

LEADER'S NOTES: The Deal of a Lifetime

- And what is the Kingdom of Heaven?
- Most people only think this phrase identifies the place we go after this life.
- It is a much bigger concept than that.

The “Already” and “Not Yet” Concepts of the Kingdom

Jesus was not **JUST** talking about the location you go when you die, if you are united with him. **The concept is bigger than that.**

Jesus came to establish his Kingdom on Earth, and did so. It was established through his life, death, and resurrection!

Early in His ministry, Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1:15), and through His actions and teachings, He demonstrated the presence and power of God's reign on earth.

Jewish people were expecting a Messiah / King, who would supernaturally save them, as God did, only in a bigger way than the Exodus!

Jesus is describing THAT kingdom! But he describes it in a way that baffles and surprises his audience.

The Kingdom was Jesus' main teaching topic.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a hidden treasure discovered by accident, which meant that field was more valuable than his total net worth!

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a fine pearl of great value recognized by an expert pearl merchant who was looking for fine pearls, but found one that far exceeded his expectations... and his total net worth!

NOTE: SIMILARITIES AND THE DIFFERENCES:

Similarities: “*Sold all he had*” [v. 44], “*Sold Everything*”[v. 46], [the motive?] “Joy” over a bargain! [v 44]

Differences: Surprise vs. calculation: 1) The first story tells of a bargain discovered by accident. 2. Calculation: The second story tells of a bargain discovered by careful market research and diligence.

QUESTION:

- How many of you found Christ by accident like the field buying guy?
- How many of you found Christ because of your diligent research for answers to life’s questions, like the Pearl Merchant guy?

One notable real-life story about a deal of a lifetime is the purchase of Alaska by the United States from Russia in 1867. The acquisition, commonly known as the Alaska Purchase, was a pivotal moment in American history.

During the mid-19th century, Russia controlled Alaska, which was then known as Russian America. However, Russia faced financial difficulties and geopolitical challenges in maintaining control over such a vast and remote territory.

In 1867, U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward negotiated the purchase of Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million, which amounted to roughly 2 cents per acre. At the time, the purchase was met with skepticism and criticism from many Americans, who derisively referred to it as "Seward's Folly" or "Seward's Icebox," believing that Alaska held little value.

However, the Alaska Purchase proved to be a transformative investment for the United States. The territory eventually yielded vast reserves of natural resources, including gold, oil, and fish. Moreover, Alaska's

strategic location became increasingly important, particularly during the Cold War era.

In retrospect, the Alaska Purchase is regarded as a shrewd and far-sighted decision that significantly expanded the territorial boundaries of the United States and enriched the nation both economically and strategically. It exemplifies a true deal of a lifetime in the annals of history.

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

Jim Elliot (1927-1956)

Father God, we want the bargain you offer. We trade our Guilt for Forgiveness. We trade our Fear for Faith. We trade our bondage for Freedom. We trade death for Life. We see our suffering and persecution as small exchanges for joy of your glory forever. Lord Jesus, we need you to give us the strength and desire to change the habits of our hearts, and change the direction of our desires,

This is not about buying our way into heaven. It's what it looks like to receive a gift given to us, because of the price Jesus was willing to pay on the cross for us to be united with him!!!

We aren't just waiting for heaven later. We have already entered into the kingdom of heaven through him. It is not fully revealed, but we experience it now. The theologians call this the tension between the ALREADY and NOT YET of the kingdom of heaven. It is what we experience between his FIRST COMING victory, and his SECOND COMING complete fulfillment of that victory!

Only when you come to appreciate the surpassing value and eternal worth of the kingdom, will anyone give up EVERY temporary seen thing in exchange for EVERY eternal unseen thing.

2 Corinthians 4:17–18 (NIV) — For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

The word “achieving” can confuse and mislead us.

Neither this parable about purchasing, or Paul’s words about “achieving” are talking about earning our way into the Kingdom of heaven.

Salvation in Christ is NOT FOR SALE. The Bible makes it clear that Salvation in Christ is NOT FOR SALE. I can’t buy what Christ has to offer from God. IT IS A GIFT that one can receive.

Romans 6:23 (NIV) — For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Wages are earned. See what the wages are? See what is earned? Death is the wages earned by our sin. And we all sin. Yet the sentence does not stop there. BUT... the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 2:6–9 (NIV) — And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

If it were possible to earn your way into heaven, why would God have sent his son to pay our debt to save us? The exchange described is not “buying our way in” it is giving up on the “achievement” mindset but fully committing to the “confessing and receiving” mindset.

Matthew 16:25–26 (NIV) — 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

Talk It Over

Stories that Stick

Part 1 - "The Deal of a Lifetime"

SMALL TALK

1. Have you ever experienced a moment when you had to give up something valuable for something even more valuable? What was it, and what was the experience like?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Matthew 13:44-46.** What do these parables teach us about the kingdom of heaven?
3. **READ Ephesians 2:6-9.** How does this passage emphasize that salvation is a gift from God and not something that can be earned through our own efforts or works? How does this contrast with the idea of "selling everything" for the treasure in Jesus' parables? How do both points fit together?

GETTING PERSONAL

4. What are some things in your life that you might need to let go of in order to fully embrace the kingdom of heaven (the King's way rather than your way)?
5. How does the concept of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9) impact your understanding of the value of the kingdom of heaven? How does this understanding influence your willingness to surrender everything for the sake of the kingdom?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

6. Are there any areas of your life where you may be clinging to worldly treasures/values/lifestyle/ rather than pursuing the surpassing worth of King Jesus and his kingdom? What can you do to desire the eternally significant treasures more?