

Treasure in a Field

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[0 : 00] Hey Josh, why would anyone want to become a Christian?

That's so uncool, that's so archaic, that's so fundamentalist, it sounds so weird being a Christian. Why would anyone want to become a Christian? Have you ever asked that question before? Have you ever been asked that question before? Maybe you're someone here who's not a Christian and you've always wanted to know, why would anyone want to become a Christian?

Well, in today's passage, in Matthew 13, Jesus tells some parables, some stories, and he gives us the answer to that question, why follow Jesus?

Now in Matthew 13, Jesus has been teaching crowds of people. Imagine 20 times the population of the people in this room, scores of people he's been teaching about the kingdom of God.

[1 : 06] But in the parables we're going to look at, he turns just to the 12, his 12 closest disciples. And he tells them, tells them three stories.

The first two are kind of similar. This is Matthew 13 verses 44 to 46. Now the two parables are actually quite similar.

Someone finds something of value and they give up all they have to get that treasure. And for one guy, it's treasure in a field. For another guy, it's a pearl.

The man in the first parable, in verse 44, well he finds treasure in a field. And it's so valuable that he, well, basically he runs home and he puts everything he has on eBay.

He sells the cat, the dog, the house, the clothes, the big screen TV, the surround sound system, the couch. And whatever he doesn't sell on eBay, he runs around the corner to cash converters.

[2 : 20] He literally sells everything. His watch, his shoes, the shirt off his back, his wedding ring, everything. To go by the field and keep the treasure.

Now the next story, the bloke with the pearl, he's a guy who's in the pearl business. He knows a thing or two about pearls. He knows a good one when he sees it.

And what happens? Well, he finds it. He finds the ultimate pearl. The most valuable pearl he's ever seen. And like the guy in the first story, straight away he sells his entire collection to get the pearl.

And Jesus says that's what the kingdom of heaven is like. Now in this passage, he's telling parables. They're not word for word descriptions of what the kingdom of heaven actually is.

So it's not actual treasure in a block of land somewhere. Don't go next door to the smith's house and try digging up the backyard. It's not there. You won't find it. It's not literally a pearl in a glass cabinet at Zammel's Jewelers, level three, Doncaster Shopping Town.

[3 : 23] You can't get it there either. It's not the point of the story. They're parables. They're illustrations or stories. That points to a bigger reality. And the point of these two parables is both the worth and the cost of following Jesus.

From here on in, in Matthew's gospel, Jesus is headed for Jerusalem, where he'll be rejected by the Jewish religious leaders, handed over to the Romans, who will torture him and humiliate him and ultimately put him to death on a cross.

That's where he'll be. That's where he'll be. That's where he'll be. That's where he'll be. He has come to die. But he's not there yet. That's still to come. So at this point, the disciples can pull away. They can pull out. They can leave. The question is, is following Jesus worth it? The answer to those questions is found in the parables. The worth of following Jesus.

It's clear in the first parable. The man in the field finds treasure. And then note Jesus says, in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has.

[4 : 30] Don't miss that word. Don't skip over it. It's only a one sentence parable. But don't skip over that word. In his joy. It's there for a reason. Because the guy loses absolutely everything.

And he doesn't shed a tear over anything. No tears. No regrets. He does it gladly. And that only makes sense if the treasure is worth more than what he started with.

I don't know if you remember back to Black Saturday at the start of this year. But I remember in the newspapers and on TV seeing the images of people just sobbing. Just broken.

Tears running down their faces. People in Marysville and King Lake. Because they literally lost everything. Their homes were flattened. Burnt to a crisp. They had nowhere to live.

Nowhere to sleep. Nowhere to eat. No clothes. No memories. Because all their photo albums had been destroyed. Irreplaceable stuff.

[5 : 30] Gone. Like that. I remember seeing those images of great sadness. People were devastated. The man in the first parable also loses all he has.

But it's not to a natural disaster or bushfire. No. He voluntarily and gladly trades it all in to have the treasure. That's the worth of following Jesus.

Sounds a bit like that Maybelline makeup commercial. You know. You're worth it. Following Jesus is worth it. He's worth more than everything because in his words and in his life, in his death and his resurrection, Jesus proves he is the king of the kingdom.

The future kingdom of God where God reigns forever over his people. God's saving rule in heaven forever. Jesus is that king. And he proves it.

We see it through Matthew's gospel. Jesus raises people from the dead. He heals people who are sick. He has great power. And he proves that he's the king of the kingdom.

[6 : 39] So following Jesus is worth it. Now the next parable with the pearl tells of the cost of following Jesus. The man in the pearl business, he loses everything too.

Like the first guy. The point though is not that anyone can buy the kingdom. You can't. You cannot buy it. Jesus says earlier in Matthew 6 that the kingdom is actually a gift from the father.

You can't buy what's a gift. And you only insult the giver if you do. So it's a gift. You can't buy it. The point though is that following Jesus is so important that you need to grab hold of him with both hands.

You can't have one hand attached to the world and one hand to Jesus. You have to put all your eggs in his basket. Throw yourself all in with him. If the situation were the Titanic so to speak, you can't have one foot in the lifeboat and one foot on deck.

Either get in or get out. It's the same with following Jesus. Don't play games with the kingdom and have one foot in and one foot out. You can't because if you're not all in, you are all out.

[7 : 52] In other words, Jesus is so worth it. Do whatever it takes, whatever it costs to grab hold of Jesus with both hands. Listen to how Jesus tells his disciples about the cost back in chapter 10, verse 37.

He says, Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

And whoever does not take up the cross. Now, a cross is an ancient instrument of death and execution. It is not an annoying relative or an ailment that you have.

It is an instrument that they put people to death on. Jesus says, Whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it.

Those who lose their life for my sake will find it. What's the cost of following Jesus? Put simply, the cost is everything. Jesus is supremely valuable and following him is supremely important.

[8 : 59] Don't hold on to this world with one hand and the kingdom with the other. Don't hang on to your time, your money, your family, your hobbies, your career, laziness, sexual temptation, even your life.

Don't let peer disapproval or family or cultural expectations keep you from following Jesus. It's way too important. Don't let peer into account. But for a lot of people, they do hold on to something.

Something or someone. Instead of being all in. An American guy, Matt Chandler, says this. He's talking about idolatry and desires.

He says, It could be anything.

It could be a relationship. It could be stuff. It could be a trinket. It could be your kids. It could be your marriage. It may be this country. It could be your safety. It could be anything.

[10 : 14] But we close our hands around it and we say, We'll do whatever you want us to do and we'll go wherever you want us to go. And you can be God. But I just don't want you to touch this.

I don't want to talk about it. But this is mine. Jesus says you can't be like that and follow him.

Grab hold of Jesus with both hands. Now in a few weeks, Wayne, Chris Badich, the youth minister here at Holy Trinity and I are going to Port Hedland in northwestern Australia with a team from this church.

I don't know if you know anything about Port Hedland, but it is a hot and dry mining town. There's seriously nothing there but a mine. That's it. People flown from all over Australia to Port Hedland and they come to Port Hedland for one reason.

That's to make big bucks at the Port Hedland iron ore mine. So they basically uproot their lives from wherever they come from, whatever the city or state they come from, to Port Hedland because of the promise of treasure.

[11 : 27] Piles and piles of money they can make working at the mine. Now we're going there to tell people to stop worshipping money and instead worship and serve Jesus.

And I can imagine that not many people want to hear that message. I can also imagine that becoming a Christian in Port Hedland could be quite difficult because the whole town is built on and built around the idea of wealth and money.

Jesus calls it in Matthew 6, treasure on earth. And I can imagine that someone who becomes a Christian in Port Hedland will find it very, very difficult to love and worship and serve Jesus while the whole town worships and serves and loves money.

Someone who becomes a Christian in Port Hedland, to remain loyal to Jesus, may even have to leave town. And that's a costly move, to move jobs and family into state for the sake of Jesus.

But that's what it might mean for someone. To follow Jesus is costly. It may cost financially, like a change of career or jobs, working less in order not to worship money and to serve Jesus instead.

[12 : 39] The financial cost may mean giving money away, perhaps paying someone's ticket to go to Hedland to preach the gospel to the miners. Following Jesus may cost relationally.

Some people may not be financially rich. They're rich differently. They have lots of friends and lots of family and it matters to them. So following Jesus may cost relationally.

When I became a Christian, the first thing my mum said to me was, I am so disappointed in you. For some people, following Jesus costs relationally.

Because their family aren't Christian or their spouse isn't Christian. There's threat of disapproval, disrupting the kind of family harmony. There's exclusion.

Following Jesus may even ultimately cost you your life. That's the point of what Jesus says in Matthew 10 about carrying the cross and those who lose their life for me.

[13 : 35] He says, if the crunch comes and your life is on the line for the sake of Jesus, in many parts of the world today, people still put Christians to death because they hate Jesus. Following Jesus is more important than saving your own skin.

So far, the parables have told us that following Jesus is worth everything. You get the kingdom. You get the treasure. Following Jesus costs everything.

It may even cost you your life. All in or all out. Now, the third parable is that the alternative is horrible. Look with me back in Matthew 13, verses 47 to 50.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind. When it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down and put the good into baskets and threw out the bad.

So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire where there will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

[14 : 39] If following Jesus is more like that first parable about unspeakable joy, then rejecting Jesus, rejecting the kingdom, is unimaginable horror.

This parable says that the kingdom is like a big net in the ocean. It brings up a huge catch of fish. Think like John West. Some fish are kept and other fish are thrown out.

Jesus says that's what the kingdom of God is like. Those who belong to Jesus, his forgiven followers, will enter the kingdom of God forever. But those who reject Jesus, who live against him, will be punished by Jesus forever.

Look at those horrible words. In verse 50, he says, He says, So follow Jesus, get the kingdom. Great joy. Reject Jesus. Reject the kingdom. Suffer God's judgment forever. The point is, the man with the field has great joy.

[15 : 50] He grabbed the treasure with both hands. No turning back. But for some people, Jesus just isn't worth it. The cost of following Jesus isn't worth it either.

They're not all in. They push back the lifeboat and they stay on the Titanic. Jesus says, How foolish that decision is. Let me ask you this question.

Where are you at with these parables about the worth of Jesus and the cost of following Jesus and the horrible alternative? Are you, as it were, on the Titanic, looking out at the lifeboats, kicking them away?

Or have you instead done like the man with the field and jumped ship, got on the lifeboat, grabbed it with both hands? Are you a follower of Jesus?

Have you done what the men in the first two parables have done and thrown everything in with Jesus? If you haven't, but you'd like to, that's a great thing. I'll tell you how to do that in a second.

[17 : 00] But if it's not for you, for whatever reason, I want you to think carefully about those words Jesus says in verse 50 again. Thrown out, furnace of fire, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The first two parables are the invitation, if you like. The third parable of the net is the warning. Eternal life or eternal death, with Jesus or against him, all in or all out.

Will you follow Jesus? Now, if in your mind that's something you want to do today, that's a great thing. How about I lead us in a little prayer that simply tells God that you want to do that, you want to be a follower of Jesus.

What I'll do though, is I'll read out the prayer first, before we say it together. That way, so you know what you're signing up for. That way you can, you know, you can say it's what you agree with.

And when I read it out, you can say it to God on your own, in your head, or quietly under your breath. God will hear you. He promised he will. And the prayer to God just goes like this.

[18 : 12] Dear God, sorry I've rejected you as my king, and sorry I've rebelled against you. Thank you that your son Jesus died on the cross in my place and took the punishment I deserve.

Thank you for raising Jesus from the dead, so that I can be forgiven and become your child today. Please help me from now on to live with Jesus as my treasure and obey Jesus as my treasure.