



What Value?

Matt 13:44-45

Last Sunday evening I was at a loose end. I'm used to being here on a Sunday evening so after Praise on the Prom, I relaxed in front of the telly, only to find that Sunday viewing is pretty thin until Top Gear comes on. So I watched a bit of the Antiques Roadshow - you know - the programme where people bring their rubbish to the experts in the hope it would be worth something. One lady bought a glass vase. She'd bought it at a car boot sale as a plant pot. In fact she paid £1 for the plant and got the vase in it. It was cluttering up her cupboard so she went to the Roadshow because somebody mentioned that it was an antique and may be worth something.

The expert who looked at it pointed her to an engraving on the glass "Lalique". Now I don't know much about antiques but I know that Lalique Ware is rare and sought after. The expert then pointed out that the vase had been cast rather than blown, which meant that not only was it rare, but it was probably unique. The £1 glass vase was worth £30,000. It was destined for the auction. The people who bought it at the car boot sale have probably since bought a new car and had a jolly good holiday! The look on their face when they realised the value was fabulous!

Let's look at a scripture together:

44 "The Kingdom of heaven is like this. A man happens to find a treasure hidden in a field. He covers it up again, and is so happy that he goes and sells everything he has, and then goes back and buys that field. 45 "Also, the Kingdom of heaven is like this. A man is looking for fine pearls, 46 and when he finds one that is unusually fine, he goes and sells everything he has, and buys that pearl.

I wonder what we would have done having gone to the car boot sale and realised that we was being sold Lalique Ware for £1. Knowing it was of great value, would we advise the seller to go and get it checked out because they might be rich - or just spend our £1, throw away the plant and get it valued ourselves? I must say the man who found the buried treasure in the field did what most people will do. Buy the field so he becomes the legitimate owner of the field and the treasure. Jesus is not commenting on the morality of what the man had done. He's making a commentary on life. If we come across something of immense value, we'll do whatever it takes to get it, and as human beings, we'll probably not worry about the morality as long as it's legal.

The parable of the fine pearl is a similar commentary on human nature. The pearl collector went to great lengths to buy the pearl. Most of us would say "what a waste". But Jesus isn't commenting on the morality of how we spend our money, just that it's human nature to be prepared to blow all that we have on that which we consider important, irrespective of what the consequences might be. If we recognise something as valuable, we'll do what it takes to have it won't we? Then how much more so should be our desire and pleasure to obtain something priceless if we can do so completely legitimately and in a totally moral and ethical way! You know where I'm going with this because God offers each man and woman something so profound and so precious that human understanding can barely grasp it I think.

So let's ask this the other way around? How does God value us? As we come around the table this evening we see a picture of God's valuation of us. *Heb 12:2 Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right-hand side of God's throne*

That was the lengths to which God was prepared to go to redeem us - that was the price He paid. Here's how Graham Kendrick describes it.

*I'm special because God has loved me,
For He gave the best thing that He had save me.*

*His own Son Jesus, crucified to take the blame,
For all the bad things I have done.*

*Thank you Jesus, thank you Lord,
For loving me so much.
I know I don't deserve anything,
Help me feel your love right now
To know deep in my heart that I'm Your special friend.*

So as we come around this table, we see an expression of our worth as we remember the broken body and shed blood of Jesus. Which gives us something to reflect upon as we come around the table. We see before us God's valuation of us and the extent to which He went to redeem us. And as we know He has given us the spiritual equivalent of a pearl of great price. Remember the sheet Who I am in Christ?

The question is, what do we think He's worth? He paid a price for us and then heaps blessings on us that we can't repay and doesn't require us to repay.

So whatever comes out of us in worship, adoration, praise, commitment and service is a reflection of what we think of Him. As I've said this a number of times recently, but what we think of Jesus doesn't reflect itself in the words that we say but in the lives that we lead.

Let's use the next few moments to reflect and then confess the times when we have so lightly valued our Saviour, and recommit our lives and our bodies to His service.

*Preached by Mark Reid
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Scripture Quotes TEV*