



TIME OF GRACE®

Jesus' Growth Plan for Me: Why I Must Give Up My Treasures

Study Notes

Summary

It's going to cost us to follow Jesus. He was upfront about us needing to give up the things we treasure. But, Jesus also said, joyfully giving up the things we have is possible when we find a superior treasure. Through two short parables Jesus told, Pastor Mike helps us see what this treasure is.

- **Matthew 13:44** — 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.
- Don't _____. He's _____.
- **Matthew 13:45-46** — 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.
- “I am the person who found Forrest's famed treasure. The moment it happened was not the triumphant Hollywood ending some surely envisioned; it just felt like I had just survived something and was fortunate to come out the other end.” ~ Jack Stuef
- “I don't want to ruin this treasure hunt by saying it was made for an English major, but it's based on a close read of a text...I understood [Fenn] by reading his words, and listening to him talk over and over and over and over again.” ~ Jack Stuef

Points to Ponder

1. How does doing life with other Christians help you remember the true worth of knowing Jesus?

2. Read what people are saying about Jesus in heaven in Revelation 4:11, Revelation 5:9-10, Revelation 5:12, and Revelation 5:13-14. What do you notice about heaven's songs?
3. Write down the names of three friends who don't have a regular connection to church. Pray for them each day this week, asking God to give you the right words to invite them to join you at worship.

Homework for Next Week

Read Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Time of Grace Ministry
Jesus Growth Plan for Me: Why I Must Give Up My Treasures
Matthew 13:44-46
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Pastor Mike Novotny

Back in the year 2010, a very wealthy man named Forrest Fenn hid a million-dollar treasure. First, Fenn apparently owned an art gallery and had become wealthy in the process. But around 2010 he was diagnosed with terminal cancer and so he decided to add a little bit of adventure to the last years of his story. So, he took this old bronze box that dated back to the 12th century, opened it up, and put inside huge chunks of gold nuggets, precious jewels, rare coins, and then hid it somewhere in the range of the Rocky Mountains. Afterward, he self-published a book, and inside the book was a poem that contained a bunch of clues that would lead the average person with enough interest and passion to find the million-dollar treasure of Forrest Fenn.

And people searched, especially after his appearance on the Today Show. Dozens of treasure hunters blossomed into hundreds and then into thousands. People were passionate that maybe they could be the one to find this box that would change the rest of their life. Many searched, and in fact, many died. Five deaths were connected to the hidden treasure of Forrest Fenn. A Jeff Morph of Illinois fell 500 feet down the Yellow Stone Cliff and died. Eric Ashby was on a raft that overturned on the Arkansas River and he died. A pastor from Colorado told his family he was searching for the treasure and they later found his deceased body on the shores of the Rio Grande.

Years passed, rumors and theories raged online, some people thought the whole thing was a made-up hoax to sell books, until one day, a Saturday, right in the middle of a global pandemic, June 6, 2020, a 32-year-old medical student from Michigan found a 12-century box somewhere in the state of Wyoming and sent a picture of the treasure to its original owner. This medical student suddenly had all of his debts paid because with that little 10-inch by 10-inch by 5-inch box he had instantly become a millionaire.

And that is a cool story, isn't it? There's something about treasure that just grabs hold of the human heart, isn't there? If you, parents, would hide like an old, rustic-looking treasure map under your kid's bed; I want you to take a video of what happens on their face. Because there's something about hidden treasure or buried treasure or lost treasure, or Nicolas Cage and national treasure that makes your palms sweat, it makes your heart beat. The thought that you could be the person and in an instant, your whole life could turn around with a treasure. It has gripped the human imagination as long as stories had been told.

Now, most people assume that finding a treasure is not easy. By its very nature we just think that we're going to have to scale some mountain, were going to have to dig into some ancient cave, it's not going to be an easy task. But many people still do it, not because it's easy but because

they think the treasure is worthy. And according to Jesus, that statement is something you really need to know about... Jesus. But the truth is, if you would read the Bible, Jesus was very up front about what it would cost people like us to follow him. He wasn't talking about earning our way to heaven or paying some amount of money, but he was really up front with people that it would not be an easy journey to be his disciple. He would say things like, "If you want to find your spiritual life you have to lose the life that you used to have. If you want to follow me and be my disciple you have to not embrace yourself. You have to deny yourself." He didn't say, "Grab your pillow and be my disciple." He said, "Take up your cross and follow me." Sometimes it seems like Jesus was trying to take people out of being Christian. But he wanted them up front, not in the fine print, to know that this is not going to be the easiest journey. Because according to Jesus, the will of God is to love God more than anything you love in this life and it's to love other people as much as you love yourself. To value people, serve people, prioritize people. And if you've ever met people, that's not easy.

In fact, there's this one prayer that Jesus taught his friends to pray. Lots of you have prayed it but maybe you've never thought about how crazy the prayer is. Jesus once said that we should pray, "Our father in Heaven, your will be done." You ever thought about how nuts that is to actually say that? "God, let's put away my wish list, not what I want, God, what you want. God, I'll move over, I'll sit in the back, you drive. God, not my life anymore it's your life, you be the King, you give the commands, you order, I obey; you say, I submit; you pick the direction, I will follow you. I'll change my mind not you. I'll be the one -- God, you be the King, I'll be a citizen in your Kingdom. Father, your will be done."

Many of us have mumbled this a hundred times in our life. That is a crazy thing to pray. To absolutely surrender to the will of our Father in Heaven. You know, there's a sweet thing that couples say in front of a church or in front of the beach, "I'm going to love you, respect you for better or worse, in sickness and in health." And everyone claps and they throw the flower petals. Do you know what that means though, what it really says? I'm going to try to love you, I'm going to try to serve you, I'm going to try to be good to you if you're good to me. Or, if this is like the worse week we've ever had as a couple, I never ever, ever do I get to play the card, "Well, you didn't." That's not my job. My job is to love, my job is to serve, even today. And if you've ever been in a stage of a relationship where your cup isn't full and you feel like you're being taken advantage of or taken for granted that is crazy hard.

I mean, just one of those things on a list would make the Christian faith very difficult. But Jesus puts all of them together; our time, our money, our passions, our desires, the way we treat people, the way we do everything with everything every single day and everyone. That is what it means to be a disciple of Christ. And maybe that's why some of you, maybe that's why you're not there just yet. Maybe you watch at home or maybe you come here on a Sunday and you like the music, and the people are nice and the coffee is fresh and you learn a little bit about the Bible but you're a little bit timid, I think, because you get it. Like, you'll have to change your mind about something if you were all in for Jesus. You'd have to open your hands and give up something if you were all in for Jesus and you're not, maybe you're not sure if it would be worth it.

Or maybe for some of you, you are a Christian, you do believe this, you do want to try, but maybe the things I just said are the reason that it has kind of felt like a grind to follow God. The standards are high, loving people is hard, you try and you pray and like me, you fall and you fail so you say sorry and you get up, and you try again, and you pray again, and you fall, and you fail again and you say sorry again. It's like day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year of trying to be that kind of person, and you never quite get there. And so, the joy that we talk about and the happiness and the satisfaction, it's sounds good but that's not what you feel right now. You feel the burden of the expectations of how God wants you to live.

So, if you have a Bible with you and want to open up to Matthew 13. Jesus said, "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." In the story, there was this guy, and apparently, in those days people didn't use banks very often and so, he just stumbles across this treasure that was hidden in a field, and notice what Jesus says he does next. Can you look at the text with me? It says, "He went and he sold," How much? He sold how much? He sold everything. "He sold all that he had." And how did he feel about it? It says, "He then in his joy -- In his joy went and sold all that he had and bought that field." I picture this guy selling everything that he had and one of his friends comes up to him and says, "Hey, hey Joe, what are you doing?" He's got this big grin on his face, and he's selling this and he's selling that, and he's practically giving the rest of the stuff away. And his buddy says, "Wait, what are you doing with that? Don't you remember, you love that thing. Ah man, don't you remember when you and I did -- No way, you're selling that? You can't live without that." But there's a big grin pasted on Joe's face. Why? Not because he didn't love the stuff that he had. Here's my point. But because he had found a better treasure.

The only way you can joyfully give up the things you have is if you find something better than what you have. And according to Jesus, this is what the Christian faith is like. It's true, you and I can think for a long time, like I did a few minutes ago, about all these things that will be difficult and hard, all these things that we might lose, all those short-term pleasures, those habits, the fun time that we had with our friends, we could focus on that. But Jesus, instead, chooses to focus on this, that he is a superior treasure.

Which is why I want to take this invisible treasure chest named Jesus and I want to flip it around... and I want you to look long and hard at what is inside. Do you know the kind of spiritual blessings that Jesus offers to you? To me? To the world? It's insane. Inside -- I'm going to sit on the treasure chest of Jesus right now. He offers us forgiveness for free. Isn't that insane? Who do you know that would ever do that? Like, you mess up with someone... you have to work to rebuild their trust and restore a relationship. Not Jesus, he just forgives. The Greek word for forgive literally means to send something away. Like all the words that I wish I wouldn't have said, all the choices I wish I wouldn't have made, instead of them hanging over my head God sends them away. The Bible is, "As far as the east is from the west so far has he removed our transgression from us." And this is true for you if you trust in Jesus. You might still feel bad about it, you might think about it, but God's not thinking about it. He has separated it from you, he has sent it away, it's forgiven. That thing is forgiven, those things are forgiven, the worst

things are forgiven. Not socially accepted sins, all the sins, they're forgiven. Whatever you feel bad about has already been forgiven. That is the treasure, that is Jesus.

And there in the treasure chest of Jesus right next to forgiveness is this fact that God is now for us. I love that one so much. "God for us." You ever gone through something hard in your life and thought that God was against you? Like, you trip up and you think, "Okay, I know what this is. Because when I did that, now God's going to do this." For a Christian that is never true. Never. If every sin has been sent away, God doesn't have a single reason to get us back. Instead, he is for us. We sing this in a song called "The Blessing" at our church, it's beautifully repetitive. "No, he is for us, he is for us. He's with us and he's in us and he's for us." So, whatever happens to you, it is never God getting you back. You never have to wonder when the lightning bolt is going to come, when he's going to sabotage your future, when you're battling cancer, when the breakup -- that is never God punishing you for your sin because Jesus was punished for your sin.

In Jesus, you have the God who runs the universe every single day, 24/7, 365 being for you. And if all that weren't enough in his treasure, you get love. How many of you have dogs? How many of you love your dogs? If I asked you why you love your dog so much would the answer be, unconditional love? People tell me that all the time, "Like my dog -- I could have the worse day in the world and I walk through the door and my dog is so happy to see me. My dog thinks I'm a rock star, that little tail is wagging back and forth."

Listen, you think your friends love you, you think your mom loves you, you think your dog loves you, have you ever thought of God? I mean, God doesn't have a tail but if he did, if he did and you walked into the room, do you think -- do you think, maybe God made dogs that way so you and I would know what it's like to be terrible and we walk through the door and it's like we're not? Like, love all the time? To know through the ups and the downs, he loves us. His love is unfailing and it's enduring, and it never ends.

Man, if we had more time I could keep going. It's not just forgiveness, it's not just God for us, it's not just unconditional love, there are so many blessings that are here and now ours because of Jesus Christ. And everything that I've been saying, that's just now. That's not even the best part about being a Christian, the best part, oh my goodness, is yet to come. Because 2,000 years ago Jesus channeled his inner Connor McGregor and he karate killed death right in the face and he dropped it to the ground and rose victorious from the grave so that you and I would not have to fear death. It would be a comma that leads to the best part of the sentence, it would be a kind of place where there's no weeping or mourning, or crying, or pain, there's no mental health struggles, miscarriage, or addiction. There's no broken heart, there's no divorce, there's just God and his face and his love, and feeling like we've never felt.

Oh my goodness, all of this, this is what is inside the beautiful, wonderful, powerful name of Jesus. And if you know that this makes sense, "He found a treasure, and in his joy, he sold all that he had." Is it hard? For sure. It is worth it? Without a doubt. Here's Jesus' big idea for today if you're taking notes, write this down — don't worry. It's hard, yep. It's going to cost you, for sure. Don't worry, he is worthy. He's not just a guy, he's not just a lord that you trust, he is an infinitely superior treasure.

And just in case you had to take a bathroom break during Jesus' first story he tells another story, which is almost exactly the same thing. Look at verse 45 of Matthew 13: "Again," Jesus continues. "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."

Sounds familiar, huh? Guy finds something really good, gives up everything he has, he does it with eagerness, with joy, he's not worried cause the treasure is worth it. In other words, Jesus is not like Forrest Fenn's treasure. Remember that 32-year-old medical student who found it? He had studied Forrest Fenn's poem from his book, he'd been thinking, actually, about the clues for about two years or so and then he started the actual search. It took him 25 days of searching right around Wyoming until he stumbled across it and when he did, do you want to guess how he felt? I'll let him tell you. Jack Stuef, the young man who found the treasure said this, "I am the person who found Forrest's famed treasure. The moment it happened was not the triumphant Hollywood ending that some surely envisioned; it just felt like I had just survived something and was fortunate to come out the other end."

Huh. You're a millionaire, man! Yes! Apparently not. What did he say, "I just survived. I guess I was fortunate." Do you know who is not like that? Jesus. Do you know one word that you will never hear in heaven? Meh. Because there's like a Hollywood ending, and then there's a heavenly ending! And you're going to have to take the Bible's word for it, but when you see his face, everything you've been through will seem small and you will sing what the angels sing in multiple chapters of Revelation, "Worthy, worthy, worthy is the lamb." He was worth it, he was worth it, he was worth it.

And people who pushed and made time for prayer and church in their life, they will say, "It was worth it." And people who were battling same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria who had a very hard road, they will look into the compassionate eyes of Jesus and say, "You were worth it." And people who did their best to care for a grouchy parent as they were aging or a spouse who was straying, they'll say, "Jesus, it was worth it." And kids who tried to honor their imperfect parents and parents who loved their imperfect kids they will say, "Jesus, it was worth it. The sacrifice we made, the time that we have, every dollar, every cent." When you see the beaming face of Jesus you will say, "It was worth it. I've been looking my whole life for something that is worthy and, Jesus, it was you." Like a merchant looking for fine pearls, you find it. And in your joy, you give up everything because you believe deep in your heart, "He's worthy."

And if you're not a hundred percent sure just yet, I have to tell you one last thing. Like, where do you see this treasure, where do you come to believe that God is worth whatever he asks you to do? Well, Jack, the man who found Forrest Fenn's famous treasure, he knows. Let me show you one more quote from him. He said, "I don't want to ruin this treasure hunt by saying it was made for an English major, but it is based on the close read of a text. I understood Fenn and where he buried the treasure by reading his words and listening to him talk over and over, and over, and over again." Boom.

Some of you know where I'm about to go, don't you? "Huh, where do you find the treasure?" By reading words. "Well, I wonder what that could mean." We can listen to words over and over, and over again. And that is why I'm so glad that you're here. Most treasure hunts have a secret map and a journey that might cost you your life. But God today is not handing you a map with secret codes, riddles, and poems, he's handing you a book that on every page expresses the glorious treasure that is his one and only son. You can download a copy for free, you can take this one if you don't have one at home and you can open it today and not need 25 days like Jack did, or years to maybe find the treasure, you can discover it today. And by listening over, and over, and over again you will start to say even on earth what the saints and angels say in Heaven, "Worthy, worthy, worthy is the lamb."

So, I won't lie to you, it's not easy, but, friends, do not worry, Jesus is worthy. Let's pray.

Jesus, your name, that is what we think when we think of you. Your name is great. The devil's greatest goal is to make us think otherwise, that you're not worth it, that this sacrifice, this obedience, this repentance, this following you instead of visa versa, it's not worth it, but that is a lie.

Jesus, no one loves us like you, no one accepts us like you, no one is with us like you, no one listens to us like you, no one cares about us like you, no one saves us like you, there is no one like you, so today we remind our own hearts and we remind the heart of everyone gathered in this space that you are absolutely worth it.

Father, give us your Holy Spirit that every time we open this book in our homes, every time we turn on Christian radio in our car, every time we podcast as we fold the laundry, every time we gather here for worship, this would be the end goal. Not to just give us a good feeling but to remind us that your Son, whatever he says, is worth it.

Father, make us like the men in these stories who give up everything, not with grumbling reluctance but with ecstasy and joy because we found, simply put, a treasure. In the name of Jesus, we pray, and God's people say, 'Amen.'