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[0:00] You know, there's one line in there in that song. I mean, they're all good lines. They're all, I think, biblically-based lines. But there's one in there that always catches my attention. I'm going to tell you what it is in just a second here.

The one line, I'll make sure I get it right here. You give and take away. You give and take away. But my heart will choose to say, Lord, blessed be your name.

It's easy to say, Lord, blessed be your name when he's giving. Isn't it? That's the easy part. What about when he seems to take away?

We don't like things taken away from us, do we? We don't like that. And as we go through life, it is a part of life that happens. There are things that we're going to talk some about this morning in the sermon.

This isn't the sermon. But we're going to talk some about things that we give up and sometimes things that are taken away from us. You think as we go through life and as you age, as you get older, what happens?

[1:10] Are there some things that are taken away by time? By age? What kind of things are taken away? Your speed.

You slow down. Your strength. You may get weaker. What's that? Sight. You may not see as well or you do this.

Yeah, I'm there. Your memory. Hearing. Hearing. All these things. You don't gain more the older and older you get, do you?

It's a process of it being taken away. All the strength that these bodies have, all the capabilities that we have, they decline. It's taken away from us.

What other things in life do we lose or have taken away? This isn't a sermon. This is bonus material. God's bonus material. What other things? People. Family.

[2:09] Family. People that we love. As we go through life, people die. People that we love. And we can feel like they're taken away from us.

And really, that's really not the proper perspective, especially if they're believers. They're not taken away from us. They're given their reward, which is a good thing. But from our perspective, they're taken away from us.

None of those things are easy, are they? None of them. None of them. None of them. None of them. And that's why this line, you give and take away, you give and take away, but my heart will choose to say it's a choice in all that.

We can choose whether to continue to praise God and know that He has a plan, or we can become bitter. We can become angry. We can become mad at God for the things that seem to be taken away from us, even though that's a natural part of life.

We need to choose to praise God in all of it. All of it. All right. This morning, if you have your Bibles, turn to Matthew chapter 14. Matthew chapter 14.

[3:12] And if you remember, if you were here last week, we were in Matthew chapter 13. And we're kind of continuing on. We skipped a few verses, but we're in Matthew 14 this morning. Because really, I was ready to preach on something completely different than last week.

And throughout the course of the week, God kind of got across to me that no, we're not done with last week's sermon. There's more we need to consider. So turn to Matthew 14.

And I'm going to ask once you've found that, if you're able, I'm going to ask if you'd stand as we read God's Word this morning. Matthew 14, beginning in the first verse. And this is what God's

Word shares with us today.

Matthew 14, verse 1. At that time, Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus. And he said to his servants, This is John the Baptist.

He's risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. For Herod had laid hold on John and bound him and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

[4:14] And John said to him, It is not lawful for you to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude because they counted him as a prophet.

But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John the Baptist's head in a charger. And the king was sorry, nevertheless, for the oath's sake.

And them which sat with him at meet, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and he beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger and given to the damsel, and she brought it to her mother.

And his disciples came and took up the body and buried it and went and told Jesus. When Jesus heard of it, he departed from there by ship into a desert place apart.

[5:15] And when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities. Let's pray. Lord God, thank you again for this morning. Thank you for your word.

Thank you for just your care for us. I thank you that you've given us this word that we can look at, that we can study. And I pray, Lord, that you would use it to accomplish in each one of our hearts and minds what you want.

Help us to grow in the ways you want us to grow. Help us to be challenged in the ways you want us to be challenged. Lord, step on our toes wherever you please, wherever it's needed. Shape us and mold us.

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen. Amen. You can be seated this morning. So if you remember last week, we were kind of, we were building on the theme of our Bible school this year.

Our theme was the greatest treasure. And we were talking all about finding that treasure. And that treasure is obviously the things that God has for us. That home in heaven, that eternal life. All those are the treasures that God has for us.

[6:17] Jesus is that treasure. So we were talking about that. And we looked in Matthew 13 at a couple of parables that Jesus told. Where he said, first of all, the kingdom of heaven is like a man that finds treasure in a field.

Do you remember this from last week? Those of you that were here. A man found treasure in a field. There was only one problem the man had. What was the problem he had? It wasn't his field. He found this great treasure, but he didn't own the land where the treasure was. So what did he do? He sold what? He sold, it says, all that he had.

That doesn't mean he sold the excess, or he sold a little holding or land he had, or it says he sold all that he had to buy that piece of land so he could have that treasure. Jesus also said then that the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man that's looking for a pearl of great price.

And when he finally finds just that right pearl, what does he do? Sell everything again. He sells what? Everything. He sells all that he has to buy what?

[7:26] That one pearl that he had been searching for. So we're talking about treasure. And I think, to be honest, we like talking about that, and we like thinking about that, and that's normal.

We like thinking about good things, don't we? And a treasure, that's something you can get, isn't it? Right? You can get a treasure. You go find it.

The man bought that field so he could get that treasure. And we like talking and thinking about things we can get. Do you like buying stuff? Do you like shopping? Yes.

Yes. Some of you, yes. What if it's shopping for something you like, something you enjoy? Do you like that? Yes. Yeah. I got a list. I get it. You got a list.

You get it, and you get out. See, it all depends on what you're shopping for, doesn't it? Yep. I mean, my wife and some others went shopping the other day. I would have had no interest whatsoever in going with them.

[8:21] Less than no interest. I would pay money not to go on that shopping trip. Do you think well? I don't know. I didn't ask, and I don't want to know.

However, if it were maybe Caleb and I, and we were going to a motorcycle shop to look around and do some shopping, guess what?

Count me in on that trip. Why would I look all your money? Right? You'd be in on that, Caleb, right? Because, again, it's something I want, something I'm interested in, something I could get, and we like that.

But what we often fail to look at in the story of the treasure and the story of the great pearl, we only want to look at that treasure part. And we want to kind of dismiss the other part of it to understand that to get that treasure and to get that pearl, what did these men do?

They gave up everything else for that. That's remarkable, isn't it? And I think sometimes we overlook that part.

[9:29] That being a Christian is not just about what we can get, but it's also about what are we willing to give up? What are we willing?

And another word for giving up that the Bible uses a lot is that word sacrifice. Do you know that's what sacrifice is? It's us giving up something for something of greater value.

That's what a sacrifice is. What are we willing to sacrifice? And it's interesting. After Jesus told the parable of the man with the treasure and the parable of the man and the great pearl, that was in chapter 13.

And then he traveled back to his own country right after that, and people didn't want to listen to him. And then we get to chapter 14. This is right after he had finished telling those parables.

And what we see in chapter 14 is really those parables in action. Because we're talking here about John the Baptist, right? And this is quite a story, and I know it's not, you probably have heard it, but it's not one we talk about a lot.

[10:36] It's really pretty gruesome, isn't it? I mean, we're talking about a beheading here. We're talking about people walking around with somebody's head on a platter. I can't even fathom that.

Can you? That's not a meal. It's a birthday party, right? Dawn's got one today. I'm guessing there's not going to be any heads on platters, right?

And I don't know how many people had birthdays. We're talking about birthdays, and it's interesting. This was at a birthday party. But it's a gruesome story. And you look at John the Baptist, who in this story gives up his life.

And you think, how does that unfold? How does it get to that point? And you have to look at kind of the back story of what was going on. Herod was the leader, right? He was the one in charge.

He was the one in authority. And Herod was doing some things that were not right, were not pleasing to God, were not anything that he should be doing, because he had a brother by the name of Philip.

[11:38] And Philip had a wife by the name of Herodias. All right? You following me? This is like a soap opera. You following me? It really is. So Herod, the ruler, he has a brother named Philip.

Philip has a wife named Herodias. They get divorced. And then Herod's like, yeah, I like my brother's ex-wife. I think I want to marry her.

I want her. There is only one other problem with that. Herod was still married to his first wife when he said he wanted another wife, the second one. Seeing any problems in this story at all?

I mean, just all the way around. It's just messed up, isn't it? But Herod was the ruler. And in that day and age, it was different than today.

I mean, today, if we don't like what our rulers do, the ones who are in charge, can you tell them you don't like it? Can you tell our rulers you don't like what they're doing?

[12:37] Yes. What's the worst that can happen if you do that? They probably won't listen. They don't listen. They laugh at you, whatever. But, you know, you can say what you want.

You can give your opinion. In this day and age, if there was a king, if there was a ruler, and they were doing something that you didn't approve of, do you think it was wise to tell them about it? No. No. Because you were risking something by doing that. John the Baptist, as he saw this relationship between Herod, the ruler, and Herodias, his brother's wife, and the fact that he was already married, just a messed up situation.

John the Baptist was willing to open his mouth and say, Hey, Herod, what you're doing is not right. It is sinful.

Now, here's the thing, and we can look at Herod and say, well, yeah, that's obviously messed up. But do we ever like being told that what we're doing is wrong?

[13:45] I'm not talking about Herod. I'm talking about us. Do we like being told that what we're doing is wrong? No. No. And what is the first thing when someone tells us that what we're doing is wrong? We can have a lot of different responses, but so often, what is our first response?

No. Defensive. We get defensive. We get defensive. And we come up with excuses, or who are you to tell me this, or whatever. We don't want to hear it. Well, King Herod was, again, he was the ruler, so John the Baptist says, what are you doing?

It is not right. What does Herod do? What does Herod do? Puts him in prison. Now, we're talking about what we're willing to give up, aren't we, this morning?

Just in that part alone, because we're, again, we're, I hope we're willing to sometimes go a little deeper in our faith and in God's Word to the point where it challenges the way that we think.

It's easy to read these things on the surface and really not let them penetrate into our heart. But I hope we're willing to just dig a little deeper and think about, at this point, it would have been easiest for John the Baptist just to keep his mouth shut, wouldn't it?

[14:50] And to say, you know what, King Herod is doing is wrong, but I'm not going to be the one to tell him. But John the Baptist said, no, what you're doing is wrong. He ends up being thrown in prison. What had he just given up?

His freedom. His freedom. How valuable is that? I mean, most of us would agree that giving up our freedom is a pretty valuable thing, isn't it?

John the Baptist was willing to give up his freedom. And you know, it even says that the only reason at that point that his freedom was all that he gave up, look in verse 5, and when he would have put him to death, it's talking about King Herod would have put John the Baptist to death, he feared the multitude because they counted him as a prophet.

So the only reason he didn't kill him at that point was he was afraid of the people. Otherwise, he would have had him killed right then. So John the Baptist at this point was willing to sacrifice, to give up his freedom, to be faithful to God and share with Herod that what he was doing was sinful.

Would we be willing to give up our freedom? Don't answer that, but think about it. Would we? And as the story unfolds, we find a really messed up story. I don't know how else to...

[16:10] God's in control. Don't forget that. But it's a messed up story, isn't it? So they're at this birthday party. Herodias's daughter starts dancing. I can only imagine what kind of dance she's doing.

She's dancing, and it says, it pleased Herod. And Herod made the foolish decision to say, well, I liked that, so whatever you want, I'll give you.

This daughter had talked with her mother, and her mother was out to get John the Baptist because she also did not want to hear that what they were doing was wrong. So what is she asking Herod for?

The head of John the Baptist. King Herod knows at this point. He said what he said, so he has to follow through.

And it's obvious he doesn't want to lose face with the people at the banquet. If you look in verse 9, and the king was sorry. I don't think he was really sorry about having to behead John the Baptist.

[17:12] He already wanted to kill him. But he was sorry he was in this position because the people might get angry with him. He was sorry, nevertheless, for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at the meat or at the table.

What does that part mean? It means he was afraid of what they think of him. That if I said this and didn't follow through, they're going to think less of me, so I better do it. So he did. He had John the Baptist beheaded, brought his head in on a platter, presented it.

What a story. But it's interesting, again, that this happens right after Jesus tells the parables about the treasure and the pearl. Where Jesus is saying, these men, the man that wanted the treasure and the man that wanted the pearl, they were willing to give up everything that they had for that treasure.

Everything. And then we see John the Baptist. And what is he giving up to be faithful to his God? Everything. Including his very life.

So now we're talking about sacrifices. What are we willing to give up as believers? Because again, folks, what's really been laid in my heart, and it's for me just as much as anybody else, being a Christian, it's not just about what we can get.

[18:27] So often we get stuck on that. And we get in that train of thought, what can God do for me? How is God going to bless me? What can God do to make my life better?

That is not what being a Christian is about. It's not. I know that sounds good, and we may like to hear it, but that is not what being a Christian is about. And it's not the popular thing to always say, but being a Christian is about what can I do for my God?

What can I give for Him? What can I give to Him? Excuse me. John the Baptist here was willing to give up his very life to be faithful to his God.

Do you think that, please, God? Yeah. And folks, this isn't the first time that someone was asked to give up something of great value, to make a sacrifice to God.

Think all the way back to the Old Testament, those patriarchs that we know their stories. Think of Abraham. He had his son Isaac, who he loved. We think of our children and the love you have for your children.

[19:33] There's very few things that top that, isn't there? What did God ask Abraham to give up? Isaac, his son. God said, I want you, Abraham.

Man, this is a hard story sometimes for us to come to grips with, too, because it really doesn't make a lot of sense in our minds. God said to Abraham, I want you to sacrifice your son Isaac on an altar. Why did God ask that of him? It doesn't seem like something God would ask, does it? But why did God ask that of him? To test his faith. To test his faith.

To see what are you really willing to give up? For me. Abraham, I cannot imagine the struggle that he had.

I can't. I can't even begin to fathom it. But you know what Abraham said in his mind? I am willing to give up anything and everything for my God.

[20:40] That is the story of the Bible and what God desires of us. People that follow him and say, I am willing to give up anything for my God.

The man with the treasure gave up all. The man with the pearl gave up all. Abraham was willing to give up all. John the Baptist here was willing to give what? Everything. And Jesus talks about this in other places.

We're in Matthew. Turn back a few pages to Matthew chapter 8. Turn there. Matthew 8. You're already in Matthew, so we're in too far. Matthew 8 verse 19.

Matthew 8 verse 19. And a certain scribe came and said to him, talking to Jesus, Master, I will follow you wherever you go.

That's a great thought, isn't it? Isn't that a good thing to say? How many times have we said that in our own hearts? You and me. Any of us. All of us. That we've said, Jesus, I'm willing to do whatever.

[21:44] God, I'll do whatever you ask of me. Have you said that in your life? I hope you have. Have we truly understand what that may mean?

This scribe says, I'm willing to follow you wherever you go. Look at Jesus' response to him. And Jesus said to him, the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

What is he telling that man? If you want to follow me, you're going to have to give up something. I don't even have a place to truly call home.

So if you're going to follow me, guess what that means for you? You're going to have to give up the way of life that you've been living. You may have to give up your home and where you're at and your safety and your comfort and your security and all that.

To follow me, you have to be willing to give that up. And he didn't stop there. Another one of his disciples said to him, Lord, allow me first to go and bury my father.

[22:50] So there is another disciple that said, I want to follow you, but hold on. Hold on. I just have this one thing I need to go do first. And I would follow you right now, but this is really, really important.

And would you agree that it's important for him to bury his father? But what does Jesus say? Follow me and let the dead bury their dead. What is Jesus really telling both these people? You've got to be willing to give up something. Matter of fact, you need to be willing to give up everything. Does that mean God is going to ask you to give up everything? No. But what if he does? What's your response going to be?

What's my response going to be? What am I truly willing to give up for him? Here's the thing.

[23:57] It's not about what we can get. It's about what we're willing to give. But here's what we have to understand. No matter what we're forced to give. The man that sold his treasure, all that he had to buy that field with the treasure, was that worth it?

Was it worth it? The man that sold everything he had to buy that one pearl of great price, was it worth it? Yes. John the Baptist, who was willing to give up his freedom, he gave up his very life to be faithful to God, was it worth it?

Abraham, who was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac, was it worth it? Everybody say yes. Yes.

That's the answer to all of it. It is worth it. Whatever sacrifice God asks of us, whatever is required that we give up, it's worth it.

It's worth it. One of the definitions of a sacrifice is to give up something of great value to gain something of a greater value.

[25:10] That's what we need to be willing to do. To be willing to give up anything we can give up here on this earth, guess what? It's not as valuable as what God has for us. Do we understand that? Our homes, our way of life, our way of thinking, our priorities, none of that compares with what God has for us.

We need to be willing to give any of this up if God asks it of us to gain what He has for us. That is what Jesus is trying to get across to the disciples, and I think what God wants to get across to us. Last verse I want you to look at is in Romans 8. And the whole thought of understanding that it's worth it, I really enjoy these verses.

Romans 8, beginning in verse 16. Romans 8, beginning in verse 16. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. If so be that we, what with Him? Suffer. That means it's not always going to be easy. That means we may be asked to give up things that are hard.

[26:29] Do you think Abraham suffered some when God said, I want you to sacrifice your son? Yeah. Did John the Baptist suffer some? Yes. Giving up requires some suffering.

If we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. And then this next verse I love. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time, that means anything we may be required to give up, any difficulty we may have, any sacrifice that God calls us to, any difficulty that we go through, the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Praise God. Do you know what that means? No matter what we go through, no matter what we have to give up, it's nothing compared to how great of things God has for us.

Isn't that a wonderful thought? Yes. I don't know what God is going to ask me to give up in the future or what I'll be forced to give up for Him.

I don't know that answer for you either. If I don't know it for me, I certainly don't know it for you. But what I do know is what God's Word tells us, that it will be worth it if you remain faithful.

[27:50] It will be worth it. And I always think back, there's a saying that actually it's attributed to a couple different people. There was a man by the name of Jim Elliott.

How many of you know Jim Elliott? There's a movie about him, Tip of the Spear, I think is the name of it. He was called to be a missionary to Ecuador, to some tribes in Ecuador that were not really very friendly.

And Jim Elliott ended up being killed as a missionary. But one of the things that he had said prior to that really sums up what Jesus is talking about.

And it's also attributed to, any of you ever use Matthew Henry's commentary? It was also attributed to him. So I don't know who said it the first time. He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. Any of the things we have on here on this earth, are we able to keep them?

[29:05] No. We talked earlier about things we give up in life. Your health. Are you able to keep that forever? No. What if you really watch what you eat, though?

No. What if you really are exercising on a regular basis? No. Guess what? You're still going to give it up, aren't you? No. You can't keep it. What about family and friends that you love?

Can you keep them forever? No. What's going to happen? No. They're going to die, or you're going to die first. Cheery thought, right? No. Reality.

You can't keep them. You can't hold on to that. No. No. He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

What God has for us, we cannot lose. It's for eternity. It is permanent. I know we've talked about a lot of different things this morning.

[30:01] But I want you in your life to think about that one word, sacrifice. What are you willing to give up for God? I'm not asking what may God ask you to give up.

I don't know the answer to that, but what are you willing to give up? And I pray that my answer, and it's a challenge, but I pray my answer and your answer is everything.

All. It's a tough thing to come to terms with in your mind, isn't it? Am I truly willing to give all for him? But I pray we get to that point.

And it may take some time to get to that point, but I pray we get there. To realize that whatever God asks of us, we need to be willing. And it will be worth it. Let's pray.

Lord God, thank you again for your word. And Lord, I know that sometimes it's hard, it's challenging. And I think of these men that asked Christ that question and said, I'm willing to follow you wherever you go.

[31:00] And I'm sure they expected the response, great, follow me. But instead, Christ challenged them. He challenged them by saying, you're going to have to give up some things. Lord, challenge us.

Help us to be willing to say, I'm willing to give all. To follow you. I'm willing to sacrifice anything I have to follow you. I'm willing to give everything I have to gain what you have for me and for my life. Help us to be obedient in that. Help us to be courageous in that. And help us to be faithful in that. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. As we close this morning, the altar is open.

If you have any need, maybe you just want to pray for just the wisdom and the faithfulness to be able to say, Lord, I'm willing to give all for you. But whatever the need, the altar is open this morning.

I know that's an old song and it's a beautiful song. And you know as we sang it, I hope that we mean it. Because the song that we sang, we didn't just sing I surrender part.

[32:11] Or I surrender a little bit. Or I surrender what's left over. We just sang I surrender all. Folks, that's what God desires from us all. And I pray that is what we're willing to give.

Don't? Yes. Okay. I pray that we are willing to give Him all. Consider that this week. Let's pray. Lord God, thank You again for this morning that You've given us. I thank You for Your Word to challenge us. And Lord, I pray that we leave here with joy in our hearts. But also, just with the

attitude I'm willing to give You all.

Whatever that requires. Whatever that means. Whatever You ask. Lord, help that to be the desire that's in our hearts. And Lord, I know that through that we find strength.

We find peace. We find hope. We find so many things. But it's not just about what we get. It's about what we're willing to give. So help us to have that willingness to give it up to You.

[33:18] Watch over each one of us, Lord, as we leave this place. And thank You for being a God that loves us. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. As you leave this morning, I am going to ask if those on this side of the room in particular could leave your hymnals on your seat.

That'll help us as we pick up the chairs. So thank you. God bless you. Amen.