

### What Do We Truly Value?

Romans 8.26-39, Matthew 13.44-58

Our sentence of the day declares, “Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8.38–39)

This wonderful reassurance also tells us that if separation from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord is a bad thing, then the opposite is a good thing and to be desired most highly: to live in the love of God in Christ Jesus. We do that in our present lives. That focus guides our words and thoughts and actions, although sometimes not as consistently as we might wish. What if our prayer for God’s kingdom to come were answered even more fully, if the whole context of our lives were like that? “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven.”

The kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, right here, at hand, at our fingertips, within our reach. It is a prayer, a possibility and a reality, both present and imminent. Here, and with even more to come. What might that be like in all its fullness, and how might we help to bring it into our lives and into the lives of others?

Some things we long for can seem impossible. One of the impossible dreams of my childhood was to fly, not in a plane but like Superman.



The closest I came was an aeroplane ride from my older cousins, but I, in turn, had to give these rides to my younger cousins. [sermon slide/pic, & explanation]



When I was a child, I also asked a lot of questions. That probably hasn’t changed much. I thought that if I could read all there was to read and ask all there was to ask, I could eventually know everything there was to know. I was wrong about that.

Those were 2 of my childhood impossible dreams. Did you have an impossible dream as a child? [ ... ]

I never did learn all there was to know. However, I could learn and explore many ideas, and hopefully those ideas, or at least some of them, would be important and worthwhile. There were plenty of questions to be asked and plenty of answers to be had. However, some answers might be difficult to understand or could be misunderstood.

When Jesus taught his disciples, he often laid out the same truth, or a variation of it, using a range of parables, metaphors and other examples from daily life. What speaks to one disciple may not speak to another. We all come primed in different ways.

We have heard many parables and metaphors in Matthew's Gospel. Before today's reading, in this chapter, there are stories of the sower, the weeds and wheat, the mustard seed and the yeast.



In today's reading, Jesus gives his disciples 3 pictures of the kingdom of heaven. We hear about the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, being like a treasure in a field, a pearl of great price and a net full of fish.

When I was in school, I remember vividly a visiting scripture teacher who asked us to draw what we thought God looked like. This is something I would not ask of adults, let alone children. I don't know what he expected us to produce, but he did not seem pleased with the results. I wonder what he would have thought if he had asked us to draw the kingdom of heaven and we had produced a treasure chest, or a single pearl, or a load of fish.

Jesus used these images to tell his disciples something important. Not the qualities of gold or pearls or fish, but the nature and value of the kingdom of heaven. In all these examples, there is something of high value that is not easily grasped. There is the understanding that the effort to obtain it is great, but infinitely worthwhile.

Is there something in your life (NOT the kingdom of heaven, something more earthly) that took a great deal of effort over a long time, but the effort was really worthwhile, whether you achieved your goal or not? [...]

How great is the effort to obtain the kingdom of heaven? Well, it will basically cost everything we are and have and do with our lives. It will mean re-aligning the way we see ourselves, other people, and the world, and re-setting our priorities so that, as Paul says, nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Matthew 6:33 says, *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

We just need to seek God's kingdom, and seek God's righteousness by living in God's ways. When we have God in our lives, other wayward, temporary desires will fade into their subsidiary place, not consuming us and robbing us of peace in our lives.

In today's reading from Paul's letter to the Romans, verse 28 says, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." and verse 31, "What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Sofia Rosenfeld is a professor of history, and she recently wrote an article about the massive increase in choices in our daily lives. She says, "So how did we get to this point?"

How did choice become a proxy for freedom in so many domains in modern life? As we discover more and more about our troubles navigating it, we might also wonder if there are other, better ways to be free.” [<https://aeon.co/essays/why-an-abundance-of-choice-is-not-the-same-as-freedom>] I heard another commentator say that the choices in our lives have multiplied more than a millionfold since the seventeenth century.

You made many choices before coming here today. Time to get up or take a little longer? What should I eat? What should I drink? What should I wear? Do I choose this service time and this style of worship? This church or another? What are my sources of guidance and information in my daily life? Are they reliable and aligned to my values? Or, closer to the everyday dilemmas of choice, can we attend to the important things in our lives when so many other things clamour for our attention? How much does any of this really matter?

The most important choices are often spoken about the least. Who am I? Whose am I? How shall I live? The answers lie in our relationship with God. In speaking of prayerfulness, Joan Chittister draws attention to “the simple consciousness that God is; that God is near us at all times; that God is closer to us than the breath we breathe; that God is available, a silence in the midst of chaos, a voice in the midst of confusion, a promise at the center of the tumult. If I ask and I listen and I reach out and I fill my heart with the words of the One who is the Word, then I will be answered. Somehow the path will become clear.”

A final quote from public theologian [Zina Jacque](#) about our Gospel reading.

“No matter which parable grabs your attention, the point is the same: The kingdom of heaven is valuable beyond measure, it is at work even when you cannot see it, and it will cost you everything to participate in it fully.”

May we be prepared to make the choice and to pay the price to obtain the true treasure. Amen.

Helen Dean

26 July 2026