

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Pentecost 10  
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Sermon by Pastor Justin Gran  
***How much is it worth?***

—Matthew 13:44-52

How much is it worth? I'm sure you've asked that question of many potential purchases big or small. A wise shopper doesn't simply walk in to the store and pay sticker price. He wants to know how much it's worth. He searches online to find out what's the going rate. If you're looking at a purchasing a home and you want to know the value or at least have a ballpark estimate, what do you do? You go on Zillow and it gives you an estimate of the home's value. You're looking into buying a pre-owned car and what you really want to know is not how much does it cost, but how much is it worth? So you go on Kelly Blue Book and it gives you a benchmark for determining what it's worth.

How much is it worth? That's a questions Jesus has us ponder in today's parables from Matthew chapter 13. The kingdom of heaven—How much is it worth? It's helpful first to define that term, "Kingdom of heaven." Jesus proclaimed that his kingdom is not of this world. It's not a visible earthly kingdom by which a king rules with force and fear. Rather Christ, the king, rules in the hearts of believers through the gospel—the good news of sins forgiven. In today's verses, Jesus tells two very short parables which have us contemplate how much God's kingdom is worth.

***"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."*** Keep this in mind: when we read Jesus' parables, we have to ask "What is the main point Jesus is driving home?" We might get carried away with peripheral details and ask, "Well what was the guy doing digging in the field and what was the treasure and was he being ethical in not disclosing the treasure to the seller of the land?" What's point though? A man found a treasure and in his assessment it was worth more than all he had. If it was only worth as much as all he had, that's only a net gain of zero? Why go through all the trouble of selling all he had and digging out in the field? No, it had to be worth far more than all he had. That's how much the treasure was worth. And notice how Jesus provides this detail that ***in his joy he went and sold everything he had...*** this wasn't a painful purchase for that man. So quickly and joyfully he was willing to part with as much as he had to possess the treasure. That's what the kingdom of heaven is like.

Here's the second parable, ***"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."*** It's the same exact point but Jesus drives it home with another parable so we don't miss it! The kingdom of heaven, God's gracious rule in our hearts, is like a man who was searching and searching for pearls, but when he found just one of the greatest value he just had to have it. Without having to crunch the numbers he liquidated all he had. How much was it worth? It was worth more than anything he possessed. That's what the kingdom of heaven is like.

Certainly, Christ and his kingdom, his rule in our hearts, has an inherent value that immeasurably tips the scale. But he's also concerned about how we personally value him and his kingdom. So, how much is Jesus and his kingdom worth to you?

As we seriously ponder that question we have to confess that we have grossly undervalued Jesus and his kingdom because we have grossly overvalued the things of this world. The most obvious thing we may be tempted to over value is wealth and possessions. After all, that's part of Jesus' illustration parables—the men were willing to part with all they had. Now let's clarify: Jesus does not ask us to sell all our possessions in order to be part of his kingdom. But he does warn that we cannot serve two masters. We cannot serve God and serve money. Do we spend as much time contemplating the riches of God's grace and his kingdom as we do contemplating our finances? Do we search the scriptures for treasures old and new with as much diligence as we search online for a good deal or the next purchase? We've been quick to pull the trigger on a buying something for ourselves and it's not a painful purchase at all because we found a screaming deal, and yet we've given an offering to support the work of God's kingdom with perhaps far less eagerness.

It's not just possessions that we're tempted to value above Jesus and his kingdom. It could relationships. It could be popularity. It could be that we value what our peers or family think of us more than what God thinks of us. I think that's and even greater temptation in our society today. Are we willing to lose the acceptance and popularity of peers or even a family member as we remain in Jesus' kingdom? Is it worth it?

To put things in perspective, Jesus tells one more parable. ***“The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*** Those who forfeit the kingdom of God in favor of what this world has to offer will eventually lose all those things anyway, along with their very soul. Is it worth it?

The kingdom of heaven is worth far more than we can comprehend, but I think we can understand this: It's worth far more than anything we might obtain or accomplish in this world. It's worth immeasurably more than anything we might lose or forfeit in this life. By the grace of God, we possess this treasure.

We don't enter God's kingdom by our striving and by our works. We cannot buy our way into God's kingdom even if we liquidated all our earthly possessions. We could not possess God's kingdom by possessing all the wealth in the world. We enter God's kingdom freely by his grace. But there still was a price that had to be paid. God accepted no other price than the blood of his own Son. It's not with gold or silver that God redeemed you, that is bought you back, from your sin and from an empty way of a life. But with the precious blood of Christ and his innocent suffering and death. How much is soul worth to God? How much was he willing to pay that you might belong to him for time and for eternity? The price of his own blood, poured out for you.

And the kingdom of God came to you also freely by God's grace. Jesus came to rule your heart and spare you from eternal death by the work of his Spirit. The triune God brought you into his kingdom by causing you to be born again of water and the Spirit—through baptism you became a citizen of heaven and were given full rights as a child of God. Through the gospel, Jesus comes to rule your heart with his love and forgiveness. In his true body and blood given in communion you find forgiveness from all your sin.

When we recognize the incomparable value of the kingdom of heaven, it helps us gauge the worth of all the things everything else. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, ***“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.”*** Personally, Paul was talking about his works as a Jew, which he once valued above all else, but when Jesus revealed himself to Paul, he considered it all a loss compared to knowing Christ. We can say the same of the things we've valued in the past. We consider it all a loss compared to knowing Jesus and his grace.

How much is it worth? How much is Jesus worth to a sinner who realizes that nothing else in all the world can truly bring lasting peace? How much is he worth to the searching soul that finally hears the message of sins forgive freely and full through Jesus. It's like a man who found a treasure in a field and sold everything he had so he could have the treasure. It's like a merchant who stopped searching and sold everything he for that one pearl. Or maybe it looks like this: you evaluate the world and all it's wealth and you can honestly say it's meaningless—it doesn't bring meaning your life. Or maybe it looks like this: A Christian man and woman wrote out their will and this is what their children read, “If there are any assets left when we depart, good—use them for your enjoyment as you please to the Lord's glory. If there is nothing left, there is no great loss. We hope and pray that we have given you things of greater value. Our greatest concern was that you might have saving faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ. We were only passing on what our parents passed on to us. May you continue to share this faith with your children and they with theirs.”

That's how much Jesus is worth to those who live and die under in his kingdom—he's worth immeasurably more than anything else we could ever possess in this world.

Amen.