

## The Greatest Treasure

### Matthew 13:44-46

From time to time,  
Our family finds ourselves watching a TV show called Deal or no Deal  
And if you've never seen it before  
It's so much fun  
A person is picked from the audience  
And they're given a briefcase with money in it  
But they don't know what that amount is  
And then there's a whole bunch of other suitcases  
And the goal is for the person to end up with as much money as possible  
And to do this, they eliminate the other briefcases one by one  
And each of those briefcases also contain money ranging from almost nothing  
To hundreds of thousands of life changing dollars  
And each time they eliminate a number of briefcases  
The bank makes them an offer to stop the game  
And they can accept that offer and give up their briefcase  
In other words – DEAL  
Or they can stay with their briefcase and reject the bank offer – NO DEAL

And you see Deal or No Deal is basically a description of the Christian life  
It's the choice between two treasures  
And the cost involved in that decision  
Knowing when to say Deal  
And knowing when to say No Deal

That's what we're going to unpack as we look at these two parables together  
Three things I want to look at

Firstly, the meaning of the parables  
Secondly, two examples from real life  
Thirdly, the choices in front of us

#### **Well firstly, let's look at the meaning.**

First parable - Verse 44

<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.

Imagine a farmhand who is an employee on a farm  
In the course of his work  
Quite by chance, he stumbles upon a serendipitous treasure  
Buried and forgotten by someone else  
He looks around to see if anyone witnessed his secret discovery  
He hurriedly buries the treasure again making sure no one will find it  
And then formulates a plan  
A costly plan, one that takes time and significant resources – maybe even years  
His plan involves great cost  
Because he wants to buy the whole farm  
But he joyfully bears the cost of this because the treasure on the farm is worth much more

The second parable - Verse 45 is very similar, with one difference

<sup>45</sup> "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.

This time a merchant doesn't stumble on a treasure  
He is in search of it – that's the difference  
He dedicates his life to searching for a pearl of such immense worth  
That when he finds it - he goes all in  
He sells everything he has ever acquired in a lifetime of buying and trading less pearls  
To possess this one pearl of incomparable value.  
He is now content because the search is over  
He's found the treasure he's been looking for his entire life.

It's pretty straightforward  
Here is the meaning of these two short parables  
The Kingdom of God  
Is a treasure worth giving up everything for  
Whether you stumble upon it  
Or whether you search for it  
Jesus and His Kingdom is of such immense worth  
That you would give up anything  
In order to gain entry into his kingdom  
And once you've found Jesus.  
You stop looking for other treasure  
What Jesus did for us in coming to earth as one of us  
Dying in our place for our sin to make us right before God  
Giving us the hope of eternal life and forgiveness of sins  
These are incredible riches that no one else can secure for us.  
And so when you have this treasure  
Whatever it costs to gain it  
Well then the search is over.

That's it, it's not rocket science  
Can you see the two elements?  
The Kingdom is a treasure of great worth that's the first element  
There is cost to gaining this treasure, you must give something up  
That's the second element  
I think you probably figured that out when you read it the first time  
That's got to be the shortest sermon ever  
Three verses  
Let's all go home...  
But don't worry,  
I'm going to give you your value for money  
Keep the timer going

Now that's the meaning of the parables  
But what does that look like in practice.  
Let me show you two real life examples from the bible

We're going to meet two men

One man who said "Deal" to Jesus  
And another who said "No deal"

Jesus once met a rich man  
A very earnest rich man  
A man who rocked up to Jesus  
Fell on his knees – good start – humble approach  
And then said "What must I do" to inherit eternal life  
At one level – sincere, he wants to get into God's kingdom  
But there's also a yellow flag  
You don't *do* anything to inherit something  
You just receive it as a gift  
This man clearly wants the Kingdom of God  
But he thinks it's all about what he does  
And if he's become rich through his own efforts  
You can see how he might approach God's kingdom in the same way

Out of love, Jesus pushes the man a bit harder  
Because it's not about what you *do* that gets you into the kingdom  
It's about what you're willing to *surrender*

Mark 10 verse 21

<sup>21</sup> Looking at him, Jesus loved him and said to him, "You lack one thing: Go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." <sup>22</sup> But he was dismayed by this demand, and he went away grieving, because he had many possessions.

Here's Jesus playing deal or no deal with the rich man  
On one hand, if you surrender your life to me as Lord and Saviour  
If you trust in me, and not in your riches  
You will have a place with God for all eternity – treasure in heaven  
And then on the other hand, there's *your* treasure  
Your earthly possessions, your money, your achievements  
Which treasure will you choose  
Deal or No deal?  
And the man says "No deal"  
I'll stick with my treasure  
And the text says he was dismayed by this demand  
And he went away grieving

I suspect that many of us  
Are like the rich man  
We think that we can have both treasures  
We can have what the world offers  
And we can just add on what Jesus offers as an additional treasure  
Jesus went on to say a few verses later  
"how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God"  
You know why?  
Jesus said in Matthew, "where your treasure is there your heart will also be"  
What you treasure will dictate your heart relies on

And Jesus is a treasure that demands our reliance  
And he is worthy of all our heart  
Jesus is not a back-up plan when the other things fail  
And you see for the rich,  
People like me and most of us here  
It is so easy to rely on other “treasures”  
Superannuation  
Investments  
Houses  
Education  
Spouses  
Relatives  
Health  
Social security  
Sex  
Holidays  
Cars  
Clean water  
I could keep going  
All of these are good gifts of God  
But how do they compare to the one who gave his life on the cross for us?  
None of those things will save you from sin and death  
Only Jesus can

That’s a picture of wealthy tech entrepreneur Bryan Johnson and his son  
Johnson having achieved great wealth  
Is now trying to live forever  
He has spent a large amount of money trying to reverse his biological age  
Using a team of doctors and a system of constant monitoring, supplements  
And best practices  
He takes 111 pills everyday, wears a cap that shoots red light into his scalp  
Has an incredibly strict diet, sleep and exercise regime  
His goal is to get his 46 year old body functioning like that of his 18 year old son  
Kate Tolo a 27 year old Australian woman has since gone to America  
To become Johnson’s first disciple on this journey of immortality  
Experts however disagree with Johnson  
“If you want immortality, you should go to a church,” adds Dr. Eric Verdin, CEO of the Buck  
Institute for Research on Aging. “If I believed even a little bit that it would be possible, I  
would be excited. It’s a pipe dream.”

I mean come on, do you really want to live forever?  
Seeing all the people you love die before you  
Just waiting for a global financial crisis to wipe out your wealth  
Why not just face our fear of death  
You see it’s on your deathbed that really reveals what your treasure is  
No amount of money and material possessions will take you from this life into the next life  
Only Jesus can take you safely into the next life  
Wouldn’t you hedge your bets on him?

**Here’s the second example - The Apostle Paul**

## In Philippians chapter 3

Paul gives us the resumé of his heritage and his achievements

Paul was a Jewish blue blood

Born in the right tribe

Paul was a respected high achiever with an excellent career

A Pharisee of Pharisees

Someone who worked tirelessly to keep the law of God

In Paul's world

He had it all

Jewish parents would have lined up their daughters to marry this guy

He had the treasure his society valued

And Paul himself once valued it

Until Jesus met him on the Damascus road

Until Jesus blinded him and at the same time opened his eyes to real treasure

### Philippians 3 verse 7

<sup>7</sup> But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. <sup>8</sup>

More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him.

Jesus opened Paul's eyes to see that righteousness from God

Came not by his achievements

Righteousness from God

Is God's free gift, paid for by the cross of Christ

A treasure of surpassing value

So much so that what Paul valued so highly as treasure in his previous life

His stunning Jewish resumé

He now considers dung,

Excrement to be flushed down the toilet

And boy Paul lost a great deal for the treasure of knowing Christ

This is what he said about himself in 2 Corinthians 11

Imprisoned

Flogged five times with 39 lashes

Three times beaten with rods

Three times shipwrecked

Pelted with stones

In danger from Jew and Gentile

In danger from bandits, and rivers

In danger in city and country

In danger from false believers

Without sleep, food and water

Cold and naked

What a resumé

And all of this for giving his life to follow Jesus

And if you asked Paul, was it worth it?

For all the suffering you had to endure

For the loss of all the status and privilege and honour that you once enjoyed

Would you still have chosen Jesus?

Paul would have said "Deal"

Every single time – Deal  
Why hold on to dung, when you can have the pearl.

Jim Elliott spent years training at bible college and linguistic school to be a missionary  
He and his young wife Elisabeth went to Ecuador to share the gospel with the Huaorani tribe  
And in one of their first encounters with the Huaorani  
Elliott along with 4 of his fellow missionary friends were speared to death  
Jim Elliott was aged 28 and he left behind a wife and a one year old daughter  
In the eyes of the world, this would be seen as a pointless waste of a young life  
But this is what Jim Elliott wrote in his journal  
*He is not fool, who gives what he cannot keep  
To gain that which he cannot lose*  
Or as the apostle Paul said in Philippians 1  
To live is Christ and to die is gain  
Whatever is lost for Christ in this life  
Will not compare to the gain in being with Christ forever in the life to come

### **This brings us to the third point - The Choices**

If Jesus and his kingdom really are treasures of immense worth it presents us with choices

#### **Firstly there is a kingdom cost**

In the parables, to gain the greater treasure you still have to give up a treasure  
Jesus said this clearly in his teaching about the cost of discipleship

Mark chapter 8

Verse 34

<sup>34</sup> Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

The path of the cross

Is one of suffering and self-denial for the sake of others

It was true for Jesus and it is true for anyone who wants to follow him.

Yes there is a glorious gain when we see Christ

Suffering now, glory then

And again Jesus presents the reality that you can't have both

You can't have worldly glory while forsaking Jesus

And then suddenly hope to have heavenly glory with Jesus

It's one or the other

And the cost is confronting

A potential disciple once said to Jesus who had responded to his call to follow

He said, “Let me first go and bury my father”

Jesus' reply: “Let the dead bury their own dead”

“But you go and proclaim the kingdom of God”

I used to find these verses hard to understand until a few years ago

One of our missionary partners was not able to return to Australia

To spend time with her father before he died or attend her father's funeral

Because it was covid and it simply was not possible

To get out of the country she served in to make it in time

You see, when you choose to walk the path of the cross it comes at a cost

But it's not just missionaries who pay the costs  
A number of you in this church know the cost of rejection from your families for your faith  
You know the cost of being mocked and misunderstood in your society  
Following Jesus means differing priorities from your friends and neighbours  
Buying a smaller house in a worse suburb to give more money away  
Limiting your marriage options in order to please Jesus  
Giving up a career you have invested tens of thousands of dollars to study for  
In order to share Jesus with others

And yet in too many churches in Australia, another teaching is present  
That says following Jesus means prosperity in health and wealth  
But earthly treasure is not promised by Jesus.  
We've seen in the Bible, pursuing heavenly treasure will cost you earthly treasure  
If you're still undecided about whether to wholeheartedly follow Jesus  
Make sure you count the cost.  
I don't want to sugarcoat it.  
But as you consider the cost  
Make sure you know this  
Jesus paid the cost first  
He walked the path of the cross for you  
He became poor to make you rich with God  
He bought your seat at God's table with His blood  
And he paid that cost because he thought you were worth it  
And he is not asking you to do something that he didn't already do for you

### **Here's the second choice**

#### **You need to understand kingdom value**

If you trust in Jesus, know what is already yours  
Why is it that Paul could consider knowing Jesus  
To be of such surpassing value compared to everything else?  
It's because he knew the value of Jesus  
He held the diamond to the light and could see it shine in all its glory

This is Paul in Ephesians 1

<sup>3</sup> Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ.

In other words,  
God has held nothing back from his children  
Following Jesus is not just delayed gratification until you die  
Every follower of Jesus already has *every* spiritual blessing in Christ

Paul goes on to list those blessings in the rest of the chapter  
Chosen to be holy and blameless  
Adopted as sons  
Lavished with glorious grace  
Redeemed and Forgiven  
Made known His will for creation  
Given an inheritance  
Sealed with the Holy Spirit  
One of those would be incredibly generous on its own

But our gracious heavenly Father pours out all of these spiritual blessings on his Children

We are not unwanted and destitute orphans  
Left to the deal with the consequences of our own sin  
We are children of the living God  
Rich beyond imagination  
If you're a believer listening today  
Do you know the value of the treasure that is yours in Christ?

The most expensive pearl in the world is called the Pearl of Puerto Princesa  
Found in the Philippine Sea in 2006  
Weighing in at 34kg, the pearl is estimated to be worth \$100 million dollars  
But for ten years, the poor fisherman who discovered it  
Did not realise its worth  
And kept it under his bed and rubbed it for good luck before he went fishing.

Are you doing the same to Jesus?  
That all he is to you is a lucky talisman – a charm for getting what you really treasure  
You see, unless you know the value of Jesus  
He will be of little worth to you.  
Paul realised this challenge for believers  
And this leads him to pray in verse 18

<sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

He's not praying that God will give Christians treasure  
No he's praying that they will realise the value of the treasure  
That they already have in Christ  
Is that what you pray for?

My wandering heart is so prone to pursue other treasure.  
That I neglect the immense treasure that I have in Christ.  
With the amount of time I spend on my phone  
I made a wallpaper of all the spiritual blessings from Ephesians 1  
So that every time I open my phone I see them  
Because I need to meditate on each of these treasures I have in Christ  
If you would like to use that wallpaper to help you value treasure in Christ  
You can download it at the live page of the Bundy website

### **Here's the third choice**

Knowing the value of Jesus means Kingdom First in your priorities

Jesus said in Matthew 6

<sup>31</sup> So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

We have a Father who knows our needs  
Who promises to provide for us



So we don't need to pursue our daily needs  
Pursue God's kingdom as first priority  
Jesus taught us to pray "your kingdom come" first  
Before we pray "give us our daily bread"  
But we have in this first, the promise that God knows we need daily bread  
And he will look after us if we seek his kingdom of God first.  
That means daily "Deal or No Deal choices"

Let me give you a couple of examples  
Asian people value education because education  
gives you employment which gives you status  
At bible college I once sat next to an older Asian man  
And he shared with me about his wife  
who told their daughter not to go to church during her year 12 studies  
In order to do more study to get into university  
And with eyes tearing up  
He told me that his daughter was not grown up  
And she never returned to church and to Jesus  
Deal or No Deal

Aussie people value sport because sport means being active  
And if your kid is good at it there's also status  
And at a wedding I sat next to a couple – both committed Christian people  
They had two daughters in high school who both played representative netball  
And you know when that's played?  
On Sunday mornings  
And now they were finding it hard to get the older daughter back to church  
Since she had finished her rep netball  
Deal or No Deal

Kingdom first or something else.  
And that something else could be anything I am worried about  
Jesus first even if that means being single  
Or should I just lower my standards  
and date that guy who I know doesn't love Jesus

Should I save my petrol money?  
Or should I just make a commitment to drive that person to church?  
Should I make time to rest?  
Or do I make time to read the bible with someone so that they can know Jesus?

And if I put Jesus and his kingdom first  
Will he really look after my needs?  
You might be asking that question.  
God had to teach me this lesson in a very clear way

After uni, I worked at a large accounting firm after a year to join a smaller Christian firm  
After working there for a while  
Emma and I decided that I would do a ministry apprenticeship  
And Lord willing go to Bible college for three years.  
And there was a struggle in me

Because that was 5 years of low to no income  
We would have to rely on Emma's income  
And amidst those plans we also wanted to have children at some point  
So Emma would have to stop working  
And I was leaving a secure job  
And I didn't have the money to buy a computer which I needed for my studies  
And I was pretty stressed about telling my boss that I wanted to resign  
Which meant he had to find someone to replace me after only a year of working there  
I went into his office and told him about my plans to head towards Christian ministry  
I shouldn't have been worried  
Because he was absolutely delighted for me  
And he said to me, do you need anything for your studies?  
I said I needed a computer  
And being a generous follower of Jesus  
He tore a blank cheque from his cheque book  
And he told me to go out at lunchtime and buy a computer.  
And that is just one of many times, that God has provided for me  
When I have made kingdom first decisions.  
God is so good.  
And I truly believe He will do the same for you.  
When you put Jesus and his kingdom first.

The Kingdom of God is a treasure worth giving up everything for  
Count the cost  
Value the kingdom  
Put Jesus first