

Imagine you were working at some dead-end job, not making all that much, but enough to get by. For the most part, you tolerated the people you worked with, but there were a couple people there that really loved to rub you the wrong way. The work wasn't really engaging, wasn't really something you were interested in. You mostly just worked there because you needed the money.

Now let's say a friend came to you with a job offer where you could make more than 10 times what you were currently making, all your coworkers were great people you knew and loved to be around, and it was doing something that you were not only good at, but you were passionate about! You loved to do it! You could wake up every morning loving to go to work! After you pinched yourself, picked your jaw up off the floor, and asked a few questions to make sure this wasn't too good to be true, wouldn't you take the job! You probably had some fond memories at your old job, but the old job would be worth giving up because the new one was so much better! You'd be a fool to stick with your old job when you've got something inherently better in every way!

Today, as we look at Jesus' parables at the end of Matthew 13, God will tell us some eye-opening truths about Your Treasure and God's Treasure.

So what is your treasure? What is most valuable to you? What is most important? Let's try some tests to see what is most important to you. Would any of you say God is more important than watching TV? God is more important than the internet? Would any of you say God is more important than sports or your hobbies?

Now let me ask you: if you look back on your life, how does the time you spend on those things compare with the time you spend on God? Do you spend more of your time listening to jokes, news, and opinions than you do listening to God? Do you spend more time on a moments entertainment than on putting God's Word into practice by serving and loving your neighbors? Do you glorify God with every moment of your time? Do you set aside specific times that are only for God? Or do you, by how you spend your time, show that you treasure other things more?

Let's try another. Would you say God's honor and respect are more important

than your own comfort? Would you say that evangelism is more important than filling your stomach with nice food?

Now let me ask you: if you look back on your life, how does the money you spend on comforts and luxuries compare to the money you spend on supporting your church or on mission work? Do you glorify God with every penny that comes your way? Do you set aside a specific amount of your income only for God? Or does your budget say that you treasure other things more?

One more. Would you say serving God and serving others is more important than selfishness? Now let me ask you: if you look back on your life, what have you used your talents for? Have you used your talents for God's glory and for the good of your neighbor? Or have you primarily used them for your own amusement and for making yourself richer? Do you glorify God with every use of the talents God has given you? Do you find special ways and times to use those talents only for God? Or does your use of your talents say that you treasure yourself more?

What is your treasure? If you're like me, you would probably say God is most important. You would probably say helping others is more important than my own comforts. You would probably say loving others is more important than selfishness. But an honest look at our actions doesn't match up to what we say. Our actions say that God is not our greatest treasure. Our actions say that our treasure is just a little more fun, or just a little more comfort, just a little more pleasure, just a little more pride, just a little more me. Would you be willing to sell everything you owned to follow God? Our actions up until now have shown just how little you and I have been willing to give up for God and for our neighbor.

In the parable of the dragnet, Jesus talks about all kinds of fish caught up in a net. Here we are, caught up in this net of the church which has preached the Word to us. But on Judgment Day, when the angels sort out the good fish from the bad. Do you think you will be one of the good fish when your life has shown so clearly that you treasured only yourself? When your life has shown so clearly that you foolishly clung to that old job even when God offered you something so much better in every way? An honest look at our lives reveals that we are bad fish. We are the rotting fish that deserve to be thrown into that blazing furnace. We deserve to go to hell for our selfishness at the expense of our neighbor and in waste of God's blessings to us.

That's your treasure, and that's where your treasure will get you. But what is God's treasure? What is most valuable to him? Let's look again at our gospel lesson. Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like something. Remember the kingdom of heaven? That's Christ's ruling in our hearts and minds through the gospel message. That's the word about Jesus who came to this world to save this world.

And Jesus says: *that* kingdom of heaven, that gospel message is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. And when he found one of great value, he sold all he had and bought it. Do you see what that means? When Jesus found you, bad, rotten fish though you are, when Jesus found you he said, "No, I don't care how you've lived. I will buy you back from the debt of your sin. You are my pearl of great price."

Jesus went and sold all he had. He, as God almighty, left behind his full power as God to become a poor man who got tired and hungry. He, as God all-knowing, left behind his full knowledge as God and became a human who had to learn and who did not know all things. He, as God over all, left behind his glory as God to become a human being who was subject to the laws of nature, the laws of earthly authorities, and to God's laws. He, as Life itself, who has life in himself, who created life in the beginning, who even gives life to the dead, he became a human being who was tortured and put to death on a cross.

Jesus treasures you. He sold all he had so that he could purchase you from your sin. He came to our world so that he could be a ransom for many, for you. He did that not because he knew you would pay him back. You won't. He did that only because he chose to, because he wants to show you what real mercy is. He wants to show you what real unconditional love is. He did it because he really truly loves you.

And Jesus, through his Word, continues to show you that he treasures you. He continues to promise you that his blood bought you. You are his own! At your baptism, Jesus marked you and said, "See! You belong to me!" At the Lord's Supper, Jesus says, "I give my very self to you, because you are mine! This is the body and blood that I paid so that you would be mine forever!"

Jesus treasures you. He sold everything to purchase you to be his own. So on Judgment Day, do you think Jesus is going to let his harvesters toss you in the

furnace? Absolutely not. You are God's treasure. God bought you with his own blood to save you from hell and he wants to give you so much more.

Satan, the world, your own sinful nature, they want you in hell, and to do that, they want you treasuring anything other than God. They want you to treasure the physical things you have. They want you to treasure your security. They want you to treasure yourself, anything that will get your eyes off God and your ears off his promises to you. They want you to waste your time, money, and talents pursuing your own selfish ways, pursuing the things that made you just another rotten fish.

God and his ways are so much more valuable for your life, because they bring God glory and they build up your neighbor. Think about it. Anything is valued at the price someone is willing to pay for it, right? I can try to sell a pencil for \$20,000 dollars, but if no one is willing to pay that much, it's not worth that amount. So what does it say about your value if God was willing to pay his very blood for you?

If that's your value, then what does it matter what so-and-so says about you? If that's your value, then what does it matter how accomplished you are? If that's your value, then what does it matter how much you have gained or lost? If that's your value, then what does it matter how much pleasure or pain you've experienced? If that's your value, then your life is worth doing right. Your life is worth living God's way.

Don't let your past define who you are. Don't let people tell you your value. Don't let Satan's lies define your treasure. Life isn't about getting as much as you can. It's not about maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. Life is about Jesus, who saved you from hell. Life is about sharing eternal salvation with others through the gospel message. Life is about serving our God and loving our neighbors with the love that God has shown us.

You are God's treasure. He sold everything to purchase you for himself. Let the use of your time show how valuable that is. God gave up his glory to buy you from your sins. Let your budget show how much that means to you. God gave up his life to redeem you from sin's deceptions. Let the use of your talents show how important that is. Jesus gave everything so that you could be his treasure. Let that be your treasure. Amen.