

For what is a man profited...

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... in prayer.

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, we thank thee, Lord, for thy preservation, again, at this place and this time and thy people this week, oh Lord. We thank thee for what thou hast brought here today. We pray for those who are not with us today that, Lord, you would be a present help and that thou would come mightily to the souls of thy people now. Lord, may all the things of this world and all the things that would take up our minds and the space in our minds be driven far from us this morning. And, Lord, may you bring us to thy feet to be instructed from thy holy Word and by the power of thy Holy Ghost. Lord, we ask this morning that you would be glorified. Be glorified in all that is said and all that is heard and, Lord, may you come with your power. Where weakness is this morning, Lord, may your strength be shown. And, Lord, may you give clarity of mind and may you, Lord, give a voice of thy power. Lord, may thy name be glorified today and every day in the people that thou hast called your own from the foundation of the world. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

I jotted down one of my own questions this morning to ask as we get started and so I will read that.

If you had everything the human heart can wish for and you had no life and fear of God in your soul, what benefit will you have?

I thought about that question and as the Lord gave it to me, because we can flippantly answer it and say, "Well, I do have life and I have fear of God, so I have great benefit."

There may be some in here where the Lord has spoken that to their soul and they do have that benefit of Christ and they see Christ in all things. But there may be those in here that are weighing the benefit or weighing it against the things in this world or talking or having a great difficulty in laying aside the things of this world. For there is a lot of idolatry, but idolatry isn't for the third world countries that we think about that run around worshipping little idols of rock or sticks or wood or whatever it is they make them out of. It is not even for those that we believe that are into witchcraft and things like that. The Lord spoke of the idolatry in our souls, the things that we esteem highly, the things that, Lord willing, we were weaned from in this life.

Today our focal verse, our text comes from Matthew chapter 16 verse 26.

These are in red. We know that they are the words of Christ. I pray this morning that as they are the words of Christ, that they are his words to your soul, that they come with his power, they come with his might and that they are searching words.

In Matthew 16 verse 26 we read these words:

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”¹

And it is a very searching question. When the Lord says, “What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” he implied something in the question, that you can’t serve two masters. He implied something in this gospel truth that if you have gained the whole world, you have lost your soul. And what is it to gain the world?

As I said when we started this morning, we can make this about the things of the world. We can make it about the riches of the world. We can think long and hard about the things that we go after in this world whether it be monetarily to increase our wealth, may it be comfortable things to increase our comfort, may it be things for our health, may it be things for entitlement and for a name in this life, may it be for friendship with the world. But Jesus asked this question:

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world?”²

And he has got the whole world at his feet and he has got everything that your heart and your carnal heart can desire. But is that the case for natural man? Is there ever a contentment in this life for natural man? Is there a contentment in this life for you?

It is a searching question, because when the Lord brings it to your soul, it begins to examine the things that we go after or the things that we pursue and start to strive after. So my ... whatever they are, each one of us has our own walks in this room. Each one of us have our own vices and our own things that seem to take us from the things that are holy, that take us from Christ himself, that consume our minds and that consume our own being.

So the Lord asks the question this morning. If you gained that, if you gained peace in whatever that is, if it is peace in this life, whatever it is, physical, political, social, financial, if you gain that, but yet you lose your soul, have you profited?

And then he rephrases the question and he says,

“...what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”³

¹ Mathew 16:26.

² Ibid.

In my life of 41 years I have seen quite a few TV shows or movies or... that has actually glamorized this very thing. Man will make a deal with the devil and he will gain some kind of knowledge or he will gain some kind of trade or he will gain something that he will sell his soul to the devil for. And the world has taken that term and said, "What is it that you would sell your soul for?" And they laugh at him. And they treat it like it is a flippant thing and that it is something that we can do willingly or I should say unconsciously, because we do do it willingly.

But what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

There is a lot of things in this life that make us happy in this life. Health makes us happy. I have been challenged with that this week myself. I told my children one night this week. It might have shocked them. There is times even in sickness, whatever it is, flu, head cold, whatever it is, there are times in that sickness when you feel so miserable that the thought in your mind is it does not matter if it ends right now. It is misery. It is carnal misery. It is that thought that you would do anything to have health at that moment, to feel better, to have relief from whatever it is that you are going through.

When the Lord led me to this passage this week it seemed to take on a whole different meaning than the things of this world. Because in my mind there is a lot more things that aren't physical things that I think about that brings me comfort, temporary comfort. My mind runs to many things. I will hear things. Oh, that is a good thing and I will be comforted by it. Financial, something, good news my way. Wow. That is good and I will have temporary peace about that, because the Lord is good to bring forth the next trial where that financial little seed just went out the window.

But that is how good the Lord is to his people to wean us from this world. For that sit eh question we start with today, questions.

"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"⁴

We are going to come back to this passage because this is our main passage, but the first place we are going to roll over here is to Luke chapter 12.

A lot of people read this parable in light of covetousness which is fine. But we come to Luke 12 and we begin... well, it... the parable begins in 16. Jesus' words in 15 says this:

"And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."⁵

And I tell you today, that unless the Lord speaks that to your soul, it really doesn't mean anything, because we strive after the things that we possess, to possess them, whatever

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Luke 12:15.

they are. As I said, I mean, it can be financial to add to our stature. It can be something in this life to add to our name. It can be something to add to our health that we continue to press hard at those things. But unless Christ comes to your soul and says that your life consists not in the abundance of the things which you possess, Christ won't be your all in all. Christ won't be your sufficiency.

We spend a lot of time with the things of this world. So then he speaks this parable.

“And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.”⁶

And you say, “Ok, well, I don't consider myself a rich man.”

Well, actually the Greek here is talking about one with no lack. I look across the people in this room and the Lord has blessed us mightily and I don't believe that anyone in here lacks for what the Lord has provided for us in this life. So I don't think we can just put this to a rich man and say that this has no relevance to us. And may the Holy Spirit reveal this morning how it has relevance to us.

“The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself...”⁷

And there is that carnal reasoning again. And we do this a lot. I find myself especially when I am sick. Boy, I have a lot of time with myself. I have a lot of time with my thoughts.

And, you know, sometimes that is good when the Lord blesses them and he is in my thoughts. But a lot of times that is bad. It is bad because my mind is carnal, too. And I think within myself many times and I reason within myself how to get better, how to do things that will be... that will profit me.

“And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?”⁸

The fruit of the ground has come forth so abundantly. And, see, that is the thing that ... when we are not at ease, I mean, when we are at ease, when we are not, when the Lord is providing bountifully, this is when this danger comes in.

Amos 6:1 says:

“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.”⁹

⁶ Luke 12:16.

⁷ Luke 12:16-17.

⁸ Luke 12:17.

⁹ Amos 6:1.

He is talking about the ones that are in the church, the ones that are in the fellowship there.

“Woe to them that are at ease...”¹⁰

And our ease comes sometimes we... we get ease in this life by the things of this life and the things of this world.

And that is what is going on here. He thought within himself, well, I have so much, but what shall I do? I can have more. I have no room where to bestow my fruits.

“And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns.”¹¹

And this sounds like a great idea. If we have more and we are going to get more, maybe we should make more room for what we are getting.

“I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.”¹²

And this is where he sees his peace and his comfort. Well, I... and look where it is. It is in laboring more. If I just, you know, I mean, I could see where I could make just a little bit more. I could have just a little bit more stature. Lord, I know that, yeah, I can be content with the things in this world, but, you know, if I just go a little further, if there is something more than I could do...

“I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.”¹³

And, see, that is the thing. If Christ is not your contentment, there will never be contentment. And, as I said, this is a struggle in the child of God's life, especially when the Lord is being benevolent, when he is pouring out his riches and the Lord is opening the storehouses and we are being given the benefit of the land.

Verse 19 is a scary one, because this person is not a child of God. You know, I used to think that only the children of God could commune with their souls? But this blows that out of the water. You know, natural man can commune with his soul. And that, to me, when the Lord revealed that to me, that was kind of an indictment to me, that natural man can go around and speak to himself and say to his soul, “This is what I can do for my soul to give myself ease.” And it was an indictment to me because of how much time I commune with my own soul, how much... and that is the thing. What has the Lord shown your soul? Is your contentment in Christ? Is your contentment in this world? Or do you mix the two? Does the Lord have his place and the world has their place?

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Luke 12:18.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Nineteen begins:

“And I will say to my soul...”¹⁴

This individual communed with his own soul. He said to his soul:

“Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”¹⁵

I have pulled down my barn. I have labored. I have decided it is enough. But is it really? For the carnal man, for the natural man is it ever enough? Does the... is there ever enough that is given and received in this life?

But he says to his soul, because he believes he has power over his soul, he has dominion over his soul and he says to it:

“...thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”¹⁶

We may even rationalize this by saying, “God has opened a door. God has put this increase in front of us. So therefore we are to go and take it.”

Do you say that to your soul? Do you think about your soul? Do you commune with your soul? And when you do commune with your soul, is it this one sided? Do you tell your soul what is good for your soul?

I believe that the child of God has the shepherd of his soul. And that shepherd of his soul is the Lord Jesus Christ. And we may backslide and we may wander, but the Lord sends afflictions, trials just his voice to stop that one in their track and to say, “I am the shepherd and bishop of your soul.”

Has he said that to you? Do you find that in this life it is just the striving day after striving day?

This one didn't seem to find rest and what he found rest in was eating, drinking and be merry. And the merriment that he had in his life is because he looked out at his barns and he saw how tall they were and he saw how much he had and he thought that is where happiness was.

“But God said unto him...”¹⁷

¹⁴ Luke 12:19.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Luke 12:20.

And I say to you this morning, that is the only thing that matters. What does God say to your soul? What does God say to you this morning? Has he spoken in his Son? Has he spoken to you to wean you from the world?

“But God said unto him, Thou fool...”¹⁸

Thou foolish one, you have spent your life in what you thought and you believed you had tomorrow. There is enough evil in today not to look at tomorrow. Is there contentment in every day the Lord gives you?

“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.”¹⁹

And when the Lord says that it is a done deal. The world may think you can make a deal with the devil. The world may think you can make... and you know what? Let them deal with it. But the Lord is sovereign over all. And as this one who did have a deal with the devil found out, there was certainly a greater power than him.

“Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”²⁰

Whose they going to be now? The state's? Even your family? Are you going to be here to enjoy the happiness that you leave behind? What is it to you? Tonight your soul has been required of you.

“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”²¹

So I ask you.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”²²

Now I want to take you now, step by step, to see how we got to why Jesus said these words. We are going to begin in verse 21, but a very humbling thing to know is that right before this is when Jesus asked his disciples:

“But whom say ye that I am?”²³

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”²⁴

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Luke 12:20.

²¹ Luke 12:21.

²² Matthew 16:26.

²³ Matthew 16:15.

²⁴ Mathew 16:16.

And what a blessing to be able to say that. That question was asked to you this morning. Who do you say that he is? And for Peter to say:

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”²⁵

Jesus quickly tells us:

“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”²⁶

The things of this life, your own flesh and blood, people in this life, man in this life will not reveal it unto you. And what a height, what a spiritual high Peter must be on right now to know that he has been revealed that Christ is the Son of the living God, that that is where eternal life is.

And then we pick up in verse 21.

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”²⁷

Why was this important? Why must he show them that? Love. Love and comfort for their souls. He will show them that he will go first, that he is the shepherd who goes first, the shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

And now that they are at this time that they have come away from him revealing himself and the Father revealing that he is the Son of God, he tells them that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and the chief priests and the scribes. Notice that he only mentions the religious world.

“...and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”²⁸

Wow. That is quite a deep saying. But, you know, I venture to understand Peter a little bit here and why he said what he did, because I do believe Peter answered out of love also, a misguided love.

“Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him...”²⁹

Which means he began to plead with him.

“...saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”³⁰

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Mathew 16:17.

²⁷ Mathew 16:21.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Matthew 16:22.

The “be it far from thee” means pity thyself, Lord. Have pity upon that, no, Lord, don’t go. Stay with us. You have the words of eternal life. Where else will we go? We can’t have you going away from us.

Did you hear what Jesus said in 21?

He must needs go. He must lay down his life for the sins of his people. He must go and be raised again the third day. He must conquer death. He must conquer the devil. He must conquer the bondage of the law. He must conquer all of those things that so easily beset us and the love of the world and the bondage of the world. He must do that for his children. He must go first. He must show the most excellent way. He must be the defeater of all that is evil.

But Peter in his self, in the way that he viewed it of himself, he says, “Oh, Lord, don’t go.”

And what really is Peter doing here? He is rebelling against the revealed will of God. It is the revealed will. It was just revealed in 21. I must go. And how many times do we do that? What is revealed by the Lord every day and the Lord does reveal things. he reveals them in our society. He reveals them in how we live. He reveals them in ourselves. And we rebel against those things because we don’t like it. It is not comforting to the flesh and this certainly was not comforting to Peter’s flesh.

“Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”³¹

Lord, don’t do it?

Do you realize what he is asking? Don’t go and die for my sins. Don’t rise again to defeat my... all I need is your physical presence with me.

I tell you today, if that is all you have is the physical presence of Christ, you have nothing. Do you have the testimony of Christ in your soul? Do you have the testimony that Christ is your all in all in your soul?

“But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan.”³²

He is not calling Peter Satan. He is rebuking Satan who has come into this time of communing with his disciples, because the Lord is the only one who can cast him out. Satan has entered into this and he has entered into Peter and he says, “You know what?> Put forth your idea. Put forth your flesh. Put forth your will.”

And Peter did and the Lord rebuked Satan where he was and he says

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mathew 16:23.

“...thou art an offence unto me.”³³

Now listen to this. This is the first enemy that Christ mentions.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”³⁴

The first enemy comes right here.

“...for thou savourest not the things that be of God.”³⁵

Satan never savors the things that be of God. He savors those things that be of men.

What about you? This is our first soul question. This is how we get to the crux of do we gain the whole world? Are we trying to gain the whole world? In the first glimpse that we get into this is that the Lord reveals that it is savoring the things of men and not savoring the things of God.

That is quite a deep thought. Satan, you savor the things of men. You desire to exalt the things of men. You exalt the titles of men. You exalt the wealth of man. You exalt the things of man, the intellect of man, man's ingenuity. You do all of that to spite me. You don't savor the things of God.

“Get thee behind me, Satan.”³⁶

“...thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”³⁷

That hits home when the Lord shows you in your life when you have tried to please men.

So many times you become a yes man for the things of this life to please man. Not a yes God, a yes man. That is putting you on the track to gain the whole world and to lose your soul. That is not enough.

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man... come after me...”³⁸

And, you know, that “will” is the key verse there, the key part of that. If any will come and we know we ain't coming. We ain't coming. These words are too hard. We ain't coming because our soul will take its ease in the things of this life. We ain't coming because that idea of building another barn or a bigger barn seemed to be a pretty good idea. We are not coming because it is just too hard.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Matthew 16:26.

³⁵ Matthew 16:23.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Matthew 16:24.

“If any man will come after me...”³⁹

John 12:32 says:

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”⁴⁰

He is the crucifixion. He is the resurrection. He is the ascension of his children. And that lifting up, he is lifted up in all three. We see him as the one who went before us and died for our sins. We see him as the one who came out of the grave, who came forth to conquer death. And we see him as the one who ascended up heaven, who sitteth at the right hand of the Father that we may have life.

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.”⁴¹

Well, we get a little glimpse into the second thing now that would keep us on the path of gaining the whole world and that is yourself.

Jesus said it best when he said you can't serve two masters. You are either going to love the one and hate the other, or vice versa. But you certainly can't in your soul serve two masters.

“...let him deny himself.”⁴²

Because himself is where the problem lies. The putting forth of self and the putting forth of our ease and the putting forth of our ideas, but then he says something remarkable about denying yourself. He tells us something about this life of denial. And when the Lord humbles us he shows us it is the way of this way. Take up his cross.

Take up his cross? Who wants to take up a cross? Who wants to follow you this way, Lord? Isn't this supposed to be a life of ease? Isn't this... didn't you conquer all of this so that I could walk through life and just tip toe through the tulips?

“...let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”⁴³

How do you do that? Well, I have said many times the Lord has said to my soul many times, “I will in the day of his power, I will by him, I will by his face, I will by his love, I will by him being my all in all.”

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”⁴⁴

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ John 12:32.

⁴¹ Matthew 16:24.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Do you see where life is? Follow me.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”⁴⁵

Praise be to God it ain't for me to keep them, because I keep falling short to that every day. But, boy, his work is perfect. His power is a power far greater than this world's power, Satan's power, my self's power.

“...let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”⁴⁶

And then we come to the third enemy.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it.”⁴⁷

Did you know that this life is your enemy? Did you know that this life you try to gain the whole world in this life whether it be for you or for the children that you love, for the mate that the Lord has given you? This life can become a trap. Because if we are strangers and pilgrims as the Lord's people are, our Lord said:

“The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”⁴⁸

What do you claim in this world to lay your head on? What do you claim in this world to rely on?

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it.”⁴⁹

If you fight your whole life to gain life, you will lose it. Death and life has been swallowed up in his victory. If it is not life in Christ, it is just not life, no matter what man will call it.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”⁵⁰

Wow. For his name's sake. It is amazing how when you read the Scriptures and the Holy Ghost opens them up to you they really all do point to Christ. They really all do support his excellency, his deity. They really do testify of him. They really do take the creature out of it. And I am talking about when the Holy Ghost brings it to your soul, because there is just no man found in any of it.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ John 14:15.

⁴⁶ Mathew 16:24.

⁴⁷ Matthew 16:25.

⁴⁸ Matthew 8:20.

⁴⁹ Mathew 16:25.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

“...and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”⁵¹

Three enemies that put us on this track to gain the whole world. The enemy of man, things that be of men, the enemy of self, and the things of this life and what we call life.

For then we come back to verse 26 now knowing why Jesus said what he did.

“For what is a man profited?”⁵²

Does it profit you to have those three things?

You say, “Well, yeah, it profits me down here.”

Well, I promise you. It won't profit you in the next life.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”⁵³

You know, every time I read that I think of the Lord's words in that parable. There is great gulf fixed, a great gulf fixed. There is such a dividing line between sheep and goats. Sometimes we lose sight of that because it is blurry down here. We don't... we can't discern which one is which. But there is a great gulf fixed between the elect of God and the reprobate of this world.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”⁵⁴

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, may you send your power, your clarify and, Lord, may you reveal it to us today what is that price, what thou hast done for our souls? Oh, Lord, wean us from this world as only you can for the glory of thee in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Matthew 16:26.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.