



Parables of Salvation

Matthew 13:44-46

1. The Hidden Treasure (verse 44)

2. The Priceless Pearl (verses 45-46)

This morning, we will be celebrating the Lord's Supper at the conclusion of the sermon. Please keep that in mind so that even now, as I preach, your hearts and minds may be directed to the infinite value of the cross of Christ, which alone accomplished our redemption.

The Bible is full of various ways to describe what a person must do to be saved from their sin. The Jews in Jerusalem who killed Jesus were told, "Repent" (Acts 2:38; 3:19). The intellectuals in Athens were also told, "Repent" (Acts 17:31). Those in Lystra were told, "turn from these vain things to a living God" (Acts 14:15). The Jailer in Philippi was told to "Believe in the Lord Jesus" (Acts 16:31). Paul said that "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Rom. 10:9). Joel said, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (Joel 2:32). Isaiah wrote that you need to look to the LORD to be saved (Is. 45:22 KJV). Isaiah wrote that you need to consent and obey (Is. 1:19). The writer to the Hebrews said that Jesus "became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9). Jesus affirmed this by saying, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Jesus said that you need to "become like children" (Matt. 18:3). Jesus said that you need to "enter by the narrow gate" (Matt. 7:13). Jesus said that the one who beats his breast and says, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" (Luke 18:13) is the one who is justified in God's sight. Jesus said that the one who wishes to follow Him must "deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). Jesus said that the one who "loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Mat. 10:37).

This is only a partial picture of what the Bible puts forth of how to be saved. It's not that you need to do each of these things that I listed. But, you need to realize that all of these things are really one thing. They put together a pattern for us to follow. The Bible calls us to forsake our life and seek the life that God gives. The Bible calls us to look away from ourselves and to look to God. We are to cry out to God for help. We are called to turn from our sin and turn to God. We are called to submit ourselves to a new master. You put all of these together, and this is what salvation is all about. You are saved from the wrath of God when you come to the point of hating your own life and everything that is involved in it and cry to God for mercy and help. It is complete self-abandonment and trust in God's sufficiency to save. There is no room to think that you can do it on your own. There is no room to think that you can save yourself. There is no room to trust in your own efforts. It is complete dependence upon God in every way that saves you.

This morning, we are going to look at yet another description given in the Bible that pictures salvation in much the same way as I just described. It is found in Matthew 13. This chapter contains seven parables of Jesus. We have covered the first four parables in previous weeks. This morning, we will look at the fifth and sixth parables in this wonderful chapter.

Matthew 13:44-46

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

These parables form a pair. They are talking about the same topic. In this way, they are much like the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven. Those parables were parables of growth. These parables are parables of salvation. Thus I have named my sermon this morning, "Parables of Salvation." These parables describe how one enters the kingdom of heaven. Let's look turn our attention to the first parable,

1. The Hidden Treasure (verse 44).

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field." (Matt. 13:44)

Jesus tells of a man walking along in a field. We have very little information about the man. Perhaps he is a regular worker in the field. Or, perhaps he is out walking and just happens to be walking through the field. We don't know. But we do know is that he is out in the field, and while he is in the field, he finds a treasure. The sense is that he wasn't even looking for a treasure. He didn't have a treasure map. He simply stumbled upon it. Perhaps he saw something shiny protruding from the soil, which made him curious. As he began to investigate what it was, he swept away the dirt and uncovered a treasure box. To us, this sounds a bit odd, though it has the makings of a good story. We wouldn't even think of placing a treasure like this in the ground. We place our money in the bank or in various investments. But in the days of Jesus, there were times in which they would place their money in treasure boxes and hide them in the soil. They did this especially when the days were filled with uncertainty. Perhaps a foreign country was going to invade them. Their money wouldn't be safe in a bank. It would only be safe in the ground. Perhaps a foreign country was oppressing them. If their money was in the bank, it would be taxed and taken. Yet, in the

ground, it might be used. I read in the news this week that the United States is speculating that the \$1 Billion in cash that Saddam Hussein withdrew from a bank in Baghdad shortly before the invasion by the United States military is currently being used to resist the Americans. Why? The money is in cash and isn't subject to any foreign control. This is the same idea behind why treasures were buried in the Middle East.

As this man in Jesus' parable found a treasure, certainly, he began to inspect it in order to get an idea of how big the treasure was that he had found. He realized that the treasure was worth more than he owned. Then, Jesus said that he hid the treasure again. He probably placed it back in the same place in which he found it. Perhaps he made sure that the treasure wasn't visible to anyone. Jesus said that this man went away joyful at the prospect of owning the treasure. So, he went and sold everything that he owned in order to purchase the field and obtain the treasure.

The man in Jesus' parable purchased the field for \$100,000 because he knew that the treasure had \$200,000 in it. This wasn't unethical. It was a shrewd business move. He saw that money could be made. He knew that he could purchase the field for less than what was in the treasure. It was a profitable business venture on day one. Some people wonder at this story, thinking that this man did an unethical thing. Some question this man's integrity in not revealing the treasure in the field to the owner. But obviously, the owner of the field didn't bury this treasure, because he didn't even know that the treasure was there. The man who found the treasure had as much right to the treasure as the man who owned the field. The unethical thing would be to take the treasure from the field, without purchasing the rights to the field in the first place.

What this man did isn't unethical. This man did the same thing that is often done in the marketplace today. It is the foundation of many businesses. It is how they make money. Retail stores are founded upon the principle of marking up the sales price on items. They purchase an item from the manufacturer for \$10 because they know that they can turn around and sell it for \$20. There are those who go around to garage sales looking for the priceless antique for which an owner doesn't realize the value. They purchase a medallion for 50 cents and turn around and sell it for \$20 at an antique shop someplace. The Proverbs speak of this type of thing: "Bad, bad," says the buyer; But when he goes his way, then he boasts" (Prov. 20:14). The buyer is haggling the price down, because he knows of its value. I know of a man who has realized that he can purchase an item from our local Walmart for something like \$5, but can sell it on eBay for \$10. He tells me that he usually sells a couple of these things each week.

The point of the parable is this: it is a picture of how a person enters the kingdom of heaven. There is a treasure to be obtained. It is called the kingdom of God. It is called eternal life. It is called the salvation of your soul. And this treasure is worth far more than everything that you own. Today, it is on sale. But, **it costs you everything**. It costs you **your physical possessions**. Jesus said, "No one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (Luke 14:33). It costs you **your closest relationships**. Jesus said, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot by My disciple" (Luke 14:26). It costs you your **reputation in the world**. Jesus said, "You will be hated by all on account of My name" (Matthew 10:22). It costs you your very **life**. Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). That is the cost of following Jesus: It will cost you your physical possessions, your closest relationships, your reputation in the world, and even your own life. I have been careful to quote Jesus exactly to demonstrate that I am not making these things up or adding to Scripture.

The cost of following Jesus is high, but it is well worth it. The man in Jesus' parable wasn't coerced into purchasing this field. He didn't purchase the field reluctantly. On the contrary, Jesus said that this man sold everything and bought the field "from joy over it." It thrilled his heart to purchase this field, because he saw that it was to his profit to do so. Likewise, the cost of following Jesus is high. But, if you will put the costs of following Jesus on one side of the scale, and the value of the kingdom on the other side of the scale, then you will find that the value will far outweigh the costs.

In the words of Jim Eliot, "He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep to obtain that which he cannot lose." This is a paraphrase of the words of Jesus, "what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). I don't care how rich you are, or how much you love your spouse or family, or how many friends you have, or how healthy you are; you can't keep your physical possessions. You can't keep your closest relationships. You can't keep your reputation in the world. You can't keep your life, as you will certainly die someday. But, what you gain in Jesus, is far better. People today will give millions of dollars for the opportunity to go up in space with the Soviet cosmonauts. They do this because to them the experience of being in space is so valuable that they are willing to part with a portion of their money in order to briefly obtain the experience. Think about the experience you will obtain in heaven! You'll have eternal life. You'll have fellowship with God. You will have a transformed, glorified body. Your sins will be forgiven. This experience is worth everything that you have.

Perhaps you have purchased something that afterwards you have regretted purchasing. I know that I have. Late in the summer, I cleaned our garage. Somehow in the process, I lost one of our garage door openers. After this happened, Yvonne and I survived on one garage door opener for two cars. Whenever we went out, we would always check the car to see that the garage door opener is with us. If it isn't, we would take it from the other car. This went on for a few months, until I found the time to get a new garage door opener. I went to Sears, and I purchased this type of opener that is guaranteed to work with any kind of receiver. I brought it home and thought that it would be a snap to set up. Well, I played with the thing for over an hour. Not only did the new garage door opener fail to work, but somehow my old one ceased working as well. Now, we were without any garage door opener. I don't know what was wrong. So, I went online and ordered a receiver for my new garage door opener. It came a few days later in the mail. I tried to get this thing to work. It doesn't work either. So now, when we want to open our garage door, we have to get out of our car, go to our external keypad on our garage, and punch in our code. It is a terrible inconvenience. (It's like everybody used to live 30 years ago, before these wonderful things were invented.) I'm out \$40 and without any garage door opener. I wish that I had never purchased a garage door opener in the first place. But this isn't the case with Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is a treasure, that will be enjoyed now and will be enjoyed later. I promise you, that you will never regret being a disciple of Jesus. It may be difficult at times, but in the end, you will be a satisfied customer.

Perhaps there are things that you own, that you don't find valuable at all. For instance, on Friday night we had a wonderful Christmas party.

It's great to see the church together and enjoying one another's company. Anyway, at the party, we had a white elephant gift exchange. We were told to bring something wrapped as a gift from your house that you no longer want. So, I brought this treasure. It's a Big Mouth Billy Bass wall hanging. When you press the button, the bass mounted on the plaque begins to flop around and sing, "Hey, I wanna know... can you help me? Take me to the river. Put me in the water." It's cute now, but after an hour with excited children, it gets old. We gave this treasure as a white elephant gift. We didn't want it. Now, the Kraus family has it. Adriana told me last night that Andrew has already learned a new song. He has been singing it all day, "put me in the river" But, Big Mouth Billy Bass is nothing like the treasure you obtain in the kingdom of heaven. Believe me, you don't want to have Big Mouth Billy Bass for too long. You don't want to pay too much for it. But, the kingdom of heaven is worth every penny that you own. The kingdom of heaven is of great value and will never grow old.

There is another treasure that we own that we would really like to get rid of. We have a bassinet, which is a family heirloom. As a baby, Yvonne's mother slept in it. As a baby, Yvonne slept in it. All of our children have slept in it. But, you know, we really don't want it anymore. It's big. It's bulky. It's difficult to store. It has served its purpose. If we have another baby, we think that we could manage quite well without it. We would simply use a crib. A baby doesn't know the difference between a crib and a bassinet. If we get rid of it, we'll probably break Yvonne's mother's heart. So, we have been in a dilemma. But, we found out recently that Yvonne's sister in California is going to be having her first baby in June. We thought that we could finally get rid of the thing by "giving" it to her, much in the same way that we gave Big Mouth Billy Bass to the Kraus family. Yvonne was speaking with her recently on the phone about the bassinet. She said, "Janelle, we have this bassinet that you might like to have. As you know, it's very special to mom. I'm sure that she sure would like it if all of her grandchildren slept in it. Perhaps we could find some way to get it out to you." Janelle instantly replied on the phone saying, "Oh, no, I wouldn't want that thing at all. It's really quite big. And, I don't think that I absolutely need it. Besides, it's probably going to be expensive to send it out here. No, YOU can keep it!" We are stuck. We don't want it. But, we don't want to break Yvonne's mother's heart either. We'll probably end up keeping it for a while longer. (I think we can hand it off to Carissa some day. Then she will have to deal with this treasure!)

Jesus isn't an unwanted treasure. Jesus is a delight and a joy and a desire. When you come to know Christ, you will be able to say with the Psalmist, "Besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth" (Ps. 73:25).

This is the message of this parable of the treasure hidden in the field. Let's look at the next parable, which also describes the kingdom of heaven to something of great value.

2. The Priceless Pearl (verses 45-46).

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it." (Matt. 13:45-46)

In many ways, this parable is similar to the previous one. We have a man who finds something of great value. Upon discovering it, he goes, sells everything he has, and purchases it. However, in this case, the man finding the pearl knew about pearls. He didn't simply stumble onto them like the man who found the treasure appears to do. Rather, this man was a merchant who bought and sold fine pearls. He knew the pearl trade. He was actively seeking pearls. He knew the supreme value of this pearl.

In the days of Jesus, pearls were a very expensive commodity. They were quite rare and were a symbol of great wealth. Pearls were expensive because of the great effort that it took to find a pearl. Pearls begin with a grain of sand, or a small piece of shell that intrudes into an oyster. In order to protect itself, the oyster forms layer after layer of a substance called "mother of pearl" (or nacre) over this irritation. Eventually, a pearl is formed in the oyster. This process often takes upwards of 5 years before the pearl is of a sufficient size to sell. Often oysters live at a depth of 25-50 feet below the surface of the water. So, finding these pearls in Jesus' day involved a diver, who would hold his breath and jump into the water, possibly holding weights to bring him to the bottom of the sea. Then, he would scrounge around for a few oysters, which he would place in his hand or a bag and swim to the top of the water. He did this without the nice scuba masks and oxygen tanks that we have today. Upon retrieving a few oysters, they would be opened to see if there were any pearls in them. In the wild, the ratio is about one quality pearl for every 10,000 oysters. This process of diving for pearls was very risky and many lost their lives in the process. Today, we have figured out how to insert an artificial irritation into an oyster to create what it called, a "cultured pearl," which is how 90% of the pearl market is produced today. We collect oysters, insert the irritation and throw them back in the sea. In a year or two, they are harvested, with a much better ratio than 1 in 10,000. It is easy to understand why pearls were so expensive in the days of Jesus.

This man in Jesus' parable knew all about pearls and the business of pearl hunting. So, when he found this one particular pearl for sale, he knew that it was "of great value." This was the one pearl that he wanted. So, like the other story, he sells everything that he had to purchase the pearl. In some ways, this wasn't a particularly wise move from an earthly standpoint. When it comes to investments, we are told to diversify our assets. This is to protect against disaster. Suppose that we put all of our eggs into one basket. If we trip and fall, we lose all of our eggs. If we put all of our eggs into several baskets, we don't lose all of our eggs if someone trips. But against all human wisdom and intuition, this man put all of his earthly possessions into one pearl. Yet, when it comes to the kingdom of God, we can't diversify our investment. Jesus calls us to place all of our faith into one place in Him, alone. You can't add Jesus to your life, as if He were a portion of your investment portfolio. With Jesus, it is all of your investments, or nothing. I have heard of Hindu people coming to faith in Jesus, yet still worshipping their other gods. When confronted, they say, "Yes, I am a Christian, about 20%." But with Christ, he can't be only a portion of your life. You can't merely add Jesus to your religion. Jesus replaces everything. He needs to have all of your life. All needs to be abandoned. You need to place your trust completely in Him, and in Him alone. Just as this man sold everything and invested himself in one pearl, so also do you need to invest your faith totally in Jesus Christ and in Him alone.

This is because God doesn't accept a divided heart. Only a few chapters back in Matthew, Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). Jesus will be your only master, or He will not be your master. You can't love Jesus and the world. The apostle John wrote, "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). This is why Demas deserted the apostle Paul: he loved this present world (2 Timothy 4:10). "Friendship with the world is hostility toward God" James tells us (James 4:4). To love father, mother, sister, brother, son or

daughter more than Jesus disqualifies you to be a disciple of Christ (Luke 14:26). Jesus won't accept a divided heart. This is what this parable means. You want to enter the kingdom, you need to recognize the pearl of great price, which is Jesus. You need to forsake everything in your life and buy that pearl.

I believe that these parables are talking about the value of the kingdom (it is more precious than anything you own) and the cost of following Jesus (it will cost you everything to be a disciple of Jesus). As I have already explained, you cannot be a half-hearted follower of Jesus. [\[1\]](#)

With these parables in mind, I'd like to ask you a few questions.

Question 1 - Have you found Jesus?

You may have stumbled onto Him like the man finding a treasure in a field. I once heard the testimony of a man who was not religious, nor was he interested in religion. One day, he received a tract from someone on the street. When he saw what it was, he crumpled it up and threw it on the ground; he wasn't interested in spiritual things at all. The one who gave him the tract said, "You will regret that action your first second in hell." It caused him to think about eternal realities for the first time. He eventually became a Christian and has been a pastor for many years. He stumbled onto the truth, while not looking for it. But God used that incident to begin to open his eyes to see the light of the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Your testimony may be like that. Or perhaps you may have been seeking for truth all of your life. I have heard many people give their testimony that they were highly religious, but they never found anything that truly satisfied until they found Jesus. They tried *this* philosophy and *that* philosophy. They tried *this* religion and *that* religion. Finally, they stumbled upon Christianity. Then, they discovered that Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). They discovered that "no one comes to the father, but through Jesus" (John 14:6). These types of people look for truth, and finally find it in Christ. This may be your testimony.

In either case, my question to you is, "have you found Jesus?" I don't care how you found Him. You may have stumbled upon Him or finally found Him after searching. I just want you to consider whether or not you have found Him.

Question 2 - If you have found Jesus, have you "bought" Him?

I ask you this, because this is the burden of the text. In both parables, the phrase is repeated, "he goes and sells all that he has, and buys." This is how you enter the kingdom. You sell everything, and you "buy" Jesus. Again, this is a picture of salvation. You can't push the details of this "purchasing" of Jesus to its extreme. You can't "purchase" God. You can't "purchase" your salvation. But, you can give all for Him. The picture is that you have forsaken the world to follow Christ, because you have found Him to be worth a great treasure or a costly jewel. Isaac Watts said it well: "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling." You must embrace the cross completely. You can't hold on to Jesus with one hand and hold on to something in the world with the other. You can't be clinging to the cross with one arm, while in the other arm you are firmly holding your television, your Internet connection, your checkbook, your job, your worldly accomplishments, your cookies, your magazines, your books, your friends, or your children. Jesus said, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Another hymn writer, Francis Havergal, said it this way, "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee; Take my moments and my days--Let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take my love--my Lord, I pour, at Thy feet its treasure store; Take myself--and I will be ever, only, all for Thee."

Is this your life? Have you "bought" Jesus by forsaking your own life and placing it at the feet of Christ? Have you realized that the only way that you will ever gain Christ is by counting your life as a loss? This is what Paul said. He said, "Whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ" (Phil. 3:7). Paul, if you remember, had many things that were to his benefit. He was of the right nation (Israel). He was of the most favored tribe (Benjamin). He had the highest religions standing (a blameless Pharisee). He was more zealous than any around him (persecuting the church). Yet, he let go of all of these things, and he took both of his arms and grasped the cross of Christ, and clung to Him by faith "that I may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ" (Phil. 3:9).

This was the thrust of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. He told Nicodemus that he needed to be born from above. He needed to be born again. He needed to start all over with nothing. This was hard for Nicodemus. Nicodemus was well-accomplished in his Judaism as "the teacher of Israel" (John 3:10). To think of forsaking all that was very difficult for him to do. Yet, this is the call of Jesus upon everyone.

Those in the kingdom are those who have forsaken all to follow Christ. Have you done this? If you have "found" Jesus and if you have "bought" Him, then I invite you to celebrate the Lord's Supper with us this morning. At Rock Valley Bible Church, this is something that we do every four to six weeks to remember the Lord's death. As we prepare to celebrate it together, I would like for you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 11. Of all passages in the Bible, this is the one that gives to us the clearest directions of how we ought to celebrate the Lord's Supper together.

I will begin reading in verse 23,

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way [He took] the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink [it,] in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment. And the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come.

I want to point out for you the seriousness of what we will do this morning. We are proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes (verse 26). In doing so, verse 28 tells us to take a time of self-examination before we actually celebrate our supper together. In light of our text today, I think that we need to especially contemplate the state of our souls before God. I am calling you to judge yourself this morning (verse 31).

We live in an interesting society. Christianity is all around us. If you turn on your radio and start turning the dial, I don't care where you are in this country, the odds are that you will probably be able to find a Christian radio station. If you turn on cable television and start flipping through the channels, you will probably be able to find a Christian television station. If you go to Sam's Club, you can find Bibles and Christian books that are sold for cheap prices. Christianity is all around us. Many people in this country will say that they are Christians. I don't know the exact percentages. I'm not up on the recent polls. However, I do know that many people will say that they believe in Jesus, because they know that "believing in Jesus" is the right thing to do. If you think about it, even a Muslim "believes in Jesus," as a prophet, and not as the Son of God. There are many Americans who "believe in Jesus," as a good man and a good teacher to follow. And so, it is important for us to define our terms, as the Bible does.

The Bible is a glorious book. God hasn't given us only one term to describe salvation, lest we wrongly understand the term and be let astray through a faulty understanding. Rather, God has given to us many terms and many different explanations of salvation to give us a well-rounded picture of what we need to do to be saved. I began my message by considering the many ways that the Bible describes what it means to "believe in Jesus." It means to "repent." It means to "turn from vain things." It means to "confess with your mouth." It means to "call upon His name." It means to "look to the LORD." It means to "consent and obey." It means to "enter by the narrow gate." It means to "beat your breast and plead for mercy." It means to "deny yourself." It means to "take up your cross." It means to "follow Jesus." It means to "hate your family." It means to "hate your very life." Now, we add one more: it means to **"treasure Jesus above everything."**

The question under examination right now is this, "Do you believe in Jesus?" Have you found Jesus Christ to be your supreme joy in life? Have you forsaken everything to follow Him? Do you believe in Jesus? When did you first find Jesus to be your greatest treasure? When did you give up everything in this world to follow Him? Do you believe in Jesus? Can you tell me how great is your love for Him? Can you tell me what types of things it cost you to follow Him? Do you believe in Jesus? Please tell me how you demonstrated your love to Christ this week. Please tell me how the Holy Spirit worked in you this week.

If your answers to these questions are "Yes," and if you could tell me of your supreme love to Jesus and can tell me of some clear evidences that this is the case, then, by all means, celebrate the supper with us together. If you answered these questions with a "No," or can't point to clear evidence in your life that you love God above all else, then let the elements pass you by. Please don't take them and fool yourself and fool others. Be warned, "He who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly" (verse 29). In Corinth, there were many who faced the judgment of God. Some became sick as a result of mocking God by taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. Some died because of mocking the Lord.

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[1] In an effort to be complete, let me say that there are some who resist this interpretation, because they say that you can't "buy" your way into the kingdom of heaven. They say that the only one buying or purchasing anything is Jesus. They say that this parable is describing Jesus "finding" the church and purchasing the church with His own blood. Without going into their arguments in detail, let me say that there are merits for this interpretation, as I read very carefully their arguments. Most of their arguments have to do with word studies. They see this word, "purchase" and see it used elsewhere of Jesus "purchasing" the church, and so conclude that this is what it must mean here (Acts 20:28). They point out that it is impossible to "purchase" the kingdom of God, which borders on works for salvation. They read other places of Jesus "finding" that which was lost, like a sheep and a coin, and a son (Luke 15), and say that Jesus must be the one "finding" in this parable. They find parallels with Israel being a "treasure" (Ex. 19:5) and conclude that Israel (or the church) must be the treasure that Jesus finds. However, I'm not convinced that this was the meaning of these parables. I believe that this interpretation places too much emphasis upon semantical parallels through word studies.

It is definitely true that Jesus came and died on the cross to purchase the church. "[Jesus] purchased [the church] with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). Furthermore, it is true that Jesus is the one who "found" the church "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). However, this view has a difficulty in explaining the clear thrust of both parables. In the case of the treasure, the man wasn't seeking anything. He stumbled upon the treasure. Is this true of Jesus? No. Also, in the case of the pearl, the merchant had no idea where such a valuable pearl was (or whether or not it even existed). Is this the case with Jesus? No. Additionally, the treasure (or pearl) is worth more than the price paid to obtain it. Is this true of Israel (or the church)? Definitely not. It is for these reasons that I believe that these parables are talking about the value of the kingdom and the cost of following Jesus. The difficulty of this view is how you explain the "buying" of Jesus. Certainly, you cannot "buy" the kingdom. Yet, there is a clear sense in Scripture that salvation costs you your life (as I have demonstrated in the sermon). In response to the question, "What good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" (Matt. 19:16), Jesus said to the rich young ruler, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matt. 19:21). Certainly this man couldn't "buy" eternal life. However, Jesus demanded this man to sell everything in exchange for a treasure. The semantic parallels are enough to convince me that we can speak of "buying" the kingdom, if we understand the terminology as Jesus used it.

In either case, both interpretations are true to other parts of Scripture. And neither interpretation would be in violation of the meaning of the Bible.