

Worth Everything. Matthew 13:44-58.

**The Kingdom worth everything vv. 44-46**

<sup>44</sup> *“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field.*

<sup>45</sup> *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls.*

<sup>46</sup> *When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.*

It is clear from these two parables that Jesus thinks that having a share in the Kingdom of heaven, the coming reign of God promised to the Jewish people in their Old Testament and which Jesus has been preaching as near, close, is worth everything.

That it was like hitting the jackpot, having your dreams realised.

The first story was the Galilean peasants version of winning the lottery..

Treasure hidden in a field was not as uncommon then as it is now, especially in Australia. Before banking became common putting your valuables like coins and precious stones in a jar or box and burying them was a recognised way of keeping them safe.

But people might die, or be taken away, and never be able to come back to them. That seems to be the case here for the owner of the field is plainly unaware of the treasure. He hadn't put it there.

Treasure legally belonged to whoever owned the field, but while buried it was unclaimed. Perhaps the man was a hired ploughman. Ploughing along, and the ploughshare hits a solid obstacle. He stops.

Brushes the dirt off, enough to recognise what it is – and then quickly reburies it, covers up the treasure.

The years of drudgery and want are past. Here is the possibility of financial security. Treasure is life transforming.

In his joy – he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field. The treasure is now legally his.

Jesus isn't dealing with the legality of morality of what he does. Just his joyful recognition of the worth of what he has found

He gives everything for it. Whatever was his before – can't be compared to the worth of that treasure. Hanging on to it can't be allowed to get in the way of obtaining that treasure.

It wasn't what he was looking for as he went about his work, but as soon as he saw it he knew it was what he was longing for.

He joyfully gives Everything – and he still reckons he is getting a bargain.

Just like the merchant.

Pearls were very highly valued in the ancient world, sought by divers in the red sea and the Persian Gulf.

So this merchant is a man of means, dealing in luxury items, knowing what he valued, searching out what he valued.

And knowing what he is looking for he gives up all He has for this one pearl

He recognises its worth exceeds all that he has thus far found, thus far accumulated.

It is incomparable, the end of his seeking

For the individuals who find it, however they find it – by stumbling across it and recognising this is what they have been longing for, or by diligent seeking because they know what they value – the Kingdom is worth everything, and at that price is still a bargain.

### **Why is the kingdom worth everything?**

But why? Why can Jesus teach that having a share in the Kingdom of heaven, being able to make it your own so that you belong in that reign, is worth everything?

Because, looking beyond the parables, normally we would reckon such a radical investment in just one thing is imprudent – don't put all your eggs in the one basket we're told, leave yourself options, what will you do if things go sour – as they will,

As he sells his tools, and then his storage pots, and then his spare cloak, you can imagine that peasant's friends asking 'do you really want to do this',

As he sells all his other pearls, and his house, and his donkey, you can imagine the merchant's friends growing increasingly concerned.

Why is having a share in the Kingdom worth everything?

That would have been self evident to his first hearers, and their questions might have been more about where they can find it, how can they obtain a share.

Self evident because they had grown up with the Old Testament promises of God coming to save His people, of the time when God's messiah, His chosen King, would reign

But it is not so self evident to us.

The phrase 'the Kingdom of heaven' doesn't excite us, create longing in us – all a bit foreign to a people who live in democracies and don't think much about heaven as the place where God lives.

To excite you about it, so that you come to share Jesus' evaluation of its worth – I guess I could take you back through the Old Testament prophecies, help you understand what the people of Jesus' day understood and were looking forward to.

But I want to take another tack.

I want to show you the worth of that Kingdom by showing you the worth of the King of that Kingdom, for the character of the King determines the character of that Kingdom, tells us what that Kingdom is so good that it is worth everything

If you know the King, you will know why His reign is worth everything

### **Knowing the value of the Kingdom by looking to the King**

#### **Jesus is the King**

And Jesus is revealed as the King of that Kingdom in the gospel, as the One who exercises the reign of God

He is revealed as that King at the beginning of the gospel – the promised descendant of King David, the one born ‘King of the Jews’. Matt. 1:1, Matt. 2:2, 6

He is tested as Son of God, Israel’s Psalm 2 King, in the wilderness

He is declared to be that King at the end of the gospel

He is crucified as King of the Jews 27:37

Raised from the dead, He says He has all authority in heaven and earth – the One who exercises God’s reign

It is in His presence that the kingdom of heaven, the reign of God, comes near

As He said in Matthew 12:28

*“If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”*

What kind of King is He, that His reign is worth everything?

### **What kind of King?**

What do we see of Jesus in the gospel, in the eyewitness accounts of those who knew Him.

- And remember, you don’t have to take my word for it. You can test what I say by just reading a gospel, or reading it with a friend, or in Christianity explored

What do we see of Jesus in the gospel

Kind – He makes time for parents with their concerns for the future of their young children, when His disciples would shoo them away. He touches the leper. Intervenes at a widow’s funeral to give her back her only son. Has a reassuring word for the woman healed of her bleeding.

He spends Himself, without even time to eat, to deal with those who have come to him in need [Mark 3:20]

His teaching is good, searches our hearts, exposing our selfishness, challenging us to love – even our enemies, and forgive, offering rest to the weary, hope for the crushed in spirit

He has integrity – He keeps His word, exposes hypocrisy, breaks human rules to do good like heal on the sabbath, or eat with sinners, or comfort a weeping woman [Lk. 7:36-50], takes on those who abuse power to promote themselves and their wealth

And He is mighty – restores sight, makes the lame walk, gives hearing to the deaf – and He can still with a word the storm that would overwhelm

And in doing so he Saves – brings the wholeness we were meant to enjoy, gives a taste of peace to the afflicted

He frees from chaos of evil, driving demons out

And He Can provide, and does out of compassion – feeding thousands with a few loaves and fish

Can even forgive sins and raise the dead

And He is this, does all this, as someone sent by the living God, God with us – relating to Him you are relating to God, knowing God's might and truth, receiving God's forgiveness

This is the Jesus we meet in His ministry

Now think for a moment about our lives, about your life.

What brings misery and grief, throws our lives into turmoil?

What do we live in dread of?

Sickness and want

Being enslaved to evil, to destructive and chaotic patterns of living

Death, our own and of those we love

A nature we can't control – whether in fire or drought or earthquake

Human failure – lies, greed, abuse of power

The consequences of our own failures – in our relationship with others, felt in estrangement, misunderstanding, harboured anger – and in our relationship with God, when we let ourselves think of Him

Jesus has demonstrated He is Lord of those things that threaten us – Lord over sickness and death and the chaotic power of evil, Lord over nature

And there is no lying or greed or selfishness with Him. He doesn't fail us.

And He forgives sin, gives God's forgiveness, and brings His followers into a community of forgiveness

Been in Galilee, wouldn't you have thought that Being His, under His rule and direction, following Him is worth it

Wouldn't have to fear – sickness, hunger, the spirits that tormented, a nature that could suddenly overwhelm, death itself

Because Jesus is mighty, kind, faithful to His word – and at peace with Him you are at peace with God

In Jesus' presence there was security, peace, and truth – that you could find nowhere and in no-one else

It would be worth giving up everything to be His, live under His rule

But that is not the whole story is it?

What happens at the end of the story would make you question whether committing yourself wholly to Him was wise, because in the end it looks so disappointing

Instead of crushing His enemies, defending His rule – He is crushed by them

Jesus is Abandoned

Shamed by the mocking of His enemies

He is Powerless to sway the crowd, persuade Pilot, come down from the Cross, powerless to stop the flies from settling on His drying blood

What He claimed about Himself seemingly empty – if you are the Son of God His enemies said mockingly, come down from the cross [27:40]. As He hangs there it is so obvious He is no King

He is Killed – and the dead, no matter how fine their words when living, can't do anything for anyone

A dead king is not worth giving up anything for

As Ecclesiastes says 'a living dog is better than a dead lion' Eccles 9:4

And when you think about it, a king who is yet to die, who will one day leave you – no matter how good while alive, is not worth giving up all for. You still have to consider the time to come when he won't be there

You have to make provision for yourself, when he can't provide for you

Reserve some part of your life just for you

No one who themselves is in bondage to death is worth entrusting your all to – for you will be left, abandoned, with nothing, at the moment of their death

But Jesus is not that King, and never was the King whose reign would be ended by death

The gospel tells us Jesus is not a dead King, and He is not a king who will ever die again.

He is and always was Lord of death

That death served His purposes to save His people

And now He is risen – just as He said [28:6]

Living, never to die again

The same King who walked Galilee, who says His reign is worth all – now revealed in His glory, and revealed for all – not just those gathered around to hear His parables

Revealed as the forever Lord of all that threatens our lives

The one who exercises the judgment and forgiveness of God

The one who brings peace, who can make whole in giving resurrection, whose forgiveness is the verdict of God at the last day

Revealed as loving – with a love for His people that cannot be greater, giving His life for them [John 15]

As true in all He says – with none surer

As mighty – with none stronger, not even death, the King whose enemies can only serve, never threaten, His rule

Revealed as dealing graciously with imperfect followers

To live under this King's rule is worth giving up everything up for

To find Him and recognise His goodness and the truthfulness of all He says, His gracious kindness to all who turn to Him, to be forgiven by Him, welcomed into His family, included in His reign – worth everything

And His reign – not a passing moment of history – but eternal

A reign that, like Him, is beyond comparison

All evil gone as He has promised – where justice and righteousness characterise all that is done

Where death is no more, and lies are no more, and hate is no more

A kingdom that is possessed securely by its citizens – for forgiven and transformed by Christ's Spirit it won't be lost by our sin

Where we are caught up into the life of God, where we will see His face – a life immeasurably richer than anything we can imagine, yet the life humanity was made for

When you know the King, you know why having a share in His kingdom is worth everything.

And seeing Jesus as the King of God's Kingdom helps us understand that cost of having a share, what the all is that we must lose to obtain our place in Jesus' reign

It is the cost of following Jesus

### **The cost of the Kingdom is the cost of following Jesus**

Jesus said to would be followers – *“If anyone wants to follow after me let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me”*, and spoke of that following as losing our lives for his sake. Matt. 16:24-25

We mightn’t have to sell all our property as those in the parables did to obtain the kingdom, and Jesus commanded the rich young ruler later in the gospel

But we do have to say it is His property – all of it, to be used as He wills

And the all we give doesn’t end there. It includes much more important things than money and property

It involves identity – giving up our identity in our family, our ethnicity, our sexuality – to have our identity as a follower of Jesus

It involves direction – giving up choosing our own direction, making decisions on our own preferences – to follow Christ, to have Him give us our direction

It includes our Ambition – to abandon our ambition to make a name for ourselves, to promote ourselves and our achievements, to become ambitious to live Jesus’ way and bring Him glory

It includes our reputation – being willing to be slandered, thought a fool, for Jesus’ sake

It includes our Relationships, – loving Jesus more than all

Everything

But it is worth it – because of Jesus, and character of the reign He brings.

It is good to belong to Him, to be forgiven by Him, to be taught by Him, to be changed by His Spirit, to be raised by Him

You don’t need a plan B when the faithful and loving King who is committed to saving You lives forever with all authority

The value of the Kingdom is found first in the King.

You make your judgment about the worth of His reign on His worth

True then, and now.

But to recognise Him as He is – whether you stumble across Him, or call out to Him in a moment of need, or have been searching for truth and love, for righteousness and peace – to recognise Him as He is, is to know He is worth everything

It is no wonder that generation after generation the oppressed and afflicted, those burdened with guilt and fear, those who know, like you and I, they must die and face judgment, joyfully give up all to belong to this King, to have a place in this kingdom.

What value money and property compared to being given life by this living King

And whatever our identity, whatever we pride ourselves on – it won't raise us from the dead as Jesus will

What value running our own lives if we only run them to death where Christ will direct us to life

What else to be ambitious for except to rise with Christ and see His glory

What worth a reputation that will be quickly forgotten when we moulder in the grave when we can be known by Jesus for ever

What other love to long for than the love that has loved us to the full, the love from which we will never be separated, the love that is generous and merciful and can save those we love

Believer, we give up all with joy to belong to Jesus, and like Paul reckon it no loss at all compared to the worth of being His.

And know joy even in our suffering, in our trials – in belonging to Him, in being given by Him a secure place in His kingdom, in knowing those trials serve His good purpose for us

Know and show that joy – by remembering Jesus, His worth

His graciousness and kindness, His faithfulness and might, His forgiveness and justice

The Kingdom Jesus preaches is worth all

Because He is worth all – God’s righteous saving King

And He brings all – wholeness, life without fear of death, enduring faithful love

Have you given your all to belong to this Kingdom, to make it your own by becoming Jesus’ own?

Held back by the cost?

Once you see Jesus’ greatness – it is not a burden to be asked to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him

Not an imposition to be called to give up your life for Him

Something you desire, rejoice to be able to do.

And you should do it now, for finding the Kingdom now with joy is better than letting the Kingdom find you at the last day, unprepared.

**The Kingdom that matters to all.** vv. 47-50

*<sup>47</sup> “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a large net thrown into the sea. It collected every kind of fish, <sup>48</sup> and when it was full, they dragged it ashore, sat down, and gathered the good fish into containers, but threw out the worthless ones. <sup>49</sup> So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out, separate the evil people from the righteous, <sup>50</sup> and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Jesus likens the kingdom to a large dragnet, drawn along between two boats to make the point that the kingdom involves all. The reign of Jesus is relevant to all.

In the end Jesus is the King you can’t avoid

Want to speak to those who are not yet believers

You might know someone who has become a Christian, might even be why you are listening – thought good for them, seen the change, the joy

But thought ‘good for them’, but kept on thinking its not for you, its something on which you can remain neutral, uncommitted

I can just keep living my way

Not true, says Jesus

The kingdom will involve all, and the kingdom, like Jesus, will divide

At the last day.

This parable is a Bit like the story Jesus has already told of the wheat and the weeds, speaking of the co-existence of the wicked and righteous until the last day.

The kosher and the non-kosher fish swim in the same pool, are caught up in the same net alongside each other, and are only separated once the net is dragged onto the shore

So the righteous and wicked live alongside each other until the final day. But on that day the difference will be seen between those who have listened to Jesus and trusted Him – sought His kingdom and His righteousness, sought to do what He has commanded – and the evil, those who have kept on rejecting God and His ways by rejecting His King Jesus

And that difference will make all the difference, an eternal difference.

Why?

Why does the Kingdom mean there will be a final discriminating judgement and separation of the righteous and unrighteous?

Sometimes we think of judgment as just arbitrary, or Christians, or God, being a little spiteful on insisting on it as a reality.

But just as the worth of the kingdom to those who recognise it is determined by the King and the nature of the Kingdom He brings, so is judgement determined by the King and the nature of the Kingdom He brings.

Think of Jesus.

Jesus is God with us – holy and righteous

And He is truth and love

Lies and hate, selfishness and destructive desire – can have no place in His presence

And He rules

Those who resist His rule cannot abide His presence.

In fact, what we see in His life is that those who resist His rule detest His presence.

They cannot tolerate His claims

Can't stand His rule

Want to get rid of Him, to kill Him. In their eyes there is no co-existence possible where Jesus insists that He is king

What they desired then – they got. They crucified Him

But it was not their triumph but their defeat

It wasn't the life they thought they could have but death they were choosing

And so it is in the judgment for those who want to stay in charge of their own lives, keep being their own ruler

They don't want Jesus in their life

Jesus, Lord of the new heaven and earth

And they will get what they want

they will have, can have, no co-existence with the One who is the King

and wanting no part of the life of Jesus

they will find there is no life apart from Jesus

And they will recognise that to separate themselves from Him is to have embraced eternal destruction when God's patience runs out.

This judgment is not arbitrary, and it is just.

And think of the Kingdom Jesus brings

It is and can only be for the righteous – for those who can live in the presence of God

For that is at the heart of God's Kingdom idea

God living with His people

Like Eden

Like Israel was meant to be

There is no place in God's presence, as Israel's history showed, for those who want to reject God's rule, those who are defiled, unclean, by their disobedience

And only Jesus can fit people for His kingdom

Only He can by His death for sin make sinful people righteous

Only by turning away from our own rule, our own determination to live as we please and reject God's law

And putting our faith in Jesus can we receive from Jesus forgiveness, be reckoned righteous in God's sight

Only those who are in Christ can live in that Kingdom, and it be the Kingdom we long for

Without injustice

Without grief

Without death

There is nothing arbitrary about the exclusion of the wicked, those who refuse to repent and believe in Jesus, those who insist on believing their own lies about God and themselves, from the Kingdom of Christ

Nothing unjust in them suffering the consequences of their choice.

And Jesus uses language that is fearful to bring home the awfulness of those consequences

*<sup>9</sup> So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out, separate the evil people from the righteous, <sup>50</sup> and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

It is no service to Christ or to those who want to continue to ignore or reject Jesus to either soften or ignore that.

Better to heed it yourself, and warn others of what awaits who want Jesus out of their lives, who want to reject His good rule.

The Lord Jesus is King of the whole world

His reign encompasses all

But only those who are righteous now by trusting and following Jesus will be revealed then as fit to live in God's presence

Make sure that is you

Ask God to open your eyes to see Jesus as He is

So that you will reckon it a joy, not a burden or unwelcome demand, to give up all now to follow Him and to have a secure, certain share in His reign

To be gathered to Him with exceeding joy when at the close of the age He sends His angels out and they separate the righteous from the wicked