

Well-Invested: Sold Out

Matthew 13:44-46

When I was a little squirt I was into Matchbox Cars. I thought they were the coolest thing ever. They were little miniature cars you could roll around the floor and dream of one day driving.

There was a Matchbox Car for just about every make and model and I had almost all of them.

Whenever my mom went to the Sears on Shelbyville Road I was ready to go with her because I knew that right next store was Thornberry Toys. They had the best selection of Matchbox Cars anywhere.

If there was one I didn't have, I'd do anything to get it. I'd save every bit of money I could and when I had the two bucks or so to buy one I'd do just that—without any hesitation.

If I didn't have enough money I would just stand there at Thornberry's looking at the display, deciding on my next purchase.

I'm telling you I was sold out when it came to Matchbox Cars.

A Matter of Surpassing Worth

Have you every stopped to consider those things of surpassing worth for your life?

I pray that Matchbox Cars are not one of them. What's your thing of surpassing worth?

For you, your thing of surpassing worth might be some possession, some collection, some honor you have received, or some accomplishment you've attained.

It might be that the very thing you consider of highest worth is not a thing at all, but those people closest to you. Family and friends are priceless indeed.

Jesus would have us consider something else. He wants us to consider the Kingdom of God and all that comes along with it.

At the end of the day, do you affirm the fact that your relationship with God is indeed a matter of surpassing worth?

God's Kingdom Above All Else

During this series on being well-invested we've heard very clearly from Jesus, the wisest investment advisor of all.

A couple of weeks ago we heard from Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount talking about investing in the things of heaven.

Jesus talked about the fleeting nature of treasure here on earth, because he knew that an undue concern for treasure on earth would leave us in a twisted knot of worry every time.

Jesus wants us to get our priorities straight. "*You cannot serve God and money,*" he says. "*You will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other.*" (Matthew 6:24)

In talking extensively about worry and how futile it is, Jesus puts us to considering things of first order. "*Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you.*" (Matthew 6:33) We are to strive for things of the Kingdom above all else.

Considering What the Kingdom Is

So then that leaves us to consider what, in fact, the Kingdom is.

Jesus attempts to do that in a series of parables, called the Kingdom Parables, many of which are found in Matthew chapter 13.

We read two of those today. They are very short and to the point. As with things that are profound, these two parables not only make us think, but challenge us.

The first of these parables is the *Parable of the Hidden Treasure*. A man finds a treasure hidden in a field. In his joy he goes and sells all he has and buys the field. We are left with the impression that he had no regrets.

The second of the parables is the *Parable of the Precious Pearl*. A merchant, in search of fine pearls, strikes upon one that is exceedingly fine. He goes and sells all he has in order to buy it. We figure that he too had no regrets.

You will note some consistent themes emerge.

Responding to Something of Exceeding Value

First, both men struck upon something of exceeding value.

In fact, in their minds the value of what they found was so high they were not at all hesitant about selling everything they had in order to acquire what they had found.

In the *Parable of the Hidden Treasure* the first man just happened upon the treasure he found out in the field.

Down through the centuries, persons have come to the Christ not because of some intentioned search, but because Jesus just presented himself and they responded.

The man, at least, had his eyes open enough to notice the treasure. May the same be said of us when it comes to the Lord in our midst.

The second man was a bit more intentioned in the *Parable of the Precious Pearl*. He was on the lookout for fine pearls. He knew exactly what he was looking for. When he found it, he didn't have to think twice about what he would do. He didn't need the assistance of anyone at either Genesis Diamonds or the Shane Company.

He too sold everything in order to buy what he knew to be of surpassing worth.

When our boys were younger they enjoyed a series of children's book by Nick Butterworth and Mick Inkpen. One of those books was called *The Precious Pearl*.

The merchant in their story had it made. He had a fine house, a fridge full of fizzy drinks, a fine fur coat, and a felt hat with a floppy feather—it was after all his favorite

He was a happy man, who was even happier when he let go of everything in order to obtain the precious pearl he had found, even the felt hat with the floppy feather.

The book closes with this: "*The Kingdom of God is like this treasure. Although it costs you all you have, it's worth even more.*"

Willing to Do Anything

Whether the two men of our parables simply stumbled on their treasure or were looking for it all along, the common theme is that they once found it they were willing to do anything in order to make it their own.

They were willing to make any sacrifice for the sake of having what they knew was of surpassing worth.

The Bible is full of those who in real life were willing to do the same. Take the disciples for instance. They were willing to leave their nets in order to follow Christ.

The Apostle Paul counted it “*all loss*” for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord. Everything he had attained in this world, whatever recognition he had gained, he considered “*rubbish*” in comparison to the greatness of knowing Christ.

Letting Go of What Stands in the Way

What’s that sort of thing look like for you?

First and foremost, you and I have got to let go of anything that stands in the way of us knowing Christ.

You and I know all too well that there are all sorts of things that stand in the way.

We are all too concerned with how we are viewed by the world’s standards. Appearances really matter or so we think.

There is not a thing the world has to offer that eclipses being rightly positioned in Jesus. Nothing can take the place of abiding in Christ.

Putting Christ First

As we said earlier, this stuff of being well-invested is a matter of right priority. It is a matter of putting Christ first to where all else pales in significance.

To put that differently, when we put Christ first everything else falls into place.

Family suddenly becomes more important. Relationships become more significant. Even work is put in right perspective.

It’s interesting how much different life becomes when we strive after the Kingdom of God and his righteousness as a matter of first order.

These two diagrams are a part of Campus Crusade for Christ’s *Four Spiritual Laws*.

When Christ is not on the throne of our lives, life tends to be in disarray. When Christ is on the throne of our lives things tend to be well-ordered. Priorities are rightly aligned.

No Buyer's Remorse for Us

It's interesting that when it comes to the two guys in our parables for today, there was not one bit of buyer's remorse.

You know the phenomenon. You'll buy something, usually something pretty significant, and turn around almost as soon as the deal is closed and wish you hadn't done it. It happens all the time in buying a car or a house.

Not so, with these two guys, they couldn't have been any more joyful.

Not so, with those who seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. They are totally sold out and couldn't be more joyful.

That's how it goes for those who make God's Kingdom the number one priority in their lives.

Well-Invested

Let's shift gears somewhat and talk about the ministries of the church and our financial support for the coming year. We don't do that very often and probably need to do it more.

As you know we find ourselves at the beginning of our 2019 Financial Stewardship Campaign. It comes to each of us to prayerfully consider what we will do for the coming year in grateful response to the many blessings of God. God has provided in a big way.

- Let me encourage you to make a pledge to the 2019 Ministry Budget. Doing so, goes a long way in helping the Finance Committee set a realistic budget for the coming year.
- Let me also encourage you to consider your year-end giving. While we are running somewhat behind with our contributions, we are tracking well with our experience in 2017. That being said, November and December were particularly strong in 2017. We will need that to happen again this year.

As you know, Jesus talked a good deal about the right use of money. He did that because he knew that how we deal with money says a lot about our relationship with God, about whether we are *"seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness."*

What we do here today is a spiritual response. I am of the firm mind that it has very little to do with a changing tax code.

What we do here today is no less freeing or no less joyful than what our two guys experienced in finding the hidden treasure or the precious pearl.

What we quoted from the children's book, *The Precious Pearl* still stands.

"The Kingdom of God is like this treasure. While it may cost you all you have, it's worth much more than that."

Let me invite you to take a few minutes to pray and consider how God might be leading you and your family in regard to your financial stewardship.

You should have received a pledge card in the mail this week. If not, there should be one in your bulletin. If not, lift your hand and one of the ushers will be glad to give you one.

As you consider your grateful response, let's also pause to consider some of the great ways the church has been in ministry over the past year. Thanks to John Choi for pulling together this morning's video.

Once your card is completed, you are welcome to bring it forward when you come for Holy Communion. You will notice baskets up front for your convenience.

Let's pray that we'll be shown faithful by what we do here. Let's pray that we'll seek to be well-invested in God's Kingdom. Let's pray for God's will to be done. Let's pray for the joy that comes from being a cheerful giver. After all, *"God loves a cheerful giver."*