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Kingdom of God (Part 6)



Kingdom of God - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg explores the concept of the Kingdom of God and its immense value. He shares parables, including one about a man who finds treasure in a field and another about a merchant seeking pearls of great value, to demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is worth sacrificing everything for. Gregg emphasizes the importance of having faith and seeking the Kingdom of God above all else, as it promises eternal happiness, joy, and peace.

Transcript

Tonight, as you can see, we're going to be talking about the cost and the value of the Kingdom of God. And we're going to be working primarily from two parables that are found together in Matthew chapter 13. At first, it may appear that these parables are saying the same thing twice, and perhaps they are, but I think they're saying two different things that are similar to each other.

And that's what we'll be working on tonight. We'll be looking at these verses and some related material. In Matthew 13, verses 44-46, Jesus said, Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid, and for 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. As I said, these may look like they're both saying the same thing. In both parables, there is something of value to which the Kingdom of God is likened.

In both cases, a person sells everything he has, trades in everything he's got, in order to obtain that thing of value, whether it's a treasure, as in the first parable, or a pearl, which is another kind of a treasure, which is what the second parable features. Now, I would like to suggest that one thing these do have in common is they both underscore the value of the Kingdom of God. And they indicate that the Kingdom of God is something that is so valuable that, in fact, if a person were to forsake everything else they had in order to obtain it, they would be happy for it.

In the first case, this man, for the joy over it, he sells all that he has in order to buy the field. Now, of course, he buys the field in order to own the treasure that he knows is in the field. And I want to talk about these two parables, but I want to suggest that they, while they both speak of the surpassing value of the Kingdom of God, I think they look at it from two different directions.

There has been controversy among commentators as to whether this is talking about the value the Kingdom has in the sight of God or the value the Kingdom has in the sight of man. And, you know, there are commentators that have taken either one or the other side about these parables. And I'm going to just come down in the middle and say, I think one of them has to do with the unit from one side and the other views it from the other.

Now, this would not be too surprising because there's no reason for Jesus to give two parables that say exactly the same thing with no variation. And yet there are other places where parables are given in pairs, even in the same chapter, Matthew 13, which has seven different parables of the Kingdom. The parable of the leaven and the parable of the mustard seed are similar parables, and we covered them in a previous lecture.

The parable of the mustard seed is that the Kingdom is very small like a mustard seed, but it grows into a great bush, a great tree, and the birds lodge in the branches. And that parable is given just about as briefly as these ones are, but it is followed by a similar parable that talks about the Kingdom of God is like leaven, which someone puts in a lump of dough until it leavens the whole lump. Now, both of those parables have something to say about the expansion of the Kingdom of God, but I don't think they're just saying the same thing twice.

There wouldn't be any need for that. Very seldom do you find two parables that are saying exactly the same thing in their interpretation. In the case of the seed that grew into a great tree, I believe that's talking about the expansion of the Kingdom externally, reaching out into all the world through the evangelistic mission of the church.

Where the leaven speaks of the internal permeation of the Kingdom in society and the way it elevates and causes to rise the standards and the morals and the benefits of the society. Both of those parables talk about expansion, but I think they're referring to one's external and one's internal. And likewise, these parables both speak of the value of the Kingdom, but I believe one of them speaks of the value of the Kingdom to Christ or to God, and the other speaks of the value of the Kingdom to the disciple, to the Christian, to the person who is looking for the Kingdom of God.

And the first one, I believe, speaks of the value of the Kingdom to Christ. Now, an argument could be made that it also speaks of the value of the Kingdom to the disciple, but I want to give you my reasons for saying it the way I do. In the parable of the treasure in the field, it's not simply a matter of a person finding something of value and

selling what he has and obtaining that thing.

There's an added element. The treasure is hidden in a field, and the person buys the field in order to obtain the treasure. He doesn't just buy the treasure.

There's this added complexity to the story that isn't in the pearl of great price. The pearl of great price, he just sees a pearl. He goes and liquidates his assets.

He buys the pearl. But in the first one, the Kingdom of God is like a treasure that's buried in a field. Now, the story behind this actually was not too strange to the ears of Jesus' hearers.

There were cases known of people finding treasures that they had not buried in their fields. In this case, the man was not working his own field when he found the treasure. He must have been either plowing or digging.

Jesus doesn't say. But here's a man who is a servant working somebody else's field, and his plow hits something that makes a clunk, or he's digging, maybe he's trying to dig a well, and he digs deep, and he hits a strong box that's been buried there by somebody else. Now, this is not strange because in biblical times, there was no country that was overrun more by other nations than Israel was.

Israel was continually being overrun by nations from the north and from the south, and wars were fought over them all continually. Of course, when armies come through, they would raid the houses and take what spoils they could and so forth. And so it was not uncommon for Jewish people to bury their goods out in the field so that if they were driven out of the country by marauders, they could maybe come back and dig it up later.

They couldn't carry it all with them, so they would bury stuff. But it was not very unusual for a person to bury their stuff in a field, and then they're driven out of the country or they're killed in battle, and no one knows it's there. And generations later, somebody who is in possession of the field may find it and say, wow, who put this here? But if you own the field, you own the treasure that's in the field.

You've got the mineral rights to your property. And so here's a case where somebody owns a field. There's clearly a treasure that that owner does not know is there, else he wouldn't sell the field easily.

He'd want to keep the field and the treasure. The owner does not know that some former owner of the field has buried a treasure there, but a servant, somebody working on the field, finds it. And he looks around and he sees that no one noticed that he found it, so he buries it again.

Jesus said he hides it. And then he goes out, and for the joy of it, he sells everything he has to buy the field. Now, once he owns the field, he owns the mineral rights to the field.

Whatever he finds there, he can have. Now, some people think this is dishonest on the part of the servant. I'd say it's shrewd.

I don't know if there's anything dishonest about it. If the master wants to charge more for the field, he can, but he doesn't know the value of his own field. I suppose if I had reason to believe there was oil on somebody's property and I offered them the going rate for a normal piece of property for it, and I happened to find oil and they didn't know there was oil there, I haven't cheated them.

They could have surveyed for oil if they wanted, and they could have sold it for more if they wanted. But you sell for what you think it's worth. The owner of this field sold to this servant for everything the servant could scratch together of his possessions to get the field.

But the servant knew he was getting far more than just the field. In fact, he didn't have any interest in the field per se. He had interest in the treasure that was in the field.

But he had to obtain rights to the property before he could have the right to the treasure. At least he didn't steal it. So he's not really that dishonest.

He just knows there's an intrinsic value in that field that the owner himself does not know about. Now, what does this resemble in terms of the story of the gospel? Well, in a previous parable in the same chapter in Matthew 13, 38, the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus said the field is the world. Now, it does not necessarily follow that the field must be the world in this parable, but there's no better suggestion than that.

That's what it is talking about. The field is the world and the treasure that is in the field, I believe, is, well, the kingdom of God. But what is the kingdom of God? In Exodus 19, 5, a verse we've alluded to every lecture so far because it's the first place in the Bible that speaks of the kingdom of God.

God said to Israel, Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people. And the next line was, And a kingdom of priests, the kingdom of God in its Israel phase, when Israel was offered that privilege, was a treasure. At least they would be a treasure if they were obedient to God.

They would be a special treasure to God. Now, of course, in Matthew 21, 43, Jesus said to Israel, The kingdom is taken from you and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it, which is, as Peter refers to us, the church, a holy nation, a peculiar people, you know, a priesthood and so forth. This is what Peter refers to the church as he uses all these terms that were first applied.

Israel uses to the church, but the church now is that treasure. And Jesus wanted the treasure. Jesus is the man who knows there's a treasure in that field, that the church is

there in the world and it's worth it to him to buy the whole world in order to get just that treasure out of it.

Now, there's reason to believe that the devil had the mineral rights to the world after the fall. The Bible doesn't say it quite that plainly, but as most Christians understand the way things work, God gave the world to Adam and Eve and Adam and Eve by submitting to Satan, kind of turn things over to him. And Jesus came and he had to recover the rights to the world so that he could draw from the world that peculiar treasure, which was his people, the kingdom, his kingdom.

You see, the kingdom of God, from the standpoint of the king, is his subjects. From the standpoint of the people, it's the relationship with their king. But I believe this parable is talking about Jesus seeing the value in the kingdom and buying the world in order to obtain the church, the treasure that was in the field.

Now, as I said, there are many commentators who believe this parable and the next one are both about the value the kingdom has to the individual looking for salvation. And, of course, it could be, but it's hard to find any particular parallel in my coming to God to seek the kingdom. What is the field that I buy in order to get the treasure? Sure, if the treasure is the kingdom of God, I would give all to have it.

But why is this element of buying the field in there if it's about me or you? If it's about Jesus, it makes perfectly good sense, and that's why I take it that way here. And so Jesus, in order to get that treasure, goes and sells all that he has. According to 2 Corinthians 8 and verse 9, it says, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich.

That is, Jesus was rich in heaven, but for our sakes he surrendered, he gave it all up. He paid everything to obtain us so that we could be in relationship with him. We could have the riches of his grace.

He became poor. He impoverished himself to obtain us. In Philippians 2, verses 5 through 8, you know the passage says, Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant, a slave who owns nothing.

And coming in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. This is what Jesus paid, everything, in order to obtain us, to be his kingdom, to be his subjects. He, like the man who found the treasure in the field, sacrificed all that he had to obtain that.

And so what did Jesus purchase? He purchased us, but he also purchased the world in the process. Now, it does say in Matthew 13, verse 44, in this parable, it says, For the joy over it, he went and sold all that he had. He was making a good bargain.

He knew it, and he was glad to do it. For the joy over what he was obtaining, he happily went and sold all that he had. In Hebrews 12, verse 2, it says, We are looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

That is, he has obtained the kingdom. He's on the throne. He obtained the kingdom for the joy of it.

He endured the cross. That's the price he paid. But there was a joy in it for him because what he obtained was worth it to him.

So also in the parable, the man was glad to part with everything in order to gain the treasure. The treasure was obviously worth more than what he was paying for the field. So I see this saying that Jesus valued the kingdom so much.

It was like a treasure to him, but it was part of a bigger package. It was hidden in a field. In order to obtain the rights to the treasure, he had to obtain rights to the field.

He had to buy the whole thing. And I believe the Bible says that he did. But the main thing about that parable is, in my judgment, it tells us that to God, this is the surpassing value that the kingdom has.

Now, if it has that value to God, then that's its true value. God never pays more for something than it's worth. Jesus is a good economist.

And this lecture is really an appeal to those of you who have good economic sense. I'm going to ask you to give up everything for the kingdom of God. Not because I asked, but because that's what Jesus requires.

You might say, well, that's pretty spendy. Well, it is very spendy, actually. But what are you getting back? Well, what you're getting back is a pearl.

Here's the parable that follows that I think is directed to our attitude toward the kingdom. If God values the kingdom as much as he does, then the individual would be a fool not to value it that much. How could it not be as valuable as God sees it to be? And if it is that valuable, how could we not value it? How could we not want to purchase it at any price? Matthew 13, 45 through 46 is the second parable we saw.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Whenever I think of this parable, I think of a book that some of you may have read back

in the 70s.

It was published in 1975. It's called Disciple. The author is Juan Carlos Ortiz.

And I can't recommend everything that's in that book. But I can certainly say that much of what he said expresses biblical truth more clearly than that. I was ever capable of doing, which is why I'm going to quote him precisely and exactly on this.

He's talking about this parable of the pearl of great price. And I'm going to pick up his discussion at this point. He says, when we find Jesus, it costs us everything.

He has happiness, joy, peace, healing, security, eternity, everything. So we say, I want this pearl. How much is it? Well, the seller says it's very expensive.

But how much we ask? Well, a very large amount. Do you think I could buy it? Oh, of course, everyone can buy it. But didn't you say it was very expensive? Yes.

Well, how much is it? Everything you have, says the seller. We make up our minds. All right, I'll buy it, we say.

Well, what do you have? He wants to know. Let's write it down. Well, I have \$10,000 in the bank.

Good. \$10,000. What else? That's all.

That's all I have. Nothing more. Well, I have a few dollars here in my pocket.

How much? We start digging. Well, let's see. 30, 40, 60, 80, 100, \$120.

That's fine. What else do you have? Well, nothing. That's all.

Where do you live? He's still probing. In my house. Yes, I have a house.

The house, too, then. He writes that down. You mean I have to live in my camper? You have a camper? That, too.

What else? I'll have to sleep in my car. You have a car. Two of them.

Both of them become mine. Both cars. What else? Well, you already have my money, my house, my camper, my car.

What else do you want? Are you alone in this world? No, I have a wife and two children. Oh, yes, your wife and children, too. What else? I have nothing left.

I'm left alone now. Suddenly, the seller exclaims, Oh, I almost forgot. You yourself, too.

Everything becomes mine. Wife, children, house, money, cars, and you, too. Then he goes on.

Now, listen, I will allow you to use all these things for the time being. But don't forget that they are mine, just as you are. And whenever I need any of them, you must give them up, because now I am the owner.

Now, that is one of the simplest ways of stating the terms of the gospel that I know of. You see, the presumption of this is the pearl in this story is worth more than all this man has to give. That's why he really doesn't balk when he says, Okay, I get that, too.

I get that, too. Well, sure. Presumably, the pearl is worth millions.

And all that this man owns is maybe only worth hundreds of thousands. The man is making a good deal, but it costs him everything. And anyone can afford it, because all it really costs anyone is everything.

Everything you have is all it costs. It doesn't cost any more than that or any less. That's what it costs to have this pearl.

Now, some people might say, Well, I thought salvation is a free gift. Well, it is a free gift. It's a free gift given on conditions.

Now, you might say, Well, if it's conditional, then it's not a free gift. That's not true. Not necessarily.

My grandmother, when I graduated from high school, said if I would go to Biola College, which she wanted me to go to, that she would pay my tuition in full. Well, I didn't. And I didn't get the money.

Now, suppose I had said to her, Well, grandma, I really don't want to go to Biola, but I'd be glad to have that money given to me anyway. Well, she would say, Probably no. It's only on the condition that you go to Biola.

If you do that, I'll be glad to pay your tuition. Well, then should I say, Well, then then it's not a gift, is it? It's not really a free gift at all. There are strings attached.

Well, it's still a free gift. If I sign up for Biola, I haven't earned anything from my grandmother. If she gives it, it's still a free gift.

When I had my first child, it was the only child I had born in a hospital, because I didn't know about home birth yet. My other four were born at home. But my first child was born in a hospital, and the hospital gave that information to apparently baby supply stores, because I started getting mail from them.

And I got a lot of postcards that said, We have a free gift for you and your baby. Come into our store, and we will give you a free gift. So I dialed their number and said, I got your card today.

I understand you have a free gift for me. They say, Yes, we do. You had a baby.

Yeah, we have your name on our list. Well, please send it over to me right now. I'll just you can set it.

You know, I'll pay the postage when it arrives. They say, No, you have to come into the store and then you can have the gift. That's the condition for the gift.

So I say, Well, then it's not a free gift at all, is it? If I have to do something to have it, then it's not free. But they reply, No, it's still free. Many people walk into our store and don't walk out with free merchandise.

If you come to our store, we'll give you a free gift. It is free. And you don't earn it by coming in.

You just qualify to receive it by coming in. And that is precisely the way salvation is. It's a free gift.

You can't earn it. Even if you start all that you have, you haven't paid enough for it. You haven't paid what that pearl of great price is worth.

And if you try to pay for it, you only insult it. That's why God doesn't want us trying to earn our salvation by works. Because our works are simply not worth enough.

It insults the value of the thing itself. Suppose you came to me and said, Steve, I've really been impressed with your ministry. I want to give you my house in Santa Cruz.

It's worth \$600,000. And I say, Well, that's a wonderful thing. But I just can't receive a gift like that.

It's too embarrassing to me to receive such a gift. I insist on paying. And I have \$25 right here in my pocket.

I'm going to pay for that house so that I'll have earned it fair and square. I have a feeling that you'd be tremendously insulted that I would suggest that I could earn or pay for your house with \$25. Because it's obviously worth far more than I could possibly pay.

And because of that, I have to receive it as a gift. But if you said, I'm giving you this house only on the condition that you will use it for such and such purposes. The truth is, if you said, I'll give you this house on these conditions, but I won't on other conditions.

It's still a gift. It's still a gift. If I haven't earned it, haven't paid for it, it's a gift.

And my son went to Cabrillo College. He got financial aid. He didn't do anything to earn the financial aid, but he qualified because he has a poor dad.

And he's poor himself. And so we qualified qualifying for a gift by meeting certain

conditions is not the same thing as paying for the gift. The gift is still a gift is still free, but it costs everything.

Now, that may not sound like it makes sense, but it makes perfectly good sense because you notice not everybody is saved. Jesus died for the world, but not everyone is a Christian. Why? Because there are conditions.

You have to repent. You have to believe. People who don't do that don't become Christians.

They don't get the free gift, but it's a free gift. There are conditions to be met. Perhaps you already knew that repentance and faith were conditions for salvation.

But you might not have known that faith means committing yourself to Jesus Christ as your Lord. If you don't commit yourself to Jesus Christ, you don't have faith. The devil has a species of faith, but he doesn't commit himself to Jesus Christ as Lord.

The demons believe and they tremble, but they're not saved because believing is not just a matter of acquiescing to some some propositions that are stated to you. And you say, OK, I guess those are true. I agree with those.

That's not what faith is. At least it's not what the Bible is talking about when it talks about faith. Faith without works is dead.

A faith that doesn't change you is a dead faith. It's not the kind that we're talking about. And Paul, who, of course, is the one who told us the most about how free the gift is in his letters and Galatians, in fact, Galatians 5, 6. He says in Christ Jesus, circumcision doesn't count for anything and uncircumcision doesn't count for anything.

But what counts for something with God is faith that works through love, faith that works through love. If it's a faith that works through love, then you are saved by that faith, not by the works. It's the works are produced by the faith.

The faith is is the condition for salvation. But faith in what? If you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and you confess your mouth that Jesus is Lord, Paul said, you'll be saved. So faith in the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Do you believe in the lordship of Jesus Christ? What does that mean to believe in the lordship of Jesus Christ? Do you believe he's your lord? And if so, what does that make you? It makes you a purchased slave. A lord is the owner of slaves. That's what the word means.

Someone who owns slaves. So if he's my lord, I'm his purchased possession. I'm owned by him.

I'm his slave. I wish I had given this scripture. I didn't put it in my PowerPoint

presentation or my notes.

But it's it's in you don't look it up on your own. It's Luke chapter 17. I think it's verses seven through 10.

Jesus said, which of you having a servant plowing or working in the field? When he comes in, how many of you say to your servant, sit down and let me prepare you something to eat? He says, no, you don't say that. What you do when your servant comes in, you say, OK, fix me something to eat. And when I'm done, then you can fix yourself something to eat.

And Jesus says, does the master of that servant thank that servant for the work done? He says, I don't think so. Jesus said, I don't think so. Because the understanding was a slave.

That's what he does. His time, his energy, his body belongs to his master. He doesn't have rights of his own.

He has surrendered those when he sold himself into slavery to pay his debts. In most cases, or when he's captured in war, he became a slave. He lost all his rights.

Jesus then says to his disciples after this is so also you. When you have done all things that you've been commanded to do, say we are unprofitable servants. We have done only what was our duty to do.

So he says, like a slave who just serves his master. And then he comes in and serves his master some more. And he doesn't he doesn't expect to be thanked because he's just doing what he's supposed to do.

He's not doing something exceptional. He says, that's how you must be toward God. When you've done all things you've been commanded to do, just say we're unprofitable slaves.

We've done only what our duty to do unprofitable after you've done everything you're supposed to. How many of you done everything you've been commanded to do so far? OK, so you can look forward to being promoted to be an unprofitable slave once you get all that done. OK, I haven't done everything I'm supposed to either.

So I'm not there yet either. But I look forward to it. I look forward to someday being completely obedient and being able to be an unprofitable slave.

I'm below that now. Now, the interesting thing about that is that Jesus was talking about the way masters in that society treated slaves. It didn't mean he's going to treat his slaves that way.

He's saying you should have the mentality that a slave has in serving your master. But

he's not saying that your master is going to be as thoughtless and insensitive to you as masters typically were of slaves. In fact, the opposite is true.

He said in one of the passages in Luke when he talks about his coming, he says when he comes, if he finds his servants faithfully doing what he set them out to do, he will gird himself and serve them. That's what he'll do to his servants. Masters didn't serve them, but Jesus did that.

He put on a towel and he washed his disciples feet and said, I am your Lord, but I have served you. So you do the same thing. So even though we have from our point of view, we have no rights.

Once we've come into the kingdom of God, we have surrendered everything. We've paid over everything we have to have that pearl in our possession. But once we have it, we have something very great, because for us, the kingdom of God is a relationship with the king.

As I said, the kingdom of God is one thing from the king's standpoint. It's his people from the people standpoint. It's the king.

The king is our treasure. The pearl of great price is our king. It's Jesus.

And you get Jesus if you are in his kingdom. But Jesus didn't make it sound like it's a light thing. If Jesus paid everything he had for it, then how could we pay less than everything we have for it? Do we value it less than he does? That doesn't make an awful lot of sense to me.

That parable piece by piece again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant who found one pearl of great price. Why a pearl? I've got an idea about this. I don't know if Jesus had this in mind.

A pearl is a very valuable thing. In fact, in the ancient world, it was one of the most highly valued things. It was like we might say a diamond.

In the ancient world, pearls were among the greatest treasures a person could obtain. And this is obviously talking about a supreme pearl. But how do pearls come into existence? They're not found in the ground like diamonds and gold and silver.

Where do they come from? Well, they come from oysters. But why do oysters have pearls in them? Well, I think you know. Because from time to time, a grain of sand or something, some irritant gets into the soft tissue inside the oyster.

And God has given the oyster glands that secrete some kind of a milky kind of liquid to surround that irritant so it's not so irritating. And make this smooth ball around it, which hardens into what we call a pearl. Pearls don't exist except the oyster suffers.

The oyster that never gets irritated never makes a pearl. And the kingdom of God is a thing of great value. But it exists because somebody suffered.

And that was Jesus. Jesus suffered and produced so great salvation that it is a pearl of great price to us. In Revelation 21-21, when the New Jerusalem is being described, it describes the gates.

And you've heard of the pearly gates. Well, this is where that idea of the pearly gates comes from. This verse, it says the 12 gates were 12 pearls.

Each individual gate was one pearl. Now, a gate big enough for people to go through made of one pearl would have to be a mighty big pearl. That would be a pearl of great price right there.

A pearl big enough to burrow a hole through for people to walk through. That's huge pearls. But why is in the imagery of Revelation, why is the entrance into the kingdom of God likened to a pearl? Well, I think it's because, as Paul said in Acts 14-22, we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.

The gate is the way of entry. And pearls are caused by suffering. And I believe the imagery of Revelation is saying that our entrance into the kingdom of God through these gates also is reminiscent of suffering.

The gates are pearls. And we enter the kingdom through much tribulation. We have to be prepared to embrace tribulation in the course of seeking and entering into the kingdom of God.

But the point is the kingdom is a thing of value, but it's a thing of value that has arisen out of suffering. And Jesus suffered to bring it into existence. And we often must suffer to enter in.

Now, I'm not advocating self-imposed suffering. I'm simply saying that loyalty to King Jesus invites hostility from his enemies upon yourself. His enemies become your enemies.

And you know what? It's a great privilege for his enemies to be your enemies. I've often thought it'd be a great insult to me if I were to be in the company of people who hate Jesus, but they don't hate me. That's not that I like to be hated.

It's just I think, well, what's wrong with me? If they hate Jesus, but they don't hate me, whatever it is they hate about him, they don't see it in me. Why don't they see enough of Jesus in me to hate me, too? I don't love to be hated. But it's flattering if those who hate God hate you for his sake.

Jesus said, Blessed are you who are persecuted for my name's sake, for yours is the

kingdom of God. Yours is the kingdom of heaven, it says in Matthew chapter 5. And so when when people persecute you for his sake, that's part of the price of obtaining the valuable pearl of great price. Jesus said in Matthew 6, 19 through 21, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is there, your heart will be also. Now, our treasure is to be in heaven.

Our primary treasure is Jesus, and he is in heaven. He's at the right hand of God. But how do we lay up treasures on a regular basis in heaven? Well, Jesus said, Don't lay up treasures on earth.

They are insecure. They can be tampered with. They can be stolen.

They can degrade in value. But if you lay up treasures in heaven, they can't. How does one lay up treasures in heaven? I don't want to go into this in detail because it takes me too far afield of the main thing I want to say tonight.

But Jesus answered that question elsewhere. When he spoke to the rich young ruler, he says, Go and sell what you haven't give to the poor and you will have treasures in heaven. In Matthew 19 and Mark 10 parallels.

In another place, Jesus said to his disciples, Sell what you haven't give alms and lay up for yourself a treasure in the heavens. That is, when you divest yourself of your goods in order to help the poor. You are making a deposit in the bank of heaven.

In Luke 14 verses 12 through 14, Jesus said, When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back and you be repaid. Sounds like that's a bad deal to get repaid. Why? Well, he says, But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you'll be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

Now, at the resurrection of the just, that's when Jesus comes back. That's when he doles out whatever reward there are to his servants. He says, If you have done gracious things to the poor and to the needy in this life.

With no mind of being repaid in this life, then God considers himself indebted to you. He'll repay you. It says in Proverbs, He that has mercy on the poor lends to the Lord.

So when you do kindness to the poor, you're lending to the Lord and he will repay his debts. But he'll repay you at the resurrection. Now, you might say, Well, I kind of like to have the money here now.

Well, it's too bad that you think treasure on earth is more desirable than treasure in heaven. If you understood God's values and God's economy, you'd realize that the more you can lay up in heaven now, the more of a good investment you're making for eternity. And it should matter.

Of course, I realize that all this presupposes that you really believe this stuff. I mean, Christians all nod their heads when they hear these familiar passages. The question is, do they believe it? If you do, then you'll do it right.

If you don't do it, it's probably because you really suspect this may not really be true. It's all very nice platitudes. It seems to agree with our Christian theology, which I've always been taught.

But good heavens, it can't really be safe to do this kind of thing. It can't be safe to make yourself impoverished for the sake of the gospel. Well, you can't out give God.

You've heard that one enough. And I'll tell you what, that's true. And I know because I've tested God on this quite a bit.

He's obviously saying that being repaid in the resurrection of the just is far more desirable than being repaid here. Therefore, do what you can to avoid being repaid here. Because if you get repaid here, you won't have anything owed to you.

I'm glad we don't get paid back for everything I do. Jesus said, you don't want to get paid back now. I hope that when I die, I will have a whole bunch of loans out that never came back to me.

It's just the opposite of the people who think that Jesus is coming back on such and such a date in 1984. And so they go run up their credit cards. You want your last day of your life to have you're indebted to somebody else and you're not going to pay him back.

I'd much rather the whole world was indebted to me for things I did for them for free. He said, if you're not paid back in this life, you'll be paid back in the resurrection of the just. But if you are paid back in this life, you won't be.

So try not to be trying to be just serve. Just be a servant. Just give and don't worry about what's given back to you.

In fact, in another place, in Luke 6, Jesus said, lend expecting nothing in return. When you lend money, you should never lend unless you're willing to just cancel the debt if necessary. Now, it's not wrong for someone to pay you back if they borrow.

That's not wrong on their part. It's not wrong for you to receive it if they want to. But Jesus indicated when you lend, you should be prepared to never receive it back.

Yes, well, I can't afford to do that. I would say don't lend because you might not get it

back anyway. And if you lend money and don't get it back and you're expecting to get it back, that can hurt relationships.

And relationships are more important than money. There's a value here that Jesus is teaching. Give and give and give and give and hope you don't get it all paid back.

God's keeping track. And he said you'll be repaid in the resurrection of the just. And that's what matters.

That's what is real to me. That's real to me. If that's real to you, it'll affect the way you live your life.

If it's not, if it just is kind of platitudes and religious sayings and so forth. And you kind of say, well, that sounds good. That sounds good.

But you really couldn't possibly dare to live that way. Well, then I'm I really am sorry for you because I hope that you will invest wisely. The few things you have.

God has given you some talents. He's given you some pounds. He expects you to do something for his kingdom with them.

And he'll reward you if you are faithful in that. Colossians three verses one and two. Paul said, if then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.

Set your mind on things above and not on things of the earth. That's a challenge, isn't it? Paul's not asking us to do something that's like super sacrificial. He's advising us to act in our own interest.

If you sell all and get that pearl, you've acted in your own interest because the pearls worth more than what you gave up. If you set your values on things in heaven rather than things on earth, you're trading the lesser for the better. That is, you're getting the better out of the deal.

Treasures in heaven. Jesus isn't trying to cheat us. He's trying to tell us where wisdom would invest our time and our money and our resources and our talents.

In Luke 14, 33, Jesus said, so likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple. We've talked about this verse before. What does it mean to forsake all that you have? Does it mean you liquidate everything you have and just send a big check off to World Vision or to voice of the martyrs or to some missionary? Well, God probably does tell some people to do those kinds of things, but that's not what this necessarily means.

When the rich young ruler went away, sorrowful because he wouldn't pay the price to be a disciple. Peter said to Jesus, well, what shall we have? We've left everything. We have

forsaken all to follow you.

And Jesus acknowledged that they had. And he said they're going to in the resurrection have, you know, a hundredfold more and so forth. But the point is that Peter is an example of someone who forsook all.

But he owned a house still. We know because Jesus and his disciples stayed there frequently. He owned a boat.

He owned nets because after Jesus rose from the dead, Peter and his friends went out and fishing again and they had their nets and everything. Peter, when he followed Jesus, he didn't just liquidate everything and become a pauper. He had a wife and children, apparently.

We know he had a wife and probably had children. So what did it mean that he forsook everything? Well, it means exactly what that illustration of Juan Carlos Ortiz suggested about the pearl. You sign everything over to a new owner.

You sign over yourself, your wife, your husband, your children, your stuff. It's all his. Now, I don't mean you sign over to the church or to some ministry.

You sign over to God. You in your heart truly sign it over. Now, I know some people say, well, if you just say it's in your heart, then no one really will do it.

They'll just all say they did it. Well, let them say what they want to say. God knows if they did or not.

God leaves it to you to be honest with him. I can't judge who has and who has not signed over everything to God. And I don't even want to.

I don't have any interest in judging people. All I'm interested in is telling you what the Bible says you should do. And you do your business with God.

You don't have to tell me what you did. If you sign everything over to God and say, I am your servant. I received the fact that Jesus paid a price for me.

And I'm going to not resist him on that. I'm going to let him own me. And everything I own is his now, too.

I have forsaken all that I have. I might still be driving a car, but it's his car. I might still have a musical instrument, but it's his to be used for him.

And to be given up if he ever wants me to give it up. There's nothing I own that I wouldn't part with immediately if I had an inkling of a thought that Jesus wanted it to go somewhere else. And that's where you have to be.

That's just where you have to be. Don't worry. I don't think God wants you poor, but he might.

You have to be ready for that in case he does. But he doesn't want everyone poor. There were rich Christians in the Bible, but there wasn't anyone who was a Christian who hadn't turned everything over to God.

In Acts 2, 44 through 47 says, Now, all who believed, that's all the Christians in those days, were together and had all things in common and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all as anyone had need. Now, I want to tell you what this does not mean. This does not mean that as soon as they became a Christian, they sold their property and handed over to the disciples.

It might sound like that. But that last line, as anyone had need, speaks of a progressive thing. People who had stuff and others in the church who had needs, when they became aware of the needs, they were selling them.

In fact, in the Greek, the verbs there are in the imperfect tense. It should read all who believe together had all things in common. So they were selling their possessions and goods and dividing them among all as anyone had need.

That was their habit. It wasn't the entry requirement to get into church. You have to sell your house, sell everything and give it to all of us.

It was rather this is how they lived their lives. This is something they were doing in an ongoing basis. As any as they learned of any have need.

Hey, I have an extra house here. I'll sell this house and I'll give it to these needy people who don't have one. Even before Jesus showed up on the scene, John the Baptist was asked, what must we do? And he said, well, if you have two coats, give to give one of them to someone who doesn't own one.

You as you have extra, you give to those who have need. That's it's not something that anyone makes anyone else do. The church can't require that of you.

I can't require that. No one can require of you. But God can.

And God can tell you when he wants something of his that's been left in your possession to go somewhere else. That's his business. And that's got to be the way things are when you forsaken all.

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness. Do you know releasing your stuff to God makes you glad if you haven't done it? It's probably sounds like the scariest thing in the world to do. But you know what? The rich young ruler wouldn't do it.

And you know, we read he went away sorrowful. Why? Because it is because he had great possessions. Isn't that funny? It's just the opposite of what the world does.

The world makes you think if you had more possessions, you'd be happier. No, he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions. These people, they gave theirs away as they had as anyone in need, and they ate their meat with gladness and joy.

There's nothing more freeing than to be a slave of Jesus, to have surrendered and turned everything over to Jesus in your life. It's the way to freedom. And if you find something, do you say, I can't do that? I just can't.

I can't release it. Then you can see why you need to do it, because you're not free. You're not happy.

You'd be surprised how happy you are once you're in the kingdom of God, because the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Paul said in Romans 14, 17 in Acts 4, 32 and through 35. We have another description of the early Christians says now the multitude of those who believe were of one heart, one soul.

Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. Now, all things in common. I believe they had a common heart, not a common purse.

Why? Because they had all things in common is explained by this statement. No one said that the things he possessed was his own. Well, I would say that, too.

Nothing I possess is my own. It's all God's. But I don't live with a common purse.

That is, I don't live in some kind of a community somewhere where everyone gives their paycheck and then it's doled out by some kind of administrator to everybody as they have need. That's communism. Communism is not what Jesus came to establish.

Communism is where people are required, whether they want to or not, to give stuff up to someone who administrates it and distributes it as that person wants to do so. Not as you want to. Christianity is about love.

When you have love, you surrender things because you love the person who needs it more than you love your stuff. It's not about compulsion. It's about do you love people who have needs more than you love your stuff? It's just that easy.

And so they did. They love people more than other stuff. And with great power, the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all.

Nor was there anyone among them that lacked for all who were possessors of lands or houses were selling them and were bringing the proceeds of the things that were sold

and laid them at the apostles feet and they distributed as anyone had need. Again, that last qualifying line as anyone had need as needs arose. Those who had surplus were just in the habit of helping at their own expense because it wasn't their own expense.

Once you've signed everything to God, you have nothing more to lose. You see, that's why it's so free. If someone breaks into my house and takes everything out of my house, I haven't lost anything.

I gave it up a long time ago. It's not mine. It's God's.

God lost it. If he wanted to protect it, he could protect it. If he wants that thief to have it, that's his business because it's not mine to lose.

I don't have to worry about it. Now, you might think, then I'm irresponsible. I don't lock my doors.

I lock the doors because I'm a steward of God's stuff. I'm not supposed to be foolish and tempt people to take things. I mean, there's there's a sense in which I need to be a faithful steward of what has been entrusted to me.

But if in spite of my best efforts, it's all taken from me. If a fire comes and burns down the apartment complex, I mean, all my stuff is gone. I say, well, it's God's.

God took it. It was his. He's free to take it.

It doesn't change my life really very much at all, except makes it a little easier. I have two storage units full of stuff I'll never unpack. And I've often said I could use a good fire.

You know, it would make my life so much simpler if there was just a good fire that went through and took all that stuff out. I'd never have to pay the rent on those storage units again. I never have to go through those boxes.

And it wouldn't make a difference at all in my life, except that I'd be free. Hebrews 10, 34 talks about the attitude of some of the early Christians that the writer of Hebrews knew. He says, for you had compassion on me and my bonds, my chains, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.

Does it sound to you like the early Christians were kind of a different mindset than modern Christians? It doesn't say they they simply were robbed. It says they joyfully endured the plundering of their goods. Their persecutors were persecuting them and plundering their goods, taking their stuff from them by force.

And they were joyful about it. Why? They knew something their persecutors didn't. They don't own it.

They have a treasure in heaven. They'd already surrendered it to God. They'd already laid up their treasures elsewhere.

They have a bank account in heaven. It may sound like I'm advocating poverty. I'm not.

It's fine with me if God gives you much to steward. If he gives you millions of dollars to steward, excellent. We need more people who will steward a million dollars.

Well, I had a father-in-law. He's the man who started Plantronics here in town, Keith Larkin. He's my father-in-law at one time.

When I met him, he was personally worth \$3 million. That was back in the early 80s. That was his personal worth.

He gave it all away. He gave it all to orphans in Haiti, to missionaries overseas. He had some of it in the bank account looking for the opportunities to give it where God wanted him to.

He still had money on him. But he was really a man who owned nothing, and he knew it. What I'm saying here, he knew.

He was a late-in-life convert, and he read the Gospels. And he wasn't all confused by what the church had taught him all his life. And so he was able to read what Jesus said and take it seriously.

And so he was a man who was, in the world's eyes, a millionaire. In his own eyes, he owned nothing. He was just a servant.

And one year, I remember he gave over \$1 million to various missions and so forth. And everything he owned was the Lord's. So I'm not saying that you have to be poor.

You can be a millionaire and still do this. You just have to be given over to Christ. Everything has to be his, and it has to be really his.

I want to assess the cost here real quickly. We don't have very much time left. I'm not going to have as much time as I wanted.

Here's a passage in Luke 9, verses 57 through 62 that talks about the cost of discipleship. It says, Now it happened as they journeyed on the road that someone said to him, Lord, I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus said to him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

And we hear nothing more about that man. You're not following a rich king. You're following a king who doesn't have a home, doesn't have a pillow.

The birds and the woodland creatures have more luxuries than I have. You want to follow

me? You can if you want, but just know what you're getting into. Count the cost.

I don't think the guy did. We don't know. Then he said to another man, follow me.

But he said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father. Jesus said to him, let the dead bury their own dead. But you go and preach the kingdom of God.

That is, I'm calling you to be a preacher of the kingdom of God. Not everyone is called to do that, by the way. I don't think everyone's called to do that.

Not even all Christians are called to be preachers. But this man was. He was called to be a preacher.

But he says, but I need to go bury my father. Jesus said, you know what? There's some things that even spiritually dead people can do. Let spiritually dead people do things like burying the dead.

Anyone can do that. They can't preach the gospel. You can.

I'm calling you to do what they can't do. The calling into the kingdom of God is a high calling. It's a high privilege.

There are people who are spiritually dead out there who can do most of the tasks that need to be done in the world, but they can't do what we're called to do. Let the dead do those kinds of things that the dead can do. He means spiritually dead people can bury dead people if they want to.

They can dig holes, but they can't preach the gospel. I'm calling you to do that. And another also said, Lord, I will follow you.

But let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house. But Jesus said to him, no one having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. Now, it sounds like he didn't let the guy go back and say goodbye to his family.

But it's obviously not a given that Jesus wants you to go away and never say goodbye to your family. Apparently, in this case, this man was just trying to make excuses to put off following him. And perhaps Jesus even knew that this man's family would dissuade him.

So he said, no, I don't think that's a good idea. You just I called you. You've got your hand up.

I'll keep your keep looking forward and follow me. Now, the second two guys here had something in common. The first one said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

And another one said, Lord, I will follow you. But let me first. It's me first.

And as long as you're talking about me first, you're not going to be following Jesus.

That's one of the things that the cost of the kingdom means. It's no longer I, but Christ.

It's not me first anymore. It's Christ first and always seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Everything else will take care of itself.

But first comes Christ. First comes his kingdom, not you. And that's something that's hard for people to get a handle on.

Jesus said in Matthew six, 24, no one can serve two masters for either. He will hate the one and love the other, or else he'll be loyal to the one and despise the other. You can't serve God and mammon.

You got to decide which direction you're going to go. You're going to serve your own interests and your own security and your own comfort and your own future. Build your own kingdom, your own empire or God's.

You can't do both. You've got to choose between them. Second, Timothy two, verses three and four.

Paul said, you therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself in the affairs of this life that he may please him who enlist him as a soldier. Just like a servant is at his master's beck and call.

So a soldier is at his commanders. The one who calls him to be a soldier calls him away from his civilian life, from his liberty to do whatever he wants to do. His definition of his duty is now to please the one who called him.

That's what it means to be in the kingdom. An American college student had been converted to communism in Mexico. And he wrote the following letter to his fiancée explaining why he must break off their engagement.

Now, as we read about this, he talks about the cause of world communism. Think if you exchange that for the for the kingdom of God in this, when we read through this, whenever he says communism, think of the kingdom of God. And you'll be just he'll be describing the attitude of the early Christians.

But ask yourself if he's describing your attitude toward the kingdom of God. He says, we communists have a high casualty rate. We're the ones who get shot and hung and lynched and tarred and feathered and jailed and slandered and ridiculed and fired from our jobs in every other way made uncomfortable as possible.

A certain percentage of us get killed or imprisoned. We live in virtual poverty. We turn back to the party every penny we make above what is absolutely necessary to keep us alive.

We communists don't have the time or the money for many movies or concerts or T-

bone steaks or decent homes or new cars. We've been described as fanatics. We are fanatics.

Our lives are dominated by one great overshadowing factor, the struggle for world communism. We communists have a philosophy of life which no amount of money could buy. We have a cause to fight for a definite purpose in life.

We subordinate our petty personal selves to the great movement of humanity. And if our personal lives seem hard or our egos appear to suffer through subordination to the party, then we're adequately compensated by the thought that each of us in his small way is contributed to something new and true and better for mankind. There is one thing in which I am in dead earnest, he said.

That is the communist cause. It is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife and mistress, my bread and meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night.

Its hold on me grows, not lessens as time goes on. Therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair or even a conversation without relating it to the force which both drives and guides my life. I evaluate people, books, ideas and actions according to how they affect the communist cause and by their attitude toward it.

I've already been in jail because of my ideas and if necessary, I'm ready to go before a firing squad. No wonder communism after this time conquered about a quarter of the world. But because it was a bad cause, it has fortunately shrunk back and lost some of its ground that it held.

This letter was written back in the 60s, I believe. And yet this young man, a college student, had found, he thought, in communism a cause worth committing himself to, worth committing everything to, worth breaking off his engagement to his fiancee for. And how sad that is because that cause was so unworthy of those sacrifices.

And yet everything he said about his commitment to communism, every Christian in the first century could have said, this is my attitude toward the kingdom of God. This is my attitude toward Christ. And you know what? People today, as at all times, need to have a cause that gives purpose to their life.

And to tell you the truth, just making a living isn't very satisfying as a cause. It's nice to get a paycheck. But what do you get a paycheck for? So you can eat.

But why do you want to eat? So you have strength to go back to work the next day. And why do you go back to work? So you get a paycheck so you can eat again and go back to work. It's a boring cycle.

Now, if you have a job you enjoy, that's great. If you've got some things that make your

life a nicer life, okay. But let's face it, it's pretty meaningless.

It's all pretty meaningless. The kingdom of God isn't. World communism is meaningless compared to the kingdom of God.

But in this man's sight, it was at least a bigger cause than himself. It was something he could give himself to because it was bigger and had more promise than anything he could do as an individual. But how sad that he gave so much for communism when he could have given it for the kingdom of God.

In Philippians 3, verses 7 and 8, Paul spoke essentially the same way about his commitment to Christ. He said, but what things were gained to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3, verses 7 and 8. That's the same attitude only directed in a more reasonable and wise direction. Here's a statement about Moses in Hebrews 11, 24 through 26. Now, Moses was the one through whom the kingdom of God in its Israel phase was established.

And he chose that kingdom over the kingdom of Egypt, where he was already in a comfortable and prosperous position as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He says, by faith, Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming that the reproach of Christ was greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. For he looked for the reward.

You want to know what? In those days, there was no greater wealth on the planet than in Egypt. Egypt was the most powerful country in the world at the time. Moses had access to the treasures of Egypt, and he was weighing those against another option, suffering affliction, suffering reproach for Christ, for the kingdom of God.

And he says he esteemed that reproach greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Now, that's seeing things differently than we normally see them, because he's looking at eternal things. Jesus said in John, chapter six, don't labor for the food that perishes, labor for the food that endures to everlasting life.

Things that are eternal are infinitely more valuable than things are not. And this is what it costs us to have the kingdom of God as our own. It costs everything.

It costs everything. Remember Jim Elliott, who gave his life up to reach the Ocas down in Ecuador? Everyone quotes him. I'm going to quote him, too.

It's a great quote. When people said, you know, you've got you're giving up so much to

come go down there and probably get yourself killed. Why are you going to give up so much? That's a very foolish choice.

He said he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep in order to obtain what he cannot lose. That's a good economy right there. That's a good trade.

Give what you can't keep in order to obtain what you can't lose. That's a paraphrase of Jesus talking about these issues. Now, what are the privileges? What are you getting out of it? What does the pearl of great price add up to? One is that you get to be a friend of Jesus, a friend of the king.

And you are taken into his confidence when others are not. Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables and the disciples came and said to him, why do you speak to them in parables? Because the people didn't actually understand the parable. So they're not getting it.

And Jesus says, well, because it has been given to you, disciples of mine, given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. But to them, it's not been given. Disciples have the privilege of being informed about things that others don't.

Things that God wants his friends to know. He doesn't want others to know. Mark four thirty four says, but without a parable, he did not speak to the crowds.

And when they were alone, he explained all things to his disciples. The crowds didn't get those private explanations. The disciples got in on the secrets.

In fact, John 15 verses 14 through 15, Jesus said, you're my friends. If you do whatever I command you, no longer I call you servants for a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I've called you friends for all things that I have heard from my father.

I've made known to you that's that's being taken into his confidence, being a confidant of Jesus. Psalm 25, 14 says the secret of the Lord is with those who fear him and he will show them his covenant. Those who fear him, those who are his people, those who are in his kingdom, they get to know his secrets.

Proverbs three thirty two for the perverse person is an abomination to the Lord, but his secret counsel is with the upright secret counsel from God. God will talk to you. God will let you in on his secrets.

God has given you his word and he'll open it up to you if you're one of his people in a way that he won't. If you're not onto you, it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom. Others, it's not given to John 15, eight.

Jesus said, by this, my father is glorified that you bear much fruit. So you will be my disciples. The much fruit is actually the fruit of the spirit, which is the likeness of Christ.

Love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, self-control, goodness and these kinds of things. These are the character of Christ. That's the fruit of the spirit.

Paul said in Galatians five, twenty two and twenty three. And she said, if you're my disciples, you're going to bear this fruit. You're going to be, in other words, like me.

And that's the other part. Luke six forty. A disciple, Jesus said, is not above his teacher, but everyone who's perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

A disciple is training to be like his teacher. If you're a disciple of Jesus, you will be like him. If you don't value that, then I don't have anything to offer you.

I don't have any way to make this sound like a good deal. If you don't value the prospect of being like Jesus, if that's not valuable to you, then take your money somewhere else. Invest in something else.

But if you think that being like Jesus is something worth more than all the world's. Then it's yours to it's your privilege. If you're a disciple, you'll become like him.

Romans eight, twenty nine says for whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son. God has predestined that all who follow him will eventually be conformed to the image of Jesus. Second Corinthians three eighteen.

But we all with unveiled face beholding as an Amir, the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. Just as by the spirit of the Lord. That is, if you're a disciple of Jesus, gazing upon him and following him, you're being transformed.

You're being changed from glory to glory into his image. You say, I don't see any change. Well, better see if you're a disciple.

Luke 19, 17. He said to them, well done, good servant, because you were faithful in a very little have authority over 10 cities. This is a parable about the stewards.

He gave them something to do, something to manage for him. They managed it well. He says, OK, when he came back, he said, you you did well with the little thing I gave you.

Now I'm going to give you something really big when Jesus comes back. I don't care whether you had a million dollars or ten million dollars to manage or just a few pennies to rub together. If you manage it well for God, he will say, well done, good servant.

When he comes, you've been faithful with a very little. Now I'm going to give you something big. Be a rule over 10 cities.

I don't know what it means to be a rule over 10 cities when Jesus comes back. Don't know who's going to be in those cities. Maybe other Christians who didn't do so well.

I don't know, but it's the privilege of those who are faithful stewards to actually rule with Jesus. Revelation five, verses nine and 10, says they sang a new song saying you are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals for you were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation and have made us a kingdom of priests to our God. And we shall reign on the earth.

That's what those who are his disciples will do. Like those who followed David in his humiliation, they reigned with him when he came to power. That is what Jesus is offering.

Now you buy the kingdom while it's ground floor. And then you own a piece of it when it rules the world and you'll rule with Christ. It's it's a it's an investment that Jesus says a person would be a fool not to make.

And I would agree because whatever God may call you to give up for his kingdom is something you can't keep anyway. So you might as well trade it in for something you can't lose.