

Fellowship Bible Church
For His Kingdom – Hidden Messages Series
Part 4 of 5: “Priceless”
07-20-2014
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TEXT: MATTHEW 13:44-46

What a treat it is here to serve at Fellowship Bible Church. It really, really is. God has raised up some wonderful leaders here, and as I scan the audience there are some wonderful people here. I see so many faces of those of you who have encouraged us and helped us to advance the cause of Christ here and our ministry. It is absolutely wonderful. I want to encourage us to be encouragers of one another. It is impossible for us to know all the things that we are all doing. We are scattered around, but let's be encouragers of each other. The older I get, the more I value that. If you think of something that someone has done, do not procrastinate writing the email or the little note. Do it. As you are driving along and someone comes to your heart and mind, pray for them, and then pull over and give them a call so you have hands free. Just think in terms of those things. There is such an entitlement thing about us in the West. We think we deserve all the stuff that people do for us, but we do not. We need to demonstrate that degree of appreciation.

It is so good to see John Montgomery here. Bless you my brother. John and Christy are serving over in the Middle East and they are home for a little time of furlough and R& R. I just had a great meeting with them last night, hearing the vision of what God is doing in their hearts and lives. If you get a chance, corner John and let him share with you what the future holds in store for them. It is really a blessing.

If you have a Bible, I want you to turn with me to Matthew chapter 13. We are in a series within a series on the parables. “Hidden Messages” is what we are calling it. I do need to make a little bit of an adjustment. At first when I outlined the parables that we would be giving, I said there would be a six-part series on the parables. I am actually going to make a change today. We are going to make it five parts, because what I have decided to do is to take these two little parables and put them together, because I think they go together. They are saying similar things with two sides of the same issue; and so instead of six, there are going to be five. As I mentioned to you, parables are divinely inspired illustrations. They are stories. They are windows into a spiritual truth. Now the parables for the most part in Matthew chapter 13 have to do with the nature of the kingdom of heaven, and we have seen that as we have walked through these parables so far. We are going to look at these two parables, three verses that give us powerful insight. I have entitled the message today, “Priceless.” Let's pick up here in Matthew 13 beginning at verse 44. Jesus says:

**‘The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field,
which a man found and covered up.
Then in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.
“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,
who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”**

One of my favorite movies of all time is “Shawshank Redemption.” It is really a powerful, powerful film. Now actually it did poorly in the box office because of the title. It was not until after it won the Academy awards that it picked up. If you have seen the movie, you know the story line is compelling. You have the two main characters, Andy Dufresne, who is a banker convicted for killing his wife who maintains his innocence, and he comes to prison there. Then he meets “Red.” Red has been in jail for a long time. He has been in prison for a long time and it looks like he is going to be there for the rest of his life. Red mentors Andy and takes him

underneath his wing and helps him to know how to get through this whole prison culture, who the bad dudes are, and sort of forms a little bit of insulation around Andy. Well, the warden is crooked; so Andy gets seduced or actually gets forced into this money-laundering thing that the warden is running. It is sort of like the back deal there. He thinks that because Andy comes across as so gentle and is so compliant and this kind of thing, that he is soft. Little does he realize that Andy is orchestrating his own escape from prison. Well, he talks to Red and tells Red about what his plans would ideally be if he ever got out. He talks about visiting this fishing village in Mexico that is idyllic and he tells Red, "Hey look. If you ever get paroled after I get out of here, there is a spot that I want you to go to in Buxton, Maine, in this hayfield where I have buried some stuff and you will know how to find me." Well, Red thinks he is blowing smoke and this kind of thing. It is not going to happen. Well, sure enough, Andy escapes and he is gone! Well, after 40 years of being in prison, Red finally gets paroled. He gets out and he does not know how to act. He had not been outside of prison in 40 years, so he is bagging groceries in this little town, staying in this halfway house, and it is terrible. He is asking for permission to go to the bathroom and he is miserable and all get out. He almost prefers to be back, and then he remembers the note that Andy gave him. So, Red breaks his parole and he goes up to Buxton, Maine, and he finds this hayfield. He is scrounging around and he looks over in the direction where Andy said he buried this stuff, and he digs up the ground! Lo and behold, he pulls out this package, and he is looking around trying to figure out if anyone is watching him. "Here I am, this black dude, in Buxton, Maine, in a hayfield," and he opens up this package and there is a letter from Andy. Andy tells him where he is at and how to get there, and then he pulls out this wad of money! So, here you have it. Red has a new life that is paid for.

That is sort of like the feeling of these two short parables. That is what it is really all about. Both of them have the idea of being surprised by joy. Both of them have the idea of tripping across something that changes your life forever. It is the joy of discovery and a new life. Now let me just back up here a little bit and say that both of these parables really teach, as is the genre here in Matthew 13 in these parables, the mystery form of the kingdom. What do you mean by that? Well, Jesus tells these parables because what God is doing is actually the opposite of what the religious leaders expected. You see the religious leaders expected the kingdom of God to come with force and drama, and to dismantle cataclysmically the control of the Romans and the Gentiles, and He establishes His kingdom – right now – and that is not the way it happens here. That is not what Jesus says. It is not coming that way. In fact, it is coming another way.

We have the mustard seed. Jesus comes not as a celebrated king. He is born in a stable and they question the legitimacy of His birth. He comes from Nazareth, a town of very little consequence. Kings do not come from there; and yet He is saying as we saw the other week with the mustard seed that inconspicuous hidden beginnings is what God is going to use to change the world. Now, they did not think that a buried box, as mentioned in this parable, or a priceless pearl that someone finds, is the way the kingdom would come. If I would summarize everything that I want to say today, let me just give you this one sentence, and then I want to walk through the passage. I want to walk through these three verses in a fair amount of detail because they are pregnant with implications and meaning for us today. The thing that I would say in these two short parables, the big idea here, is that they are really about the inestimable value of God's kingdom in doing whatever it takes to enter it. That is what these two short parables are about. It is as if Jesus is saying, "I know I talked about the mustard seed up here and how it grows to overtake the garden. You need to understand something. You cannot put a price tag on the kingdom of God. You cannot put a price tag on the value of the kingdom of God. Now the outline is very simple, because you have two different individuals. In verse 44 enters the first man, and that is about a treasure found. In verses 45-46 with the merchant, it is about a treasure sought. One is found and one is looked for. Both of them have to do with the kingdom. So, there is the treasure found and there is a treasure that is sought.

A TREASURE FOUND

First of all, there is a treasure found. I want to walk through it and just comment. There are four words here in this verse that are very important to understand – hidden, found, covered, and bought – hidden, found, covered, and bought.

1. Hidden

First of all, the treasure was hidden. He says, again, in verse 44: **“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field.”** I do not want to insult your intelligence. It is hidden. The implication is somebody put it there. Somebody put it there. It is hidden. Again, this speaks to the inconspicuous nature of the beginnings of God’s kingdom in human history. The kingdom of heaven did not come with a great parade. It did not come with a fanfare. It is not going to be like the second coming. It came very quietly. It came very subtly. It did not come the normal route. It came very unexpectedly. It is hidden. It is not like what you see, but it is hidden in the field here.

The other observation is that it was there before he got there. You are saying, “Crawford, you are being very simple, aren’t you?” Yeah, but think about that. It is hidden in the field and it was there before this man got there. What is the implication of that? What Jesus is saying is this. “Look, look. Don't look for anything new. The message of the gospel has always been here, and it is here for your generation. Unless Jesus comes back, it is going to be here for the next generation. Unless Jesus comes back, it is going to be here for the following generation. It is here before you got here.

Let me give a little parenthesis here as a pastor. Be very careful when people come up to you and say that there is some new truth or there is some new idea or there is some new insight or this kind of thing. That is not true. The gospel has been here. It is here. It is buried. It was here before you got here. It is hidden in this field. It is a treasure that is hidden in the field. Now, what you have to understand is back then they did not have SunTrust, Wachovia, or these other banks, and this kind of thing. They hid their valuables, and if it was very valuable, believe it or not, they did not hide it in the house. They would hide it in a field. They would find a place and they would bury the treasure right there in the field.

2. Found.

Now with the word “found,” the idea as you read this short parable, one verse, this man is probably just walking through this field. I do not know what happens as he walks through the field. He may look down and notice the ground looks a little different from the ground over here. This soil looks a little looser maybe. It is like somebody has been over here. He wasn’t looking for anything. He was not seeking anything. He found it. So, as he pokes around, he sort of like says, “My goodness here,” and he sort of pushes things back and he gets a little stick maybe and unearths this. “Oh my goodness!” He finds it. He actually found it. It was there to be found and he came across it by an absolute accident.

How many of you, when you trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and LORD, were not necessarily particularly looking for anything at that time; but all of a sudden, you were startled when it hit you and you heard the gospel? Is anybody here like that? Yeah, yeah, numbers of us. As I was reading this text, I thought about something that happened to me when I was about 23 or 24 years old. I was preaching in Kingston, Jamaica, at this outreach on the ground of Calvary Gospel Assembly there in Half-way Tree. It is a very crowded area. There were several thousand people coming out each evening. It was an amazing thing, but I will never forget this experience. Near the end of the message, I was giving the gospel and giving an invitation for people to come

and trust Christ as Savior and LORD. Out of the corner of my eye on the left-hand side, there was this gate that opened up into the grounds where we were having this and I could see this man just kind of leaning up against the post of the gate. He was a Rastafarian and he had just stopped there. As I gave people an opportunity to come and express their faith in Christ, a lot of people were responding and all of a sudden he wondered over and he came. Counselors divided the group up and one of the counselors came to me and said I want to introduce you to this man. Then she told me a story. He was on his way to kill his estranged wife. He had a machete down his pant leg and she lived not far from where the meetings were, and he had to walk past there. As he heard the gospel (and he was not looking for Jesus that evening, trust me), he came across a treasure in the field; and the LORD Jesus changed his heart and life. There are many stories of people who have not been looking for anything. There was that man looking across the field, looks down at some loose dirt. I wonder what this is, and then when he unearthed it he finds this amazing treasure.

3. Covered

The next word is the word “covered.” He covers it up. Why does he cover it up? I did some research, and once you find out about customs you learn that they sometimes do not make a lot of sense; but here is the custom of the time back then. During this time if you found something in a field, even if the field belonged to someone else, if you found it and you lifted it up with your hands; you could claim it as yours – even though it belonged to someone else. Now you say, well, why did he cover it? Well, there was another thing, however, and it sounds like our laws back then. The other deal, however, was the owner could say to the person making the discovery he was acting as his agent. So, if he acted as his agent that meant that the property went back to him. That is the reason why homeboy covered it up. He was maybe like “Red” up there kind of looking around. I need to get rid of this thing quickly. He covered the thing up. It was a statement of incredible value.

4. Bought

The fourth word is “bought,” and this is interesting. It says that he “**sells all that he has and buys that field.**” The surest way to make sure his possession was absolutely secure was to buy the field. I do not know if the field was for sale, but I think this man made it really attractive to the owner to sell this field to him. I want to suggest to you also, and I would not push this too hard, that the fact he sold everything indicates that this man was probably poor, the man that discovered the treasure. He was probably poor. He did not sell part of his assets. It does not say that. It does not say that he sold off this or went and got the money that he had squirreled away in his own field or whatever. It says that he sold everything that he had to buy the field. I think that is a purposeful statement on Jesus’ part, because He wants to highlight the fact that we are spiritually bankrupt.

The point of the parable is that we are spiritually impoverished. We do not have it. I just extrapolated this out, that if you really consider the whole idea of what God did to send His Son on our behalf, “**that He spared not His own Son;**” and if God spared not His Son, what makes us think that we can buy our salvation? What makes you think that? Think about how silly and ridiculous that is and we do it all the time. You cannot buy a relationship with God. You cannot moralize yourself in a relationship with God. “Oh, I will stop lying. I will be a better husband. I will be a better father. I will be a better son. I will be a better daughter. I won’t do this. I will do this. I will keep my word. I will follow through on this. I will be like this.” What is that all about? You can’t do it! We are spiritually impoverished. We are empty. We find the treasure because we are bankrupt! We do not have what it takes to establish a relationship with God. So, what do we do? We surrender to what is already there. We, middle-class folks, have a particular problem. We have a really hard problem, a big problem. We do not see ourselves as needy. We celebrate the fact that we are resourceful and yet there can

be no spiritual vibrancy unless we perceive ourselves as needy. That is the reason why so many of our churches are mediocre. We think that we can give God something, that He will be impressed with, my skills, my abilities, my background, my problem solving, and my ingenuity. It is only those that hunger and thirst are the ones who are filled. The treasure is for those who are bankrupt. The plenty is for those who understand they have want. People who do not feel their need are never spiritually vibrant folks – ever. So, this man says I am impoverished. I am going to sell everything that I have to get this; and he does it in his joy. In his joy, he sells all that he has. Joy was the motivation for him selling all that he had to buy that field. It was because it was worth it all. It was a pleasure to give it all up. The idea is what the treasure is compared to, what I have; there is nothing that I have that is worth more than this. I will gladly sell everything that I have, all that I have, because of this incredible treasure. We should count it lost for the sake of the kingdom of God. The point of this is that Jesus is to be treasured. Don't treat Him as if He is just another important person in your life. He is not just another important person in your life. He is not just a resource for your life. He is not just somebody. Jesus is the most important figure in our lives! He is everything to us.

Hold your finger there, if you want to, and go over to Philippians 3:7-8. Paul is giving his testimony. He is talking about his background. He is saying, "You want to brag a little bit. Look, I am in the most popular frat there could ever be. You talk about knowledge; I have it all. You talk about insight; I have it all. You talk about pedigree; look at my background. You talk about being blueblood; I got it! I really have it." But, notice what happens when Paul is walking through his field, so to speak. On the road to Damascus, he was not expecting an encounter with Jesus. He was on his way to kill some Christians. He was going to lock them up. He was not going to do anything but serve Jesus. He trips across the field, and notice what he says here. "All my background, all these bennies, all this profile, all this big bio, all this big resume -- listen to what he says in verse 7:

**"For whatever gain I had,
I count it as lost for the sake of Christ.
Indeed, I count everything as lost because
of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.
For this sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse [or as rubbish]."**

I wish the modern translation would literally translate the Greek there. The reason why they don't is because the Greek uses a profane word. He says, "I count all as human waste matter." What he is saying is this. Anything that you have that competes with the Lord Jesus deserves to be flushed down the toilet. I count it all but loss. So, this man sells all that he has with joy because of what he has found in that field.

I am going to say more of this near the end, but I just have to tell you this. Our brand of Christianity has been raped of passion. It has been raped of passion because it has undervalued the primacy of Jesus. Because Jesus has been undervalued, our brand of Christianity has become oh so normative and average.

A TREASURE SOUGHT

Now we have the second figure. There is a treasure found, but number two, there is a treasure sought. There is a little bit of difference here in verses 45 and 46. I just want to underscore three words – searching, finding, and then again bought. In regard to searching, verse 45 says:

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,"

Now notice how he identifies this man. He does not identify the other guy. The other guy is just a normal dude. He is not on any business trip. He has no focus in mind. He is strolling through the field. He comes

across perhaps some loose soil and decides to check it out. Well, lo and behold, his life is changed – the treasure is found. Well, this dude is a little bit different. He is more intentional. Notice he is described as a merchant. In other words, he is in business for business. He is really focused on what he is all about, and he is in the business of pearls. He knows what they are all about. He knows the quality of pearls. He knows the true from the false; and unlike the man in verse 44, the merchant knows what he wants, and he is searching for it.

Some of you this morning might be on a quest. Now I know that we react sometimes to those who use seeker sensitivity, that we are seeking God and we quote from the Psalms, “No one seeks God.” Well, yeah that is true, but it is not true at the same time. It is true on one hand that in ourselves we do not seek the Lord. We are depraved, and yet it is also true that God does work in our hearts to give us the desire to seek Him. Yeah, is that true? Yeah, it is a little bit of a paradox. Naturally, we do not seek Him in ourselves, and yet the Lord places in the hearts of people to seek Him.

A classic illustration is Cornelius in Acts chapter 10. Cornelius was not a follower, but he was God-fearing. He was on a quest. He was searching. He was hungry. He was looking. God had placed that desire in his heart. Just a few weeks ago, one of our elders led a guy to Christ who had been coming to our church for a number of years. He thought he was a believer, but come to find out he was just seeking. He was searching. He was looking, and finally when his eyes were open, “Wow! This is it!” So, that is what we have here. We have this guy that is looking. He is searching. He wants to find something, and he looks and looks and looks and he understands what is quality, what is not quality, he finds it – verse 46 – “on finding.”

**who, on finding one pearl of great value,
went and sold all that he had and bought it.”**

There is one pearl of great value, and although he knew what he was looking for, he was absolutely blown away when he found it. He was God-fearing. Have any of you grown up in a Christian home? You have heard the stories. Do you remember that? You went to vacation Bible school, whatever, or to Celebrate Summer. You went to camp and you thought maybe kind of sort of that you were a believer, and then one day your eyes were open and all that gospel that you had been around your whole life, you had heard it your whole life, and you got kind of “ho-hum” with it, well, all of a sudden you came alive! You could not believe how good it was! Amazing! It is absolutely amazing!

As I was looking at this text this past week, I thought of that great gospel hymn of the 60s, “Ain’t Nothing Like the Real Thing Baby” by Marvin Gaye and Tammy Terrell. “I got your picture;” no, I should not sing that. That is what happened when I saw Karen. When I saw Karen, everything else went out the window. “I ain’t dating nobody else. The plane has landed, Jack.” I actually thought about this. Our oldest son tells this story how he met his wife Korie. He was in grad school out in Southern California. He was also on staff of a very large church in L.A. He was over assimilation, and so they had a tradition there that at the end of the service they would invite people to come forward who wanted to join the church. Well, he is on the platform and next to him is the executive pastor. Korie, who is very beautiful, starts walking down the aisle, and so Bryan who should have been praying and thinking about Jesus and godly things [laughter] leans over and says to the executive pastor, “Have you ever seen anything that gorgeous in your life?” He said all my dating desires stopped. Everything stopped. I had to get to know Korie.” “Ain’t Nothing Like the Real Thing.”

Have you discovered the real thing, or have you just been hanging around tasting and trying, tasting and trying? Have you discovered the real thing? I can just imagine this man with his whole business sucking out these pearls. He knows what costume jewelry is and what is the real deal; and all of a sudden, he says, “Oh

boy, whoa, nothing compares to Jesus! Nothing!” Your little cute ideas, are you kidding me? Nothing compares to Jesus. So, what does he do? He does the same thing as the guy did with the field, although this dude was wealthy. The other guy was probably poor, and it **says “he sold all that he had and bought it.”** He took decisive action while the opportunity was there.

Did you hear what I just said? Did you hear what I just said? He took the decisive action while the opportunity was still there. While the opportunity was still there, he took decisive action. He realized somebody else is going to come along. The whole idea here is not that Jesus does not continually call us, but the whole idea is this. When you hear His voice, as the Scriptures say, do not harden your heart. Opportunity comes, and opportunity goes, and it comes no more. The moment you sense Him pulling on your heart, tugging you toward Him, softening your heart, speaking to you, do not resist Him. Resistance produces spiritual calluses. It becomes all the more difficult to respond later on. So, he saw what was real and he understood what was real. He did not procrastinate and he took decisive action.

The other implication is that no cost is too great when it is a matter of gaining the kingdom. No cost is too great when it is a matter of gaining the kingdom. I fear that we have sold a brand of Christianity that incrementalizes conversion. We have sold a brand of Christianity that takes the radical nature of salvation off the table. We have promoted a brand of Christianity that reduces Jesus to placating our cultural tastes and preferences, that holds Him hostage to our readiness. The issue is not whether or not we are ready. The issue is when God is calling, that is expensive and that we do all that we can to respond to God. It is the expression of hellacious arrogance to assume that we control when God works in our lives – utter arrogance. This man understood if he did not get it, it may not be here tomorrow, that Jesus or the kingdom is worth everything.

Now having said that, I want to say a few words about this contrast and then I want to give some concluding remarks having to do with application, how we think concerning these things. There is a contrast, obviously, in verse 44. The poor man who bought the field could sell part of it and still be wealthy. It is really interesting, isn't it? Here he sells all that he has to buy this field. Now what he could have said is, “Hey, you know what,” like some of us here who have rental property and this kind of thing, “You buy it and you sit on it and you wait until the time is right, and you sell it and make a profit. You get that equity up there, and hey, it is good.” That is just good business sense; but this guy is thinking, “Have you lost your mind? Why would I want to sell this? There might be other treasures on the property.” In the case of the merchant, he would not depart with the pearl. You see, his delight and joy is in possessing it, not the profit he could make from it. “I sold everything to get this. I was wealthy before I had it! Are you kidding me? What would I trade this for?”

I think these two parables plead with us to hold on to these three realities. I want to give them to you.

1. We Gain All When We Enter the Kingdom

We gain all when we enter the kingdom. We gain it all. We gain it all when we enter the kingdom – everything. That is the reason why in this second parable the merchant sold everything that he had, and he was wealthy. He was wealthy, but he knew that the pearl was worth everything that he had and then some. So, what Jesus is saying is we gain everything. Why are you holding on to stuff? Do you think that makes you valuable? What is keeping you back from full surrender? What do you think? Are you going to lose something? That is ridiculous. Do you think you are going to lose something by surrendering to Jesus? Honestly, do you think that? That is like paying \$3000 for a string of fake pearls. So, the way we need to think is to understand that we gain everything when we enter the kingdom.

2. We Gladly Give Up All When We Enter the Kingdom

Secondly, paradoxically, we gladly give up all when we enter the kingdom. That is the whole point. The treasure is worth everything. I will give up this for this. The pearl is worth it all. I will give up this for this. Yet, our problem, and I see it all the time and I see it all over this church and I see it every place I go, we want to hold on to everything and we want Jesus to transform us at the same time. Jesus goes, "I don't think so," which is the third thing that we need to think through. We are not going to know joy and freedom paradoxically until we give up that which we think gives us joy and freedom. Did you hear what I said? Did you hear what I said? We are not going to know joy and freedom, true joy and freedom, until we give up that which we think gives us joy and freedom. You see Jesus has no competitors. The kingdom of God has no rivals. Anything that holds us back from full bore embracing the kingdom is an idol.

The issue is this: What do we treasure more than we treasure Jesus? If we are bored in our walk and relationship with God, we need to ask ourselves a question. What is it that I treasure more? If we are having a hard time surrendering all that we have to Jesus, ask the fundamental question, what is it that I treasure more? If we are not growing and fruitful in our walk with God, we need to ask the question, "What is it that I treasure more?" Something is treasured more than Jesus. What do I treasure more? It is not always a benefit to be in a country where freedom of religious is around us. It is not always a benefit. We had a great time over at the Ensor's house on Thursday night. I tell you, we left that place buzzing. If you get a chance to talk to John Ensor about what is going on in China right now - wow. That is one of the things I thought about when I pulled away from that house. The explosive fruitfulness and revival in that country, when all the party jewelry has been taken off the shelf and you realize it is either the real thing or nothing at all. The option is easy; and that is what Jesus is saying.

I want to conclude by telling this story. Richard asked me to do this in our meeting on Tuesday morning. We have a teaching team meeting on Tuesday morning. We were talking about numbers stuff, and I shared this story. He said, "Crawford, will you share that on Sunday?" I said, "Okay, I will." Hang in there with me. In a way, this fits dramatically with what we are talking about today.

In 1979, I spent some time in South Africa. Karen and I were on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ, and I was invited to speak over there in outreaches to business and political leaders, in these nice posh hotels in Johannesburg and Pretoria during the daytime, and in the evening time, I was speaking in these outreaches in Soweto and Atteridgeville in these other townships. Let me explain something to you. Anybody who says apartheid was not that bad is a categorical fool. It was hellacious. It was unbelievable, and I do not have time to go through the diabolical ways in which they raped people of their dignity and humanity. If you were not Afrikaner or of English or British descent, you could not own property. You could not travel without a pass. They separated the tribes into different townships, as they were afraid the tribes might get together. It fostered all kinds of immorality and squalor. In Atteridgeville, they had these big hostels where 10,000 men, who worked in the gold mines, slept together. They could not visit their families during the week and they could only visit their families if they were in different townships and had a pass. It was just legalized poverty and legalized slavery. That is all it was, and that is not an excessive statement.

So, you can imagine, here I am an African-American over there with a U.S. passport. Of course, I could go back and forth and travel freely; and thank God for Campus Crusade for Christ because Bill Bright put his foot down and said we will not have a segregated ministry anywhere in the world, including South Africa. So, there was a dual head of the ministry there, John Temple Hall, who is Afrikaans and _____, who was Zulu. Thank God for that, but it was a crazy maker during those couple of weeks that I was there. Can you imagine that in the daytime you are speaking in these posh hotel ballrooms and things like that, these outreaches, and then

you go to human squalor in the evenings? You see people with free access. This was catching up to me big time. I am like 29 years old. It was like frying my circuit. So, I get to Atteridgeville about a day or two before I was leaving the country, and I was struggling. Atteridgeville is a township outside of Pretoria, primarily a lokasie township, and it was human squalor, terrible. The people just could not do anything. I will never forget this small tiny house. One of our staff was there. I could tell they were going out of their way to serve me. I had to use the restroom, and I tell you this, it broke me. I said, "I have to use the restroom." He lowered his head because he was embarrassed and he gave me a flashlight and said, "You have to go outback." As I walked out, I just wept. I said, "God, it is not fair." Honestly, and I will just be transparent, I felt like punching somebody. I did not feel like speaking that night. I wanted to go. I was done. I was done. I got in the car and we headed toward the place where they were having the meetings that evening. This is remarkable. I am like struggling. I do not want to preach. Okay? There was not much joy in me. This anger had finally gotten up to here. I was, quite frankly, afraid of what I was going to say; and I am in this car, and as we get about a mile and a half away from the place, I noticed all these people walking. I said, "Where are they going?" He said, "They are going to the meeting." When we got there, there were hundreds and hundreds of people. They are sitting in windowsills. As we approach, and this is remarkable, as we approach they are singing this song in _____ and I know that song. I know that song! As I listened intently, it was as if the Holy Spirit gave me a gift and taught me a lesson. Do you know what they were singing in _____? They were singing that old hymn, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" Listen to these words. As they sang, I remembered the words, and the tears began to flow down my cheeks and the LORD began to speak to me about what really is freedom and what really is a real treasure. They were singing,

Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb,
And shall I fear to own His cause,
Or blush to speak His Name?

Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?

Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord.
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Thy saints in all this glorious war
Shall conquer, though they die;
They see the triumph from afar,

By faith's discerning eye.
When that illustrious day shall rise,
And all Thy armies shine
In robes of victory through the skies,
The glory shall be Thine."

Those folks had found the pearl of great price. Those folks had found the treasure in the field. They were not defined by their circumstances, but they were liberated by the gospel, and so they could sing with dignity. [applause]. That pearl, that treasure, don't prostitute it, Fellowship. Do not trivialize it. If you have lost your passion, go back home and ask Jesus, "What am I treasuring more?" What am I treasuring more? What is happening to my heart?

I am going to ask you to stand. I am not talking about raw emotions this morning, although unapologetically I have been emotional; but I am talking about a white-hot holy passion because of great eternal gratitude for that pearl of great price, for that treasure we have found in the field. It is my challenge to each one of us, as I sat back in my study and contemplated this message and asked myself, "Crawford, what is the stuff that you are treasuring more?" As you go home today, Fellowship, don't let dinner or lunch conversations push this out of your mind. Go home and ask that honest question. "LORD Jesus, what am I treasuring more?" For those of you today who know you are not a follower, and He has brought you here and He is making it clear, "Here is the field. Here is the treasure. Here is the pearl. What are you going to do," all you have to do is say, "LORD Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross for my sin. Forgive me of my sin and make me the kind of person you want me to be and the treasure is yours." I am going to ask the elders, staff members and any Stephen Ministers who are here to join us upfront. If you want to talk, pray, have a question, or whatever, we are here for you.

Father, in the name of Your Son, we thank You for Jesus. We thank You, oh God, that You brought us to the treasure and You have shown us the pearl. Help us, Father, to live lives that express the incredible gratitude of the value of the treasure we have in broken vessels. Oh God, forgive us, forgive us oh God, forgive us for being pedestrian and casual and having a lack of gratitude for who You are and who Jesus is and for what He has done for us. Forgive us LORD. Strengthen us, help us, and bless us we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.