

The Parables of the Treasure and the Pearl

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, thanks for coming back. Great to be with you. When I speak at events like this, almost always, before the talk, I'm interviewed like I was two weeks ago, which is great.
- You get to know me, breaks the ice. And I was asked, Mike, how did you become a Christian? I shared a bit about that last week in my family being not very religious.
- But my answer is gradually, no dramatic, sore-like conversion. Just over my teenage years, I gradually grew into faith.
- By the age of 18, I was a youth leader, begun university in Wollongong. I'm not a bold Christian, I think I like assurance.
- I'm pretty proud about my faith. That all changed in October 1972. I was in Wollongong. They had back then a Christian tour company called Christian Youth Tours.
- [1 : 0 2] I've got the name here. Sorry, South Coast Christian Tours. And then a tour to a little town called Gravenhullen, two hours west of Wollongong, population 253.
- Claim to fame, they found sapphires there. So you'd have a sapphire safari. So I went with some of my youth group on this tour with other young Christian kids for a weekend or a few days.
- I forget the talks. They were not memorable. But the young people I was with, my contemporaries, were just so passionate for Jesus.
- They just were so excited about being a Christian. And it was infectious. I mean, God changed my life that weekend. I went away just excited about Christ. I've been taking Sunday school for three or four years, which I shouldn't have done because I probably wasn't converted.
- It was just something I did, a job I did at church. But after that, I wanted those kids to know Jesus. I just wanted to understand the gospel and be saved. Back then in the 70s in Wollongong and in other parts of the country, if you're a keen Christian, you put a bumper sticker on your car.
- [2 : 1 2] Do you remember that? The popular one was, honk if you love Jesus. On the back windscreen of the car, honk if you love Jesus. I was a young driver.
- Everywhere I went in Wollongong, people honked me. It was the most Christian city, I think, in the country, or maybe my driving. Anyway, I was at university.
- I got involved in CU. Very involved in CU. I did a national degree. In my last year, my third year, I had six hours full-time. Two hours Monday.
- Four hours Tuesday. Tuesday was a big day. Four hours Tuesday. The rest of the week was Christian Union. We had the first Wollongong Uni mission. Organized by the students.
- Invited this young tutor from Sydney to come and be our missionary. A guy called Peter Jensen. I'm not sure what became of him, but anyway. But my point is, oh, and three years later I was in Pakistan with CMS.

- [3 : 13] My point is, that weekend, while I understood the gospel pretty well, I'd never really found Christ in a way that excited me.
- That weekend, I found a treasure, a pearl, a sense of wonder that has never left me. I guess that's true of you too.
- The wonder of knowing Christ. And I think I, hopefully like you, am just as excited now as I was 50 years ago in knowing Jesus.
- Last week we looked at two parables, two brief ones. The parable of the mustard seed and the yeast making a very simple point that God's kingdom will grow and grow magnificently.
- Now two more. And they're very, again, they're very simple. Sometimes in preparing a talk or a barber study, you spend hours and hours in the commentaries.
- [4 : 14] Trying to work out what's the passage about, what's the big idea, the context. What are the tough things to explain? Not here. You hardly need a commentary. The meaning is plain.
- It's clear. Now it does raise some issues. Like, for example, do you need to sell everything to find the kingdom? And it raises for us some personal questions.
- Like what is really important to us? How much does Jesus mean to us? Do we love him more now than before?
- What are we prepared to give up for the sake of Jesus? We'll look at those in a little while. Well, let's look at the two parables. In the first one, we meet an ordinary man.
- He's walking down the street. I guess he decides to take a shortcut across the field. He's thinking about things and not watching where he's going. And he stumbles over something. Maybe a stone, maybe a tree stump.
- [5 : 21] But no, it looks like the edge of a box. A wooden box. A hard box. So he scoops away some dirt.
- And sure enough, it's a box. And a very, very big box. He scoops away more dirt and lifts it out. And it's a very big and very heavy box.
- It's full of stuff. He's able to finally pull it out. He's curious. The box has a lock on it. He looks around to make sure no one's looking because this isn't his field.
- But this isn't his box. He's very careful. Pulls out his knife. Plays the lock. And finally, the lock snaps. He opens this huge box.
- And he can't believe his eyes. And what he finds inside. He finds gold necklaces worth weighing 10 kilos.
- [6 : 19] A golden rope. Golden bangles. Silver cups and plates. Kilos of gold in the shape of loaves.
- A sack full of diamonds. Jewels like sapphires and emeralds. Two kilos of gold coins. He finds 40 kilos of treasure worth, I guess today, \$100 million.
- He can hardly contain his excitement. This will change his life forever. He's going to have this treasure. But there's a problem, as I said.
- It's not his field. It's not his treasure. He'd be stealing to take it away. And besides, it's far too heavy. No.
- He has to have the field. Get the field. Get the treasure. So he makes some inquiries. And sure enough, the field is for sale. But it's very expensive.
- [7 : 22] It'll cost him everything. But if he sells his house, his furniture, his animals, his fishing business, then he can buy the field.

And he does so. But what's a house and a business and animals compared to a treasure like that? And in his joy, he sold all he had and bought the field.

That's the story. Embellished somewhat by my imagination. Before banks, it was common for people to hide their treasure.

Maybe you do that. You might hide some of your jewelry or your important documents. Lest a thief come in and steal. You have maybe under the bed or in the coffee jar or behind the clothes, in the wardrobe.

You hide stuff. That's very common. Now, we can't take the parables details too literally. That's parables aren't like that. Allah told a parable about a woman, a widow who came to a judge again and again to seek justice.

[8 : 36] And he was hard-hearted. And just shoot her away again and again. Finally, she wore him out and he gave her justice. Our Lord says, God's that judge. No, he's not hard-hearted.

Don't take it too literally. The point's about being persistent in prayer. Same here. Same here. He's not saying be sneaky. This guy was fairly sneaky in trying to get the treasure.

If he'd been honest, he'd have told the man, the owner, this is your treasure. He's somewhat deceptive. Our Lord isn't saying be deceptive.

And he isn't saying don't tell anyone about the treasure. Keep it to yourself. Not at all. He's saying that to go and tell the world. And he's not saying you can buy the kingdom.

Sell all you have to get salvation. Although we'll come back to that in a moment. The simple point is finding God's kingdom. The simple point is finding God's kingdom. Salvation.

[9 : 43] Jesus is so wonderful. You'll give everything for it. Once you meet Jesus, you've met all you want in life.

Everything else is just relativized. And then, as with last week's two parables, to emphasize the point, he repeats it with another little parable.

There, make it the same point. There's a slight difference. In the first parable, a man just happens to stumble upon the treasure. Wasn't looking for it, just happened to trip over it.

Like someone sits at a bench, a train, and there on the bench is the gospel of Matthew. He just happens to pick it up and find Jesus. Just happens upon the gospel.

This guy happens upon it. In the second parable about the pearl, this man is searching for it. That's his job, to find precious jewels.

[10 : 41] We don't call him a seeker. I heard a while ago a story about this parable that I've never forgotten. It's about a man.

It's his 25th wedding anniversary. He goes to a jeweler store to buy a special ring for his beloved. He says to the jeweler, it's my 25th anniversary. I've got a very special wife.

I want something special. So he shows him his array of jewels, his sapphires, emeralds, diamonds. He says, well, they're very nice, but really, don't you have something special?

Well, I do have one thing I keep at the back. I don't show it to many people, but I'll get it for you. He reads out from the back, this little box, and opens it, and there is the most wonderful pearl the man has ever seen.

That's stunning. Oh, I'd love that, but it must be very expensive. Oh, yes, it is very expensive. But you can afford it.

[11 : 45] Really? Well, how much is it? Well, that's everything you've got. Nothing more, nothing less. That's a lot.

But, hey, that is such a pearl. She's an amazing woman. I'll take it. So how else do you have? Well, I've got money.

I've got \$100,000. Well, that becomes mine. What's in your wallet? Just my credit cards. Well, they become mine, too. Oh, you've got all my money.

Well, where do you live? In my house. That becomes mine, too. Well, if you take my house, where do I put my possessions?

Not a problem. They become mine, too. Well, where do I live? In the car? Oh, no, don't be silly. The car's mine, as well.

[12 : 49] Well, you have everything. You have my money, my house, my possessions, my car. You have everything. Do you live alone? No, I have a wife and two children.

Well, they become mine as well. Well, no, you do have everything. Money, house, possessions, car, wife, children. All that's left is me. You become mine as well.

It's now all mine, and I give you now this pearl. Now, actually, I don't need these things right now. You can keep them for a little while until I need them. But when I do need them, remember, they belong to me, and you must give them to me.

That's the picture here. Giving everything to find a pearl of immeasurable value.

Two short stories about finding a treasure so wonderful, you'll joyfully give up everything to obtain it. Let's think of three things that I think come from these parables.

[14 : 03] The first is the hiddenness of the kingdom. He finds this hidden treasure. Now, whether the hiddenness is just part of the story, I think it's more than that.

In the first parable of the sower, the disciples asked Jesus, Lord, why do you speak in parables, in riddles? He said to them, the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom has been given to you, but not to them.

You're the ones who've left your nets, your tax booth, in a sense, your business, your house, your animals. You've left everything to follow me because you've come to understand something about who I am and my kingdom.

You know I'm the ruler of the Messiah. You know I've come to save and heal people. You know that. They don't, and they should know that. They see what you see.

They've seen my miracles. They've seen me raise the dead. Cast out demons, still a storm, make the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear. They've seen that, yet in their stubbornness, they refuse to believe.

[15 : 19] So, in judgment, the kingdom's secrets is hidden from them. He quotes Isaiah. You'll be ever hearing, but never understanding.

You'll be ever seeing, but never perceiving. This is your field, but I've hidden the treasure in this field, and they can't find it.

But those outside do. Sometimes God hides things from people. Even Christians, he hides things from them. Remember the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus on that first Easter morning?

They've heard the amazing news that Christ has risen, and they're befuddled. They're confused. They're walking home, and a man joins them. A man they know.

They're his disciples. They've been with him. They've heard him speak. Now, of course, he'd be the last man they thought would be walking with them. But anyway, they don't recognize him.

[16 : 28] Why? Because they were kept from recognizing him. God, in that sense, closed their eyes. Then later, over dinner, their eyes were opened, and they recognized.

God shuts eyes. God hides. God's open eyes. And reveals. I don't know how many people walk by that field with a hidden treasure.

Probably many. But God had the eyes of one man to find it. Whenever we teach God's word, we may say the prayer of Psalm 119, verse 18.

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. Second, the cost of the kingdom.

Both men sell all they have to receive the kingdom. Well, that's just a story. We don't literally sell all we have. Matthew 19, verse 16 tells another story.

[17 : 44] A true one. Not a parable. A rich man who came to our Lord with a question. What good thing must I do to get eternal life? We have a discussion about the law.

And then Jesus says, go sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me.

The Lord says, count the cost. Sit down, do your sums. Can you, in a sense, afford it? I guess it's a bit like marriage.

Now, we don't have in our culture dowries. I got married in Pakistan. I didn't give my in-laws four camels, two water buffaloes and 12 goats.

There's no bribe price. But before you marry, just stop and think about the cost. You've lived an independent life.

[18 : 48] You've spent your money how you want to. You've gone where you want to. You've done what you want to do. You are completely independent. That now all changes.

You no longer live for yourself, but for someone else. You go where they want to go. Your money is their money.

How you spend your time is how you spend your time together. Their family, like them or not, are now your family. Are you prepared for that?

And your answer is, oh, Mike, if you knew her, if you knew him, she is such a sweetie.

Lovely, kind, patient, generous. He is such, well, he's a bit of a hunk, but he's honest and good, respectful and faithful.

[20 : 00] I'd give up everything to spend my life with her. I'd sell the lot to live forever with him. That's the picture here.

When I was 24, I went out with CMS to Pakistan. I'd been for a while quite excited, but as the months went by and the time for departure drew near, my excitement waned.

I remember living, sitting, I was living in an apartment in Cabramatta. Saturday night, lying in my bed, thinking about leaving my family, my friends, my job. I'd begun preaching. I just lay there in bed, and I just said to myself in bed, wouldn't it be great if the whole thing just fell through?

I could keep my house and my furniture, my animals, my fishing business, and God spoke to me. I think the most profound experience of my Christian life.

I can remember, like yesterday, what God said. Now, it wasn't a voice like you hear to now, but it was a deep inner voice. I sat bolt upright in bed. I shook for days. He said this to me.

[21 : 17] Mike, you are not your own. You were bought with a price. If you never meant me to be your Lord, why did you call me Lord in the first place?

That night was a crossroad in my life. I'd found the greatest treasure Jesus who gave his life for me.

But for a moment, I wanted to keep everything. And I knew I couldn't. I had to count the cost. In the end, I went to Pakistan joyfully.

And my life has never been the same. Finally, the main point. Those who find the kingdom of heaven find Jesus an incredible treasure.

So tonight, let's open up our treasure box and see what's inside. There's forgiveness.

[22 : 42] All our sins are taken away. Christ has washed us clean for all our dirt.

And we sit here tonight with a completely cleansed conscience. Stunning. We are adopted as God's sons and daughters.

We're his children. He's our father. We live in his presence every day and every night. We are never, ever alone again. He is with us always.

We have in us his powerful spirit who's changing us, making us more like Jesus. We have a life that's useful. We have the best work in the world to build the kingdom of God and see people's lives change for eternity.

We know all that happens in our life is for her purpose, a good purpose. And we are part of a family of believers.

[23 : 50] Now, many of you know my daughter Lauren. And thank you, Doncaster, for supporting her in her missionary work. My name is Lauren. I'm out with CMS in Spain. Some years ago, I was preaching in Darwin on a Sunday morning, relaxing Sunday afternoon, and my phone rang.

It was Lauren. She was in Sydney. She was an AFES trainee at a conference in Sydney and driving home Sunday afternoon in our star wagon, our eight-seater star wagon.

She'd taken six friends to the conference and was driving home Sunday afternoon and my phone rang. I knew it wasn't her asking how my sermon went.

She's driving home mid-afternoon. I think I know why she's ringing. Dad, the car's broken down.

I'm halfway between Goldwood and Middagong. What should I do? I said, well, Lauren, I know the pastor of the church in Middagong. I'll be with him next weekend, actually. Give Richard a buzz.

[24 : 53] He'll help you. She did. He came, ordered, got the car towed away. Her and the girl spent, her friend spent the night with him and his family to look after them. Then, Dad, how do I get home to Melbourne?

I'm in Middagong. So she put on Facebook her dilemma that she's stuck in Middagong. A friend in Melbourne saw the Facebook post and said to her husband, honey, I think you should pick her up.

He said, I think so too. He hopped in the car, drove 800 kilometers to pick her and her friends up, turned around and drove 800 kilometers back to bring them back to Melbourne.

I said to Lauren, Lauren, that is the body of Christ, the family of believers. What would you give to live in a family like that?

And we have an inheritance. Jesus conquered death. We now, death's just a door we walk through into eternal life.

[26 : 08] No more sinning. No more anger or temptation or lust or envy or greed. No more corruption or bribery or scammers.

No more cancer or arthritis, depression, anxiety. No more famine or floods or fires or earthquakes. No more war or racism or sexism or death.

What would you give for an eternal life like that forever with Jesus? What an inheritance. before COVID, I went every year to Tanzania to teach preaching.

While there, I met a CMS missionary. Her name is Helen Hoskins. Single lady, worked in Tanzania for 40 years.

grew up in Sydney, grew up in Sydney, a wealthy parent. Her father owned a steel business worth millions. And one day she, with her three siblings, would inherit millions.

[27 : 18] She did computing at Sydney University, became a computer programmer and became a Christian. Her parents were Anglicans normally and were angry she became a Christian.

Then she told them she was going to Bible college and they were furious. They said, you're throwing your life away. But it got worse. She told them she was going to Africa as a missionary and they were livid.

Livid. They threatened to disinherit her. But she went to Tanzania. Until the day she died for 20 years, they maintained the rage.

And when her father died, her mother tried to forbid her to go to the funeral. But here's the thing. At one point in Helen's life, she was given a choice.

Follow Jesus to one of the poorest countries in the world or receive an inheritance worth millions and a life of prosperity and ease.

[28 : 26] And she walked away from a worldly fortune. Actually, Helen told me later that her parents had later softened and gave her some inheritance.

She lived in a town called Bunda where she helped pregnant girls learn to sew. and with her inheritance she built a school for single girls and a primary school for children.

I've been to Bunda. There's no TripAdvisor Bunda. You can't stay in the Bunda Hilton.

There's nothing to see in Bunda. No nice restaurant to eat in. There's no reason at all to go to Bunda. It's a simple, dirty, hot, overcrowded African town.

You go through there to get somewhere else. It was at home for 20, 30 years and she's a very, very happy woman. She's retired now.

[29 : 34] She has cancer and come back to Sydney. Bunda is in the Diocese of Mara. To mark all she's done, the Bishop of Mara announced last year Helen will be annually celebrated on May 12th, which she now calls Helen Hoskins Day.

Well deserved. the one that she received a far greater celebration and an honour from someone far greater than any bishop, the Lord God himself.

Why did Helen turn her back on millions of dollars? Life in the lovely city of Sydney for Bunda. because she has a far better inheritance.

She's found something, someone with more than millions of dollars. She's found the kingdom. She's found Jesus. She found a joy, a delight and treasure more than anything this world can offer.

I trust you found this treasure. I'm sure you have. But it would be remiss of me, not to say tonight, but maybe someone here who's a seeker, who's not found that treasure, not found the kingdom, not found their sins washed away, not found a new life, not found a hope of heaven and it's here for the taking.

[31 : 33] Don't leave tonight without knowing Jesus. And for the rest of us, I've got to ask us, I guess, how's your passion now for Jesus?

your delight and your joy in knowing him. How long has it been? 20, 30, 40, 50 years since that moment you found the treasure and maybe sometimes over the years the passion dies down a bit, the heat becomes lukewarm.

tonight. Look again into that treasure box and see the spiritual riches God has given us in Christ and leave here tonight filled in Peter's words with inexpressible joy.

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

[33 : 15] Let me pray. Lord Jesus, you are our greatest treasure. We delight to know you and even more to be known by you. We gaze into this treasure box with wonder and amazement at your gift to us.

The gift of yourself, the gift of your blood, and your body, the gift of your spirit, the gift of sharing eternity with you and the Father and the Spirit, the gift of each other, the gift of adoption.

We praise you, Jesus. Fill our hearts tonight again, I pray, with joy. If there be any yet who have not found that treasure, open their eyes to see Jesus.

hearts, open our hearts tonight again and fill them with love and praise and joy in knowing him. We pray this for our delight and for your glory.

Amen. But if you have questions, you either text the questions to our phone or raise your hand, I'll run around with the mic and you can ask your question to the mic so we can all hear.

[34 : 30] So are there any questions either from tonight's talk or the last couple of weeks or anything in life generally? G'day Mike, Dean Troth.

Thank you again. You've done a terrific job. Given, well I heard second hand on my balcony that you corrected me last week.

So some friends of my son's said that you corrected me but it wasn't me that came up with a figure. But in terms of the Rogan interview, but it was this protestia website, etc, etc.

But the question around that was this immense treasure, how do we get the word out? We've got this incredible treasure beyond value, beyond worth our whole life.

What is the best way to get the word out? three things the scripture says.

[35 : 49] In the Bible there are two ways to do mission, as it were. One is attractional. People come to us. You are the light of the world. Years ago I went to a church in Sydney, I don't think I've said this, called some Barnabas Broadway, Barnies.

A woman walked in off the street, Rosie, stayed a few weeks and then said to my wife Sarah, you people go on and on and on about love. I'm going to get out there and tell people.

We've been trying for about 150 years. The point being, you guys blow me away. and she's still there 20 years later. She found a people of love and she said, God is in this place.

So one way I think is just to be a people, we'll see this next week as we look at the parables of judgment, be a people of love, be such an attractive community that people want to join us.

Be salt and light, be good, bear the spirit's fruit. incredibly appealing. And when we don't, incredibly repulsive, turns people off.

[37 : 05] So that's the first thing, be the church as God meant it to be and go and tell, go and tell, with joy, with joy.

I think people should see our passion, our love for Jesus. It should be infectious. That's why, new converts are fantastic. They're so excited, aren't they? The problem is when you get to my age, you become more Anglican, more restrained, less emotional, never lift your hands, whatever it might be.

Lord, make me have that same passion and delight to tell people and share the joy. Now, of course, the gospel is a word of warning too. There are consequences of not believing, but it's called good news for a reason.

It is such good news. So I guess, if you've lost that passion, pray, Lord, give it back to me, that I can, with joy, share this good news.

That leads to another question that's come in, and you've answered part of it already. In fact, two questions have asked a similar thing. How do I get back the spark if the treasure doesn't seem as appealing as all we own?

[38 : 25] Terrific question. So you mentioned prayer. Have you got any other ideas? Yeah, I mean, I think that it is prayer, I think.

And it's a prayer God delights to answer. I might give you another story. My dad became a believer in his 40s, went to a church, got baptized, but then the church imploded, and dad was deeply hurt, deeply hurt, left that church, went to a church in St.

Luke's Daphto, which is Andrew and I, that's our hometown, and he warmed a pew for 20 years. I was in Pakistan. I began to wonder, has dad really been saved?

You can't just warm a pew for 20 years. I got letters from friends back home, wait till you see your dad. Your dad's changed. He came home and leave, went down to Daphto to see my folks.

Dad put me aside to the garage where he has his little chats. He told me the story. Mum had gone out with my sister shopping, Dad was sitting at home, retired, in his armchair.

[39 : 29] He just prayed a prayer. Give me the Holy Spirit. And dad said, his words were, and zhunk.

The Pentecostal would say he was baptized in the Spirit. I don't care what you call it. God did something in his life profound. He was shaken to the core. He began to preach in a time village.

He just tell a story. God heard that prayer. Give me the Spirit and he just did it. Now God does always act that way, but pray.

Lord, I had a passion there when I was 20. It's not the same, Lord. Do it again. show me Jesus. Now go to Belgrade House Convention or just gather with friends and pray together so we can recover that bit we've lost.

It'd hate to be that church which you've lost your first love. Wouldn't that be awful? On the last day you meet Jesus. Look, you're a good preacher, faithful Bible study leader, taught Sunday school, we're good.

[40 : 41] you've lost your first love. It's just duty. No, Lord, please, not me. So I think there are ways like that.

That's my desire, as yours too. In a marathon, when you enter the last lap, they go faster, not slower, because they see the finish line.

So, beloved, if you're my vintage a bit longer, I speed up. Next question. Mike, I want to focus a little bit more about the guy who was a bit sneaky and compare that to the rich young ruler who had all the money in the world, had the status and everything.

And, you know, Christ was asking him to sell everything, as you said. The context here is the Jews. So, Christ is saying these things to the Jews, isn't he?

So, they were inundated with the laws, were they not? The laws, the Jewish laws. And it seems to me that there's a play here with the guy being sneaky, because he's effectively, like you say, thieving before he buys the thing, he doesn't say anything.

[42 : 04] So, it's like, could it be coloured that the people who are under the laws of the Jewish nations, like us, under the do's and don'ts, that somehow our views of God get coloured, so therefore the treasure becomes more like a burden than it is something to be valued?

I think if I understand your question rightly, that is the risk of the law, and for many Jews that was the case, and the Pharisees weighed people down with the burdens of the law, that was never the law's intent, I've been reading Psalm 119, I delight to do thy work, I find joy in your statutes, the godly Jew found the law, well, sweeter than honey, more precious than fine gold, he just found joy and obedience, our Lord says come to me, those who are heavy laden, I'll give you rest, not in disobedience, not in wantonness, but in the delight of obeying, you'll find joy in that, and so I think we want to portray to the world that living a Christian life is actually a terrific way to live, and we don't do things just out of duty, this is a duty part, but out of duty, we do things out of delight, the delight to obey, because in obedience is life and freedom, and try to convey that to each other, and maybe if a part of your service has become a duty, maybe take a break for a while, just to kind of recapture the joy of service.

I'll go back to the text, why did Jesus use material possessions to illustrate his point, as opposed to something else, in terms of giving up?

giving up all you have, the material things in life, why does he use that?

Well, I think maybe back in Matthew 6, he talks about seeking treasure in heaven, and the great obstacle is mammon. That's the great barrier.

[44 : 22] If that's a great barrier, like with the rich and ruler, you better get rid of it, if that's your great barrier. And mammon being, yeah, wealth positions, and trust him for all that you need.

It's a great struggle, I think, still, isn't it? A great struggle with being generous, and it's a great barrier. And as he makes clear, I think, in 1 Corinthians 6, I bought you, and if we can get that in our mind, that all we have is not us.

I've got two daughters, they're in missionary service, I've given them away because they don't belong to me. God gave them to me for a while, he's now in a sense taken them back in his service.

But all my kids belong to me. All your kids belong to him. So it's possessions, it's material things, it's family, all these things belong to him.

We've given them to him to receive this wonderful gift of salvation. salvation. And they can all be, I think, an obstacle to obedience and to joy. Just following up from that then, it's another question on the text.

[45 : 43] For younger people who don't have a lot of material possessions to give up, no children, spouse, job, income, barely finished a degree, student debt, oh dear, you have Jesus, right?

What are some practical ways to live out the giving up aspect? Yeah, it's easy now, when you're young. It's easy now. That's right, you've got nothing.

You're young, you've got energy and health. I'm being serious, it's easy now. It gets harder. When you get middle age, it gets really hard.

Just getting old gets hard. What do they call it? The happiness curve? You heard about the happiness curve? When you're young, you're really happy. But then you get less happy and the nadir is in your 40s.

That's when you're really, well, you've got a mortgage, you've got teenage kids causing headaches and all these kind of things, been married 20 years and stuff. And as you get older, you get happier. I'm the happiest guy in the world.

[46 : 55] But it's easy when you, seriously, when you've got a job and you're working long hours, you've got a mortgage, family come along, obligations, to maintain your joy, it will get harder.

And then when you get old, oh, I'm retired now. I've been told I can lay down tools. Oh, terrific. All the excuses. But I do think the early years are the easy ones.

To persevere with joy in the middle years. That's tough. When did David fall? I think in the middle years. I think a lot of men, when do they fall?

In the middle years? Very often. They're the tough years. To keep yourself obedient and pure and zealous? not easy. That's why a loving, faithful church is so important.

We hear the Bible preach faithfully week by week by week, praying for God to open your eyes to see what's in his word. The question with the tongue-in-cheek is dead right.

[48 : 09] It's easier when you're young. It's harder the older you get to maintain that passion. So please do. So how then would some younger people be able to, what are some practical ways that they can begin as they need to continue?

I guess you try to put into place now practices which will last you for the long haul, like the commitment to regular times of prayer and Bible study, the commitment to be involved in a church, being active in Christian service, finding ways and means to keep your Christian faith alive and passionate, choosing good friends, making wise choices regarding your life partner, your career, all those kind of things, make those kind of wise choices while you can now.

And, this is next week, keep one eye on the coming day. Also our first thought, one eye on the coming day, when we stand before our Lord and we see the nails in his hands and his feet.

And we answer to him. And I don't want to just be saved, I will be, I want to be commended. I don't want to lose my ground of boasting.

I want to say, I want to hear him say, well done Mike, faithful to the end, joyful to the end. That's what I want to hear.

[49 : 42] So make choices now with an eye on that day. Any more questions from the floor? There's another young person question.

That was a while ago, mate. I should tell you. Of a different type though. As a young person who understands Christ is the greatest treasure and wants to proclaim his name as a missionary, what kind of practical advice would you give a young person thinking about mission work?

Okay, well, a few things I guess. We'll start going to a mission conference, you may already do that. CMS had one last weekend, there are other good ones around, so to go to them and be exposed to the needs around the world, start to pray regularly for missionaries, start to give regularly to mission, go on a short-term mission trip, seek advice from friends who know you well, who say, great idea, but we know you well, you're not the person for it.

You might, the things you might battle with, you might battle with anxiety, you may have aging parents, there might be a good reason where they'll say to you, look, no or not yet, so just seek advice from wise godly friends, but get into the mission zone and then plan, whenever, plan to go to Bible college, you must go to Bible college, at least for 12 months, if not for three years, depends on your work, but plan on Bible college and then start talking to a mission.

CMS has a group called SIN, seriously interested in mission, join that, or whatever mission you join, but start now, start to talk to missions, I'm interested, can we begin a conversation?

[51 : 48] Perfect, thank you. Any final questions? Sorry, can I make a comment?

Andrew and I actually run a seriously interested in mission group, if you want to join one, come and talk to us. Thank you. There was a couple of questions about getting back that spark, so thank you for your comments about prayer.

One other person who I think has been in a similar position and found this book helpful was The Pursuit of God by A.W.

Tozer, which addresses the question very directly, so that might be worth looking at. Why don't I just take a brief moment to pray before we finish together.

Let's pray together. Let's pray for you. Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you that Jesus is the greatest treasure, the one who bought us by his blood.

[53 : 19] Father, we thank you that for those of us who know him, it has changed our lives forever, for we have permanent forgiveness in him.

we have adoption as your sons and daughters in him. We have a place to belong in the body of Christ where we can care and be cared for because of him.

And we have an inheritance beyond compare. God please help us, we pray to know the joy that comes from knowing Jesus.

And to be willing to joyfully give up whatever we have for him. Why don't you just take a moment to just quietly reflect on Christ and all he's done for you in your life, particularly at the cross, and pray as Mike encouraged us that God would fill you with that inexpressible joy.

So just take a moment to quietly pray yourself. A gracious father, we do pray that you would answer our prayers to delight in the Lord Jesus more and more.

[55 : 02] That we may truly sing that last verse of our previous hymn. That were the whole realm of nature ours, millions dollars worth of inheritance like hell.

that that would be an offering far too small for you. In light of your love so amazing, so divine, help us we pray to be joyfully willing to give up our soul, our life, our all.

We ask it all in Jesus name. Amen.