14, he says in verse 26, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, in his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Now, notice... And we better take the next verse too. Verse 27, And whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Then we have verse 33, Whoever does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Three times he says, Unless someone does such and such, they cannot be my disciple. There is a parallel to this in Matthew chapter 10. In Matthew chapter 10, verses 37 and 38, He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Now, that's obviously parallel to the Luke 14 passage.

Taking up your cross and following him and hating father and mother is here put. Loving father and mother more than me is not worthy of me. To be his disciple, to be worthy of him, is to obtain the kingdom of God.

Now, some would say we can never be worthy. The kingdom of God is a gift. Salvation is a gift from God.

And we don't earn it in any sense. It's true that we don't earn it. But it's not true that we don't pay anything for it.

The fact is we pay all that we have, but that's still not enough to earn it. It's as if the pearl of great price was worth a million dollars and all that we had was worth a hundred. And, you know, some of you have heard, I'm sure, Juan Carlos Ortiz's little dramatization of this pearl of great price parable.

How many of you are familiar with Juan Carlos Ortiz's book, Disciple? Not so many. This is a new generation here. Disciple is a very popular book in the 70s.

Very powerful book. But Juan Carlos Ortiz, an Argentine pastor, Assemblies of God at that time, who wrote it, he was talking about the kingdom of God as the pearl of great price. And he said, he kind of dramatized it this way.

And he's very humorous. I'm not very humorous. I can't tell it quite with the same degree of impact that he can.

But, you know, he's got an accent and he's cute and stuff. So it makes you laugh more. But he says, it's as if you're going through the marketplace and you come upon a certain booth and there's this huge pearl there.

And you immediately recognize that it's worth a small fortune. And you just marvel over it. And you talk to the merchant who's there selling it.

And you say, boy, that pearl must be worth an awful lot. And the pearl merchant says, oh, no question about that. It's worth a great deal.

It's worth more than the whole world. It's, in fact, of infinite value. And the man says, well, it must be very expensive.

I'm sure I couldn't afford it. And the merchant says, oh, sure, you could afford it. Anyone could afford it.

And the buyer says, but I thought you just told me it was of infinite value. How much does it cost? He says, well, it costs all that you have. And the buyer says, well, that's certainly worth the deal because what I have isn't worth that much.

I'll be glad to buy it. I'll take it. And the man said, fine.

How much money do you have? The man says, well, pulls out his wallet and leaps through, finds a couple hundred dollars, says, well, here's a couple hundred dollars. That's all I have on me. And the man says, well, that's a good start.

What else do you have? The man said, oh, well, I do have some money in the bank, a couple thousand, I suppose. The man says, okay, sign that over to me. And so he does.

And then he says, okay, I guess that's all I have. Can I have my pearl now? And the man said, well, wait a minute. Where do you live? And the man said, I have a house.

You mean I have to give up my house too? The man said, everything you have. And so he says, well, gosh, now I'm going to have to sleep in my car. Oh, you have a car.

Okay, we'll take that also. Two of them? Okay, I'll take them both. And the man finally has bartered all of his possessions and he says, okay, I guess you have everything I own now.

Do I own the pearl? And the man said, well, one other thing or a couple more. He says, are you alone in this world? No, I have a wife and kids. Well, they become mine too.

You have to sign them over to me. I own your wife and kids now. And one other thing I forgot to mention.

You, yourself also. You have to be my slave. You have to give all that you have.

Your freedom, you have to give everything. Wife, children, yourself, your possessions. Then you can have this pearl.

And so the man, having already made the agreement, is, of course, obliged to make, to pay this cost, and he does so. And then the pearl merchant says, well, now that I own you and your wife and your children and all that you have, you're my servant. You belong to me.

You're a piece of property owned by me. But he said, I don't need this house myself. I need some place for you to live.

Why don't you live in this house for me and take care of it for me? And you can drive this

car for me. And someone's got to take care of this woman and these children for me, so I'd like you to do that for me too. And, you know, I'd like you to take this money and invest it on my behalf and my interests and so forth.

And basically, he turns over to the guy most of what the guy surrendered in the first place. But it's totally different now because he doesn't own any of it anymore. He's got the pearl and he's got the other things too, but he doesn't own the other things.

All that he once had has now been forsaken. But he's a steward of it for his master. And that is, I think, exactly what Jesus is talking about when he says you have to forsake all that you have to be my disciple.

Now, whether the story of the pearl merchant, the parable is talking about the same thing as that, whether it's saying we have to forsake all that we have to obtain the kingdom, or whether it's just saying that Jesus forsook everything to obtain the kingdom, which is possibly what the first parable means, cannot be determined with certainty. But I will say this. It would make sense for it to be so.

If the first parable tells us how much Jesus paid to obtain the kingdom, it would only be reasonable for him to tell us how much it's worth and how much we ought to pay to obtain it. If we give all that we have, we still haven't paid anything near what it's worth, so we can't be said to have bought it. We've just met the conditions for receiving it.

And there's a difference between meeting the conditions for receiving a gift, on the one hand, and purchasing it at a fair price on the other. In the story, of course, of the man who bought the treasure in the field, no doubt the amount he sold his goods for was enough to buy the field if there were no treasure in it, but it certainly wasn't enough to buy the treasure had the owner known the treasure was there. The idea is that you end up with something worth far more than what you started out with.

And Jesus put that price on it. Jesus paid that kind of a price for it. And for us to think that we can pay any less than everything is to insult his sense of values, for one thing.

It's not to put a proper value upon it. If Jesus, all that he had, and that was a lot more than what we have, if he gave all that he had to obtain it, then there certainly must be an argument there for us forsaking all that we have to obtain it too. And therefore, one parable would follow the other as a natural sequence, if it's seen in this way.

Of course, the alternative is that both parables are talking about the human cost of coming to the kingdom or that both parables are talking about Jesus' cost. But I suspect that one parable tells what Jesus paid and the next one tells the upshot of that, which is what we need to do. Because both are taught in the Bible that the disciple has to forsake all that he has and Jesus forsook all that he has and both for the same reason, to obtain the kingdom of God.

And so, again, the emphasis would be here that a person who makes this exchange has not been robbed. A person who makes that exchange has not even come out poor. He's richer.

He may not own very many possessions anymore because, by the way, some of the things you forsake may not be given back to you. God might take some things from you and say, well, I don't have any use for this and I don't think you do either. We can liquidate this and use the money for better purposes.

There are times, certainly, when we do forsake things and they're not handed back to us. And that could include family members or possessions of great value or other things of value to us. But the point is, if we do possess them, if God does give them back to us, they're not really given back to us in the sense of us owning them.

They're His for us to manage. But even if He took everything from us and gave us nothing back except the pearl, if we had nothing but the kingdom to show for our losses, we still come out on the positive side of the ledger by infinite proportions. Because He said to the rich and the poor, so what you have, give to the poor and you will have eternal life.

And that's, you know, eternal life is immeasurably valuable because it's eternal. And therefore, we shouldn't pity a person who forsakes all that he has to obtain it. I know I've quoted Jim Elliot before.

Everybody quotes Jim Elliot. He was a great person to quote. And usually when they quote him, they quote this particular thing.

Though he's had many quotable things. This is his most famous quote. That when he was a missionary who was killed by the Aka Indians shortly after he went down to evangelize them in Ecuador.

Elizabeth Elliot was his widow. And she's a very famous Christian writer now. Jim and four other guys were young, handsome, athletic, intelligent.

I think he was the president of his college, if I'm not mistaken. He was a man of, you know, tremendous earthly gifts. I mean, a man who could have made a living doing anything he wanted to do and been successful at it.

But he felt called to go down to the Aka Indians, a group of natives of Ecuador who had killed the only missionary who had come to them before. I think a Jesuit missionary had gone to them 50 years earlier. Now, the story of Jim Elliot's death took place in the 50s, early 50s.

So about, I think, around the turn of the century, if I'm not mistaken, a Jesuit missionary had gone and had been martyred by these Indians. And that was, of course, well known.

And Jim Elliot's family and friends tried very hard to persuade him not to go down there.

And they said, listen, there's a lot of people in America who need the gospel. You could be a pastor of a large church. You'd probably reach a lot more people if you just stay in this country.

Think of what you're giving up. If you go down there, those natives will probably just kill you. You know, don't be a fool.

Don't go to these unappreciative natives who have already shown what they think about missionaries by killing the only one that ever came to them. Look at what you're giving up. You're being a fool.

And his famous quote that is so frequently quoted, and there's good reason it's quoted. It's a powerful statement. He said, he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep in order to obtain what he cannot lose.

And what he did lose was his life, his earthly life. He went down there and he was martyred shortly after he went down there. But he gained what he couldn't lose.

And Jesus is the one that was the source of that value statement of his. Jesus is the one who said he that seeks to save his life will lose it. But he that loses his life for my sake shall find it into life everlasting.

So that, I mean, Eliot's statement was, it seems profound, but it's not profound. It's rudimentary. It seems profound because modern Western Christians have lost sight of it.

And they have felt that because there's no persecution and because they can prosper and the standard of living of most Christians is pretty high and so forth, that they can have both worlds. They don't have to give up anything to obtain the kingdom. They can have all this in heaven too.

And the idea that someone would feel like he had to give up his life in order to obtain the kingdom of God and to obtain that which he could not lose is a radical thought to most Christians. But why should it be? It's what Christians throughout history have largely had to face and known and what Jesus said in no uncertain terms. It just shows, if Jim Eliot's statement seems like a dazzling revelation, it just shows how little time we've spent reading about what Christianity is in the Bible.

Because what he's saying is just a paraphrase of Jesus himself. A man is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep in order to obtain what he cannot lose. And that's why the man is not to be pitied who forsakes worldly things in order to obtain the kingdom of God.

Now, of course, the thought that most of us have is why not obtain the kingdom of God

and have a few worldly things too? Well, if that were possible, no doubt most of us would choose to do that. The question is, did Jesus teach that that's possible? And, of course, then people say, but I know a lot of Christians who have worldly things. Well, let's just say we know a lot of people who have worldly things.

The question of whether they're Christians or not is, of course, God's judgment to make, not ours. But judging from what Jesus said, it seems to me that we're not really entitled to say for sure that such people are Christians. They may be.

They may talk like Christians. They may love the Lord at a certain level. But it seems like he described in the word of God how Christianity, what it costs to be a Christian.

And it doesn't mean that a person has to be poor. It certainly means they can't be materialistic. And it does mean that they are poor, seen one way.

They don't own anything. Although they may own a lot of things, apparently, because they're stewarding them. But these parables are, you know, both parables are about the value of the kingdom of God.

One may tell us what Jesus was willing to pay to obtain it, and the other would tell us what we have to pay in order to obtain it. And that may include our lives. But it certainly implies everything.

Everything has to be surrendered to Jesus, or else there is no kingdom for us. Because what is it to be in the kingdom but to be surrendered to the king, to be subject to him, and everything that we have is his. All right.

Well, anyone have any questions about this?