

# Red Chairables

## *The Hidden Treasure & The Priceless Pearl*

Part 8 - July 10, 2011

If you knew about a fortune in treasure, in the backyard of a house that was for sale, wouldn't you buy that house as quick as you could? Would you bother to haggle over the price? I know I wouldn't! In the parables of "The Hidden Treasure" and "The Priceless Pearl", Jesus makes it clear that surrendering everything to gain His Kingdom is a great trade!

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. - *Matthew 13:44-46 NIV*

We get two parables for the price of one today!



Somerset England, April 2010

The first concerns a guy who discovers buried treasure in a field. Just like Dave Crisp did last year with a metal detector in a farmer's field in England. He uncovered a hoard of Roman coins - buried about 260 years after Jesus told this parable.



Known as the "Frome Hoard"

Back then, everybody buried their stash! Looting was common, Banks were uncommon, and mud-and-stone houses were hard to secure.



Giv'ati car park, December 2008

When Jesus told this story, after generations of warfare, untimely deaths, and failing memories, everyone knew *someone* who had unexpectedly "hit the jackpot" and unearthed a cache of coins!

This is Nadine Ross, a first-time, four-week volunteer at a dig in a Jerusalem parking lot.



264, 24-carat gold coins, c. 620 AD

After *three whole weeks* of amateur-archeology, Nadine happened upon one of the largest hoards (264 gold coins) *ever* discovered in Jerusalem!

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. - *Matthew 13:44a NIV*

Do you know what Jesus means by "The kingdom of heaven"?

The Jews had been led to believe that the Messiah was coming to subdue their enemies and establish a national, political kingdom. Jesus says He's coming to rule and reign inside them, to subdue their sinful self-centeredness, so they can love their enemies!

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." - *Luke 17:20-21 NIV*

This is radical stuff; and it's partly what got Him crucified!

Luke calls it the "kingdom of God" (as do Mark and John). Only Matthew calls it the "kingdom of heaven". Do you know why? Matthew's audience is Jewish. And in Judaism, God's Hebrew name (YHWH) isn't spoken out loud, and is often replaced in writing. Even in English, orthodox Jews will write God's name as "G-D" so that they can erase or dispose of it without showing disrespect.

The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God refer to the same thing: God's will on Earth, in you, in me, as it is in Heaven. He's not interested in blasting out power *from* heaven. He wants his power "loved out" through kingdom agents *as it is in* Heaven. And that can't happen through *me* until I surrender *my* authority to *his* authority: how I act at work, how I treat my spouse, how I spend my money, what I do with my free time, *everything*.

Two reasons why this is like finding an incredible treasure:



1. I gain infinitely more than I surrender.

In the parable, the Greek word for *treasure* is *thesauros*: a *vast* treasury, a *treasure trove* or *storehouse*! Like Roget's thesaurus of words. Dave Crisp uncovered the largest hoard of coins *ever* found in one pot, 52,503. That's *chicken scratch*! All the coins in the world can't compare.

What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?  
Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? - *Matthew 16:26 NIV*

Give me a number ... what's the dollar value of redemption, forgiveness, purpose, peace, joy, and eternal intimacy with God?! And it's not like he's asking me to give up the "whole world" ...

2. I'm only asked to surrender that which harms me

We tend to look for security and self-worth in the *very things* that'll rob them from us: sex appeal, money, power, popularity, prestige, and *possessions*.



These things are like cats. They're okay to have as long as you can remember not to hold 'em too tight. The tighter your grip, the *less* secure they become! I loved Todd's "Hoarders" analogy last Sunday. Jesus is like one of those *really patient counselors* that are on that show: "Can we let the old newspapers go? No? What about the wet and moldy ones? No? They give you a sense of security? Hmm. Do they add *joy* to your life? No? And do they add to your *sadness*? Yes? Well ... can we maybe throw a few of 'em away?"

We're offered *infinite* joy for all of our "un-joy"! In Romans 14:17, Paul says that the kingdom of God is a matter of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit". Yes, the call requires surrender; but, it's a call to joy!

... and then **in his joy** went and sold all he had and bought that field. - *Matthew 13:44b NIV*



Jesus doesn't say the man sold his stuff easily or effortlessly, just willingly and *joyfully*. They're not mutually exclusive.

Ever have a great garage sale, where you made a bunch of money from all your old junk? Were there any *bittersweet* moments when you were both glad *and* sad to be unloading something you were still kind of attached to? It's like *that*.

"I kind'a like my sin. Lust is fun. So is selfishness. I like throwing anger fits and getting my way. I don't like *loving* my enemies. I like *hatin'* 'em! It gives me security and self-worth." But you see, to the degree that we view our self-destructive-garbage as "treasures" we won't be able to find the joy in the trade: "Jesus wants to take my wet newspapers!" "No. He wants to *free* you from them. Can we maybe throw a few of 'em away?"

He wants you to find your security in the "thesauros" of his loving kindness and sovereignty, and your sense of self-worth in the likeness you were created in, and the price he paid for you.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who **for the joy set before him endured the cross**, scorning its shame ... - *Hebrews 12:2a NIV*

This was *his* bittersweet surrender of joy: he purchased our redemption by his blood and offers it freely by his grace. But, his point in both parables is that God's reign doesn't come without our surrender; so, there *is* a cost to be counted ... and it's absolutely, categorically worth it!



They had another big find in that Jerusalem parking lot: a 2000-year-old pearl earring set in gold with emeralds. The ancient Romans prized pearls above all other jewels.

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. - *Matthew 13:45-46 NIV*

Why do you suppose Jesus told two stories to make one point? The word “Again” ties them together as one teaching. Maybe because there are two ways people discover God’s kingdom: some people stumble onto the truth *unintentionally*; and some people seek out the truth quite *intentionally*.

The stumblers are busy with other things when the truth suddenly trips ‘em up and grabs their attention. They’re like the man who happened upon treasure while he was on a fieldtrip. But the seekers are like the merchant. They spend years collecting pearls of wisdom and philosophical truth in order to understand the purpose of life ... or even if there *is* a purpose to life. And then, one day, they come across a pearl like no other.

A God of mercy and love, who desires intimacy with his children, freely offers salvation by grace, readily forgives and cleanses. And in return, he only asks for joyful, gratitude-fueled surrender of our “un-joys” and our near-sighted, not-so-bright authority.

That’s some pearl! I find it most curious that a pearl is the result of an impurity being covered over, layer after layer, transforming it into something beautiful and precious. It seems so appropriate that in Revelation, pearls represent the entrance into the New Jerusalem where God will dwell with man.

The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. – *Revelation 21:21a NIV*

This is where we get the term “Pearly Gates”. But again, good fortune demands action! The seeker must be willing to surrender the inferior pearl collection that he has invested so much time and energy into. And he’ll do it gladly if he’s seeking truth instead of security and self-worth in his own intellectual and philosophical prowess.

Jesus made a purchase similar to the two men in these parables. He gave up his glory, his honor, his home, everything he had, even his life, so that he could purchase *you*.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. –  
*2 Corinthians 8:9 NIV*

*You* are *his* precious pearl. So ... are you willing to give up the poverty of self-centeredness for the riches of Godly generosity, compassion, and kindness? Are you willing to trade temporary and disappointing pleasures for the eternal joy and peace that passes understanding?

Are you willing to forfeit the bondage of resentment and bitterness for the freedom of forgiveness and mercy? And ... are you willing to stop squeezing the cat, so you can experience a security unknown to those outside the kingdom?

These are just *some* of the tradeoffs. We need to count the cost, consider the reward, and keep in mind the amazingly patience of our Wonderful Counselor, our Prince of Peace, our Mighty God!