

TREASURES OF THE KINGDOM

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it." (Matthew 13:44-46)

Of all the precious things that the thoughtless crowd casts aside or ignores as valueless, none is so greatly and so generally underestimated as the kingdom of Christ. Not only the majority of Americans, who take no active part in any church, prefer a mess of pottage to their birthright in Christ; but a large percentage of church members cannot tell what Christ means to them. Indeed their lives testify that He means less to them than many mundane things. How does it go in your personal market? Are you selling everything else to buy Him? And—(don't answer out loud)—how great is your joy at the opportunity to make the transaction?

Jesus told two parables to emphasize the fact that whether to the poor laborer, working another man's field, or to the rich merchant, admiring his great collection of prize gems, to everyone the kingdom of heaven is the opportunity of a lifetime—literally! No man has so many worthy attainments and personal powers, such great wealth, such varied and important interests that he should regret losing every one of them to be a humble disciple of Jesus. It is easier for the poor and oppressed to realize that in coming to Christ they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The rich and self-righteous, the proud and powerful are very hard to bring to that realization. Even when they see value in Christ their hearts are often "joined to their idols." "How hard it is for them that trust in riches" (Mark 10:24) "How can you believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not" (John 5:44). Those who are wise in their own conceits have these things "hid from them" (Matthew 11:25). Compare I Corinthians 1:26-31. Still it is true that *any man* giving up all to have Christ has *nothing to lose and everything to gain!*

In Philippians 3:4-14 Paul tells of his own experience as a "merchant seeking goodly pearls." Compared with others he had made a good showing of things gained outside of Christ, but he counted them all loss to gain Christ. He actually suffered the loss of all things but counted them mere rubbish compared with the excellency of Christ.

LET'S TAKE AN INVENTORY

What are the treasures that the Saviour sets above the sum of all that the best-favored life can assemble? What is the preciousness that so satisfies the great apostle and makes all his former attainments as rubbish? It

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is evident that many of us do not value the kingdom as Jesus and Paul did. Surely we have not known what riches abound there. Jesus spoke as if any man in his right mind would joyously part with everything he had to get that supreme treasure as soon as he saw it. Paul and many others did just that. But today people are putting off accepting Christ, and are afraid to part with anything to gain Him.

What makes Christianity precious? One thing—it cost an infinite price: time and sacrifices, life and blood, heartaches and struggles of men and God. Nothing else in history compares with it. Another thing—it is rare, the only thing of its kind and nothing else approaches it or can substitute for it. But Jesus was thinking of its value to us for what we may find in it and receive from it.

It is possible to expect the wrong thing and, being disappointed, to turn away and lose all. The crowd that Jesus fed miraculously tried to turn His beneficent powers to political and material purposes. They would take Him by force and make Him their king to satisfy their own ambitions and desires, but Jesus would not consent. (John 6:15). Then Jesus, the following day, rebuked them for seeking the bread that perishes and tried to give them the Bread of Everlasting Life, but they had expected the wrong thing and when they found it not they forsook Him (John 6:26-66). Paul writes of those, "corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, supposing that godliness is a way of gain" (I Timothy 6:5). So do not follow those false prophets abroad today who promise all the material things you want if you buy their religio-psychology course. But Paul did go on to say: "But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content" (I Timothy 6:6-8). In the same letter he said: "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come" (I Timothy 4:8).

FOR THE LIFE THAT NOW IS:

(Note: Do read the scriptures cited. Look into the catalogue of the products of God's love with at least as much interest as you look at Montgomery Ward's catalogue of products of American industry. This is merely an index held to a minimum of space.) We should expect and find:

1. Justification, the burden of sin removed, conscience relieved (Romans 8:1, 33, 34; I Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:19-23)
2. The burdens we bear (e.g., responsibility) lightened by love and by the strengthening the Lord gives (Philippians 4:13; II Timothy 4:17; II Corinthians 12:9).
3. A sure and steadfast hope (Hebrews 6:17-20).
4. Peace (Romans 5:1; John 14:27; Philippians 4:9), freedom from anxiety, fear and despair (Philippians 4:6; Matthew 6:33).
5. Self-mastery, Christ dwelling in us (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 3:14-19; James 1:2-4; Galatians 2:20).

SPECIAL STUDIES

6. True liberty (Galatians 5:13; John 8:32, 36).
7. The unshaken life (Matthew 7:25; Romans 8:37-39; Hebrews 12:28; I Corinthians 15:28; Philippians 4:12).
8. The best of human fellowship, refinement of every social relationship (Colossians 3:8—4:16).
9. Comfort (II Corinthians 1:3-5; I Thessalonians 4:18).
10. Increasing joy and satisfaction out of life (Philippians 4:4; Galatians 5:22).
11. Partaking of the divine nature, its beauty and poise, its radiant righteousness (II Peter 1:3, 4); chastisement (Hebrews 12:5-11); correction, instruction (II Timothy 3:16, 17); improvement—the discipline of a loving Father, building us up to a wonderful and beautiful ideal (Ephesians 4:13).

FOR THE LIFE THAT IS TO COME:

1. Eternal life (I John 5:11, 12).
2. Transformation (Philippians 3:20, 21; I Corinthians 15:50-54).
3. Being with the Lord (John 14:3; II Corinthians 5:8). Divine fellowship unhindered.
4. Being like the Lord (I John 3:1, 2).
5. Joint-heirs with Christ, Heir of all things (Romans 8:17).
6. Divine power's sure victory (Galatians 6:9; II Timothy 2:12).
7. Rest (Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 4:9-11).
8. New heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (II Peter 3:14).
9. The glory of God and of the children of God (Romans 5:2; 8:18-20; II Timothy 2:10; II Corinthians 4:17; I Peter 5:10; Revelation 21:11).
10. A kingdom that cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28).

REFLECTIONS

These treasures are chiefly personal. "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." (Genesis 15:1). They are not in things, but in the realm of spirit and persons. Therefore they are not seen and appreciated by the profane eye of Esau. Even the practical providence is the Lord's personal care. He is able to provide for all out of little or nothing. The feeding of the multitudes, miraculously, demonstrates Jesus' teaching that God knows our needs and cares about them. He will add all these things if we seek first the kingdom (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19). To have the Lord is to have everything! "The Lord is my shepherd; that's all I want," said the little girl who had the words mixed, but the idea exactly right. We may have Him who makes "all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28) and who is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). His best gifts to us are what He creates in us personally, not material stores.

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Cleansing! *Righteousness!* Priceless goal of the awakened soul! We who know not the curse and shame and defilement of sin do not appreciate the cleansing from sin. We who believe not the written sentence of doom and damnation upon sinners care not for deliverance. We are so prone to have such low standards, such trashy ideals, as to be satisfied with a little self-righteous respectability of works of the flesh, even in pride; but Paul sought not a righteousness of his own, of law and flesh, but sold everything to gain the righteousness of God, given by faith in Christ through His blood.

"*He is so precious to me!*" In a burning building a fire escape is the most precious thing—no matter if the crown jewels of Russia and England combined be there. Dear brother, are you ashamed of this phase of our precious faith?

It is desirable to be healthy, wealthy and wise. These proverbial prizes are the object of most of men's daily efforts. In Christ we have: *wisdom* exceeding the greatest education; *security* exceeding the greatest wealth, the "*unspeakable riches*" administered for us now by a loving Father and reserved for us unto the day of inheritance; *health* of mind and soul, rightly affecting the body, renewing within though the outward man decay, lasting beyond the putting off of the flesh.

The greatest treasures are yet to come. We "who have the first-fruits of the Spirit . . . groan . . . waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For in hope were we saved" (Romans 8:18-25). "If we have only hoped in Christ in this life we are of all men most pitiable" (I Corinthians 15:19). "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). The whole New Testament emphasizes that we are to invest this life in securing that one which is final and eternal. The blessings of God we receive here are to prepare us for and to lead us to that limitless blessedness there. "A tent or a cottage, why should I care? They're building a palace for me over there."

WHAT DOES CHRIST MEAN TO US?

Are we living up to the privileges of the Kingdom? A man paid for first class passage on a steamship and took along a lot of cheese and crackers to eat for the whole trip. One day another passenger too sick to eat found him off by himself eating his cheese and crackers. "If you can eat, why don't you go eat that fine fare they are serving in the ship's dining room?" He answered, "The ticket for this trip cost so much I couldn't afford to eat that kind of meals." "Man, you paid for it in your ticket. You are not getting all that's coming to you."

Are we continually living such rejoicing, thankful, and victorious lives that other people may see how valuable Christ is to us and desire what they see that we have?