

THE COMPASS

Part 2 of “The Eye Chart Gospel”: *Seeing Value God’s Way*

The Parable of the Hot Real Estate Deal

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Here’s a cool story — Jesus made this up, about 2,000 years ago — goes like this:

Matthew 13:

44 “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.

Hey, this really happened.

Time magazine reports that a construction worker, Gregory Corliss, was digging a driveway on a client’s property in Idaho when he noticed some coins in the soil. On further inspection, he and his boss found a mason jar full of coins, dating from 1857 to 1914.

Worth a *fortune!*

So see? The Bible is still relevant to us today.

Okay. Next, Jesus tells another little story:

45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.

46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

These two stories have come to be known as the parable of the hidden treasure and the “pearl of great price” — you may have heard that phrase before, if you grew up in church; the old King James Version of this passage uses that language (it’s kind of elegant, isn’t it?).

Scripture records 38 separate parables, these fascinating little stories or illustrations told by Jesus.

And each of the four guys who back in the first century wrote the so-called “gospels,” the biographies of Jesus — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — had different audiences in mind, so they had different slants in their writing, so each of them chose to record different parables of Jesus.

And Matthew was writing to ?

We can tell by how he starts his book (**Matthew 1**): with a long, seemingly endless genealogy — a family tree.

It’s boring — unless you’re a Jew, seriously looking for the coming of your Messiah.

Then it’s fascinating.

It’s crucial.

It’s the answer to your questions.

It’s the answer to your prayers.

Because in verse 16 (**Matthew 1:16**), Matthew’s genealogy comes down to the birth of Jesus.

Matthew's audience is the Jewish audience, and the whole point of his gospel is to let Jesus say, *Hey! I'm here! I'm your Messiah! The long wait is over!*

So as Matthew proceeds to write his account of the life and teachings of Jesus, this is his perspective. This is his goal.

As he writes out his biography of Jesus, he goes back to the Torah — to the Mosaic Law, to the Psalms, and to the Jewish prophets, which to the Jews back then was what the Bible is to us today — and he references the Torah 100 times over the course of his account of the life of Jesus, all the Old Testament prophecies and so forth:

and he shows how it all points to Jesus as the Messiah.

And when it comes time to choose some of the parables of Jesus, Matthew chooses 20 of them, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

11 of them, Matthew is the only writer of the Gospel who records them.

He chooses 11 parables nobody else chooses,

11 parables that will connect with Jewish people.

11 parables that will help show his own people — because Matthew was Jewish himself — that Jesus really is the Son of God,

the Messiah,

the one we've been waiting for,

the one the prophets have talked about all along:

He's our King.

Matthew was extremely sensitive to the things that would concern the Jewish audience, because not only was he a Jew himself,

but before he met Jesus, Matthew was a Jew who had given up on God.

Actually, even though he was of the Hebrew race, Matthew was employed by the Roman government.

He tells us (**Matthew 10:3**) he was a tax collector.

His own Jewish people despised him because he was working for the enemy;

the Roman government used taxation to keep the nations they had conquered under control,

plus, people who were willing to be tax collectors were already so cynical

that they cheated the tax-paying citizens,

they intimidated them, they extorted bribes from them.

(You can imagine how you'd feel if the IRS audited you

and the auditor came to your place and looked through your records

and said, I don't think I'm going to allow any of these deductions you've claimed,

and you're going to be in court for the rest of your life,

or you're going to be flat broke after you pay the penalties —

or, you could give me \$1,000 cash and we'll call it square.

That's how the tax collectors routinely operated in Jesus' day,

so no wonder they were hated.)

So here's Matthew.

He's Jewish, but he's given up looking for the Messiah.

Nuts, it's been 4,000 years, he's never gonna come, those prophecies were all a crock.

And he's so jaded, he's so far from God,

he takes the best-paying job he can get —

doesn't care what his neighbors think of him for it,
 doesn't care if it's for the pagan federal government
 (no offense to those of you who work for *our* pagan federal government — sorry, I
 already regret that remark).

Anyway, Matthew has so totally given up on God
 that he just goes ahead and works for the enemy
 and rips off his neighbors;
 he's a jerk.

And then along comes Jesus, and the light goes on in Matthew's head:
 It's him! It's Messiah! Our King has finally come!
 And he drops everything, **Luke 5:27,28** tells us;
 he quits his job,
 leaves his relatives behind,
 he totally changes his life
 just to be close to Jesus,
 just to walk with him and live with him and learn from him,
 because he realizes:
 The most important thing in life is to love God, to walk intimately with him, in his design,
 with his guidance.

And month by month, over the course of 3 years,
 Matthew is transformed.
 His heart goes from hateful to loving,
 from greedy to generous,
 from cynical to caring.

And now, after Jesus has died and risen again and gone back to heaven,
 Matthew looks around at his own nation, Israel,
 and his heart begins to grow heavier, and heavier,
 with a burden for his own people
 to understand that Jesus is it: he's the Messiah, he's their King.

And the Spirit of God begins to speak to Matthew's heart
 and begins to guide him to sit down and start writing out a biography of Jesus,
 an account of his life and teachings that will particularly get through to Jewish people.
 And as he sits and writes and prays and thinks back over those 3 years with Jesus,
 Matthew thinks through all the parables he heard Jesus tell;
 and suddenly — as the Spirit of God guides his thoughts — he remembers 2 tiny little
 parables —
 2 little illustrations, so small that, even together, they only take about 30 seconds to
 read —
 but I believe Matthew remembered these 2 little parables because when Jesus first
 spoke them,
 Matthew's heart skipped a beat.
 He might have even thought Jesus was talking just to him, because in these 2 little
 parables, Jesus describes what Matthew did.

The guys finds treasure in a field, hides it again, and joyfully sells everything he has in

order to buy the field and claim the prize!
 Matthew gave up his entire life to follow Jesus.
 He realized that the most important thing in life is to love God, walking intimately with Christ, with his guidance.

And then in the other story, a business man finds a top-quality pearl, so valuable that he sells his whole business in order to buy this one gem.
 Matthew left everything he had in order to follow Jesus.
 He realized that the most important thing in life is to love God, to walk intimately with him, in his design, with his guidance.

Now Jesus is talking to his disciples when he offers up these 2 parables.
 He's not talking to the crowd, he is not talking to unbelievers; he is talking to people who have committed their lives to him.
 He is talking to Christians.
 He's talking to us

44 "The kingdom of heaven

[not salvation, but true spiritual success — truly living like Christ]
is like treasure hidden in a field.

It's hidden.

When I turned to God, I didn't gain total spiritual maturity in a sudden flash.

No — it's a learning process

This is why Paul talked to the Colossians (**Colossians 1:10**) about **growing in the knowledge of God.**

This is why Peter said (**2 Peter 3:18**) "**...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**"

You don't achieve total spiritual maturity overnight.

That's not what God expects.

He says the kingdom of heaven is like treasure *hidden* in a field.

We need to be learning every day, we need to be growing,
 we need to be finding what's hidden — digging deeper to discover what God has in store for us to learn and experience,

We need to dig deeper into his Word in our own study.

We need to dig deeper in prayer, to learn to hear from God, learn to talk with God.

We need to dig deeper in our relationships with people in need, loving God by loving people, just like Jesus did.

We need to dig deeper in our exploration of the gifts God has given us; how can we grow more by serving?

We need to dig deeper in our giving to the work of God, learning to let go of our financial resources and see how God blesses us as we grow that way, and see how God blesses the church through us.

There's treasure hidden in the field.

We've got to dig deeper to get at it.

But what do we do about it?

...then in his joy [he] went and sold all he had and bought that field.

When God grows me spiritually, he's going to change my perspective.
He's going to give me a "paradigm shift" — changing my whole way of looking at things,
my whole way of doing things.

As I learn to walk more intimately with him, in his design, with his guidance,
as I see more and more the incredible value of what he wants for me,
I am more and more willing to sell off the stuff that would keep me from experiencing a
deeper relationship with him.

I may have to part with my old ideas about what church should look like — so I can buy
into a kind of church that actually, effectively focuses on the 2 things: loving God
and loving people.

I may have to sell off my personal preference for classical, traditional music on Sunday
morning — or my personal preference for contemporary guitar-and-drum-driven
music — because of the place where God calls me to grow.

I may have to sell off my natural tendency to bad-mouth people behind their back as a
way of dealing with conflict —

so I can buy in to the hidden treasure of resolving conflicts the way Jesus designed us
to resolve conflicts.

I may have to sell off my rigid control of my schedule
in order to buy in to the hidden treasure of getting involved in real relationships with
people that God wants to grow me through, people God wants to love through
me.

I may have to cancel my cable, because there's stuff on there that keeps drawing me
away from a more intimate walk with God.

I may have to cancel some magazine subscription, because there's stuff in there that
keeps drawing me away from a more intimate walk with God.

I may have to unplug my Internet access, because I keep finding myself browsing
websites that draw me away from a more intimate walk with God —
while the most important thing in life is to love God!

Now don't misunderstand me.

We don't have an anti-Internet policy or some rule about cable or a list of approved
magazines you can subscribe to.

Nobody told the guy in Jesus' parable to sell off his stuff.

He did it out of *joy*, because he realized what it would be worth to him.

Here's the point:

Whatever it is, I want to sell it off — get rid of it — adjust it however I have to — so I
don't lose out on the hidden treasure that God has in store for me!

I should tell you the rest of this *Time* magazine story.

The construction worker who found the mason jar with \$10 million worth of rare coins?
Of course he hid the mason jar back in that dug-up driveway, and sold everything he
owned, so he could buy that property, so he would own the driveway and the
mason jar full of coins, right?

No, actually, he looked at that mason jar full of rare coins, and he said, Hey, I've been
trying to borrow \$11,000, but I haven't been able to find a bank to lend me the
money; and he gave that mason jar to a friend who would agree to cover an
\$11,000 loan.

Duh!

Don't blow the buried treasure. Sell everything and buy the field if that's what it takes. Interestingly, Jesus says, it's not just about getting the hidden treasure.

It's also about getting the field.

Because it's not just about what God does *in you*.

It's also about what God does *through you*.

I love it that Jesus says **in his joy [he] went and sold all he had and bought that field.**

See, Jesus says to us, as Christians, as spiritual leaders,

Hey, I've got something good for you. And when you get hold of this treasure, when you grow spiritually the way I want you to grow,

you're going to have some new property to manage.

You're going to have a realm of influence you didn't have before.

You're going to have land to plant seed in.

You're going to have soil to till.

People are going to take notice.

You won't have to blab about your spiritual growth; they're going to see it.

They're going to recognize how you have sold out to God.

You have given up what wasn't really important in order to get hold of what is really, really important.

People are going to be turning to you when they face spiritual questions in their lives, when they come to spiritual crisis points,

when they recognize their own spiritual need.

People are going to gravitate to you because you're different;

you don't live the way other people live;

you've found some kind of better way;

you seem to be at peace, no matter what happens in your life;

you seem to have such joy, no matter what problems come your way;

you seem to know where you're headed, even when you're blindsided by some circumstance.

What's happening here, with these acquaintances of yours? Well, they're in your field.

It's the field you bought when you sold out to Christ.

It's the field of influence you acquired when you said, Yes, I'll give up whatever I have to give up

in order to walk as closely with God as I possibly can — because loving God is the one most important thing in my life.

When Jesus told the story of the merchant looking for fine pearls, he said what the merchant found was just *one* pearl of great value.

You know, in my life, I'm distracted by all these ordinary pearls:

my finances — my schedule — my sex drive — my career path —

getting the proper respect —

getting people to come over to my way of thinking about such-and-such —

looking good — feeling good — my health — my car — my remodeling project —

Ordinary pearls.

But the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant who finds *one* pearl, of *great* value, the greatest by far,

one pearl that's worth *everything*.

Buy the field.

Get the hidden treasure.

Grab hold of the pearl of great price.

The most important thing in life is to love God, to walk intimately with him, in his design,
with his guidance.