

Priceless

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[0:00] Good morning, New City. My name is Chris Blackman, and in many ways I'm a son of this church, so it is a joy to be back here worshiping with you this morning. If you have a Bible, go ahead and open up to Matthew chapter 13 as we hear from God's Word. We're going to be in Matthew chapter 13, looking at verses 44 through 46. While you're turning there, let me just extend my greetings.

I work with a campus ministry called RUF at Kennesaw State University, and I love what I get to do, and I am so grateful that you guys are supporters of our ministry, so thank you for your prayers and your support that make everything we do possible to share the gospel with college students. Let's turn our attention now to the reading of God's Word, Matthew chapter 13, starting in verse 44 through 46, and it says this, 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. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever. You may be seated, and let's pray together one more time.

Father God, as we read your word, we ask now as we meditate on it, as we study it, that through your Holy Spirit, you would open our eyes to it afresh. Lord, we ask that you'd make the gospel sweet to us in new ways today. Lord, that it would be the great treasure of our hearts and our minds and our lives.

Lord, that we'd give it all for this greater treasure that you have offered us, namely Jesus himself.

Lord, I thank you for this church, and I thank you that you treasure and love the church.

[2:06] And Lord, we pray that you would further the work of this church, in this town, in this place, with these people, in this community, that more people would know the great gift, the great treasure, which is Jesus Christ, through the work of your people here in Chattanooga. We pray all this in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

Amen. Well, the title of my sermon is Priceless, and you can see how we get that from these parables of Jesus talking about treasures. And maybe you've had this experience years ago. My father's mother, my grandmother, she had passed away, and we were cleaning out her house. And we traveled up to Pennsylvania, where she lived. And, you know, she had lived in that house for, I think, 60-plus years.

So, you know, you accumulate a lot of stuff. And so, you know, I was a teenager at the time, and I'll be honest, I was not motivated to work very hard on cleaning out this house. I just wanted to go and hang out with my friends and do what teenagers do. But that all changed one day when someone found some cash hiding in a lamp in my grandma's house. You know, she lived through the Depression. They didn't trust banks. So, you know, as many people from back then did, they stored money in different parts of their home. So we found ourselves quite motivated now to go through all this furniture and all this stuff in the hopes that we would find some treasure. And it kind of became a little bit of game for our family. You know, truth be told, I might have walked away with a little bit of money, but, you know, don't tell my sibling. It's amazing, though, how knowing there's a little bit of treasure out there makes a world of difference. In our passage today, the main thing I want you to take away is that Jesus wants us to see that his kingdom is the treasure we are looking for and is worth giving everything to have. And that will change our motivations on how we live this life.

In these two parables, Jesus is specifically, he's describing the kingdom of God to his disciples. He had been talking to the crowds, but now he and his disciples kind of go aside and he's describing it further to them. And the kingdom of God is the main thing Jesus came to do. It's the first thing he announces. Repent, for the kingdom of God is here. So when Jesus is talking about the kingdom of

God in these parables, he's really talking about himself, the king and what the king came to do, how he came to redeem and transform this world and transform us, his people. And the kingdom of God is so big and so massive and so all-encompassing, it can't just be explained with one parable or one metaphor.

So Jesus gives us multiple just so we can try to grasp in our finiteness all of the implications of God's kingdom come down on earth into this life.

[5:08] So he gives us these two parables that are very short, but they pack a punch as they talk about treasures or riches, that the kingdom is this great treasure for us to have. And so there are three things I want us to see as we go through this passage.

The first is the search for treasure. Next is going to be the cost of treasure. And then finally, the transformation of treasure. So let's look first at the search for treasure here. If you look back at the texts, in both of these parables, there are two men and they're both searching for something. It says the first man, he was out in a field digging around when he finds this treasure. Why he was in the field digging, what he was specifically looking for, it doesn't really tell us.

You know, maybe he's just digging a ditch for his job. Maybe he's planting a garden. Maybe he's like one of those people on the beach where their hobby is like, you know, the metal detector, like beep, beep, beep, beep, you know, I don't know if that's your weird hobby to each his own. Maybe he's poor and like he's kind of hoping to hit the lottery. Like maybe I will find treasure if I dig long enough and hard enough. The point is though, we don't know why he's digging, but he does find treasure.

He hits gold. He hits pay dirt. And look, this actually still happens today. There's an article I saw recently called, It Pays to be Curious, where this construction worker in Austria, he was renovating an old home and he found just like this rope in the floor and he started pulling and digging on it and he found it led to like a medieval treasure chest with gold in it worth over two million dollars. And the laws in Austria says he gets to keep a portion of that. So it pays to be curious, y'all. Maybe do a little more digging in your backyard. All right, but why would he do that? Well, just a little bit of context in Jesus' day. You know, there weren't banks. And so not dissimilar to my own grandmother, right? They would have to store away their riches and treasures in their home. And often they would bury their valuables underground. But, you know, life happens.

[7:11] You know, people die. Storms come and knock down the homes. Armies invade, carry people away. And the treasure would be forgotten. So it wasn't uncommon for people digging to find treasures like this.

And the laws in Jesus' day allowed for people to keep it. But interestingly, when he finds the treasure, it says he sells everything to buy the land. Why does he do that? Well, he wants to guarantee that there's no question that this treasure is his. You know, he doesn't want there to be any, so much so that he, you know, wants to give it all up so that he can guarantee this treasure is his for the rest of his life. That no one comes along and says, well, hold on, that was my land. That was my family's treasure. You can't have it. He's willing to give it all for this treasure. In a similar way, the second man, right, he's a pearl merchant. He's going through the marketplace and it says he's looking for fine pearls. So he has a sense of what he's looking for. But when he finds this one, he's so shocked and overwhelmed, he sells all that he has to have this one pearl. And once again, a little bit of context, a pearl merchant in Jesus' day was a very wealthy person. Pearls were more valuable than gold or diamonds or silver. So this must have been a rich man, a man of means, and yet he sold all that he had to have this one pearl. He finds something greater than anything he's seen before, he's willing to give it all up to have. He sees this as an amazing deal. It would have been considered a great deal to have this one thing of value. All right, so on the surface, a pretty simple story, but what does Jesus want us to see here? Well, I think the first thing he wants us to see about ourselves is that we too are searchers, that we are on a search for treasure. Jesus is telling us something about our hearts that we're all longing and searching for something more. We're all treasure seekers. You know, deep down, you're all Indiana Jones. And there are some men in this congregation who are like, all right, yeah, I like the sound of that. There's a part of us all, even like the most ardent atheist out there, that has a sense that we're missing something. You know, we often say like there's a God-sized hole in our hearts. Or St. Augustine once said, our souls are restless until they find their rest in God. That even as Christians, we experience this at times, that we feel unsatisfied with life in the here and now. And even in our happiest moments, we wonder if we're missing something, if there's something more. You know, famously, J.D.

Rockefeller, the first certified billionaire oil tycoon, when asked, how much money is enough? He said, just a little more. Just a little more. That like the man digging holes, we're trying to find something we want a little more. We're hoping that thing will be our happiness and our fulfillment and our joy. The Bible tells us what we really need is God, that our hearts long for God. But in our sin and rebellion, it drives us to search for treasures and things outside of the Lord and in the world. And ultimately, in our sin and rebellion, it twists how we see that treasure. And ultimately, it twists our hearts away from the things of God towards envy and greed. You know, what happens is we start to think like, man, my heart longs for something more.

And, you know, my neighbor, my neighbor seems to be happy, you know. And maybe if I had what they had, I'd be happy. You know, and why do they have what they have? You know, it's a little unfair that they have it and I don't. That this is what we do. Our hearts so quickly turn to that, even if we know better. It's no mistake that the 10th commandment is thou shalt not envy. You know, not just envy your neighbor's stuff, but it even says don't envy your neighbor's spouse or their children or their property. This is what we think, that we start to think if I had my neighbor's spouse or if I had kids obedient like theirs or if I had their job or their health, then I would be happy. I mean, what did Satan tempt Eve with in the garden? He says, don't you think God's holding out on you? You know, if you had that fruit, maybe that'd be it. He made her feel like she needed more, even though she had everything she had already in Christ there in the garden. It reminds me of this great story reflective of our hearts. It's this old kid's story. It's called The Pirate Who Captured the Moon. It's actually out of print. It's hard to find, but it's a great kid's story. And so hang with me here. It's going to be a little long, but it's worth it. It tells the story of a greedy pirate. And, you know, he was so greedy, he wanted to capture every ship that would sail by. So, you know, anytime he saw one, he'd sail out and capture it and add it to his collection. But then he looks up and he sees the moon. And he's like, oh, if I could capture the moon, then I'd truly be satisfied. But he realizes the moon is far away. It's hard to catch. So he reads this book and it tells him what the moon loves.

And it said the moon loves to shine through curtains and to float in pools of water, to peek over small hills and poetry and people dancing in the night. And so the pirate goes out and he steals all these things. He steals curtains and he steals pools of water and he steals people dancing in the night. And it says then the moon comes out and it looks for what it loves and it can't see them. And so the moon starts to come down closer and closer to the island the pirate's on.

[12:56] And the pirate's like, now's my chance. I'm going to capture the moon. This is it. But as the moon gets closer and closer, the pirate realizes the moon is kind of big, maybe bigger than I thought it was, and maybe bigger than I can handle. The moon was larger than anything he had seen, it says. And as the pirate looked into the moon's light, it said, a shiver ran through him like a wave and he forgot about being afraid. And he forgot about being fierce.

And he dropped his sword and his armor and he whispered, moon, wonderful moon, it is you who has captured me. And the moon glowed through him and above him and slowly it sailed back into the sky wherever it pleased. And it drifted over the island where now there was someone new the moon loved and who loved the moon in return. For at that moment in the middle of the night, the pirate began to dance. The point I'm trying to make here is, look, our hearts are so often consumed by greed and envy and wanting more and searching for more treasures in this life. And really what we need is to be captured by God himself, by his beauty, by the amazingness of his treasure, by what he is offering us. And really that's what Jesus is actually trying to get at in these parables here. He's saying, look, you've been looking for treasure your whole life. What if you found it? What if you found that treasure and it was better than you imagined? That what Jesus is saying here is actually very positive. He's saying, what if the treasure you've been searching for, the happiness and the joy you're looking for, can be found in God? And it really is just as satisfying and life-giving and joy-fulfilling as you've ever desired. That thing you've been looking for, the thing your heart longs for, what if it changed your whole life? Jesus is saying, the kingdom of God, the thing he came to bring into this world, it's the thing that you want. It's the only thing that will really satisfy. It's the only thing really worth giving everything for. And guess what? Having Jesus as your ultimate treasure, it makes all the other treasures of life that much sweeter. It makes being married that much sweeter and having children that much sweeter and having a fulfilling career that much sweeter and being a part of a church and a community so much sweeter and all the other joys of life.

So let's pause here and ask an obvious but essential question. Is Jesus the greatest treasure of your life? Have you been captured by his beauty and the awe of the one who created the moon? I love how Ken Fong put it. He said, once you realize that Jesus is the pearl, that he is the real treasure, then everything else looks like a cheap imitation, like a costumed fake, that he is the thing we're truly searching for. But that's my first point. But there is a second point here, which is the cost of the treasure. And there is a cost that Jesus talks about here. He says when the man was found the treasure in the field, he covered it up and in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has to buy the field. Or the pearl merchant, when he finds the pearl of great value, he sells all that he has so he can buy that pearl. What does the treasure cost? What does Jesus cost? He costs everything. That there is a cost. The two men sell everything they have to buy the treasure. What does their sacrifice tell you about what they found? Well, it tells you that they saw the treasure as more valuable than anything else in their life, more valuable than anything else they owned. We think about the pearl merchant.

[16:48] This is a guy who knows pearls. He probably has a bunch of pearls in his office that are pretty valuable, that he was planning to sell and trade and stuff like that. And yet when he found this pearl, he did the calculation and he said, it is more valuable to sell all those other pearls to have that one pearl. Or think about the guy who, you know, he sells all that he has to buy this land.

I mean, imagine he comes home and he says, honey, guess what? I found this great treasure. She's like, oh, okay, tell me more. And he's like, yeah, yeah. And I sold everything to have it. I sold our farm.

I sold the house. I sold the wagon and the donkey with it. You know, I sold everything we have of value to have this treasure. She might look at him and be like, you're crazy. Really, you're probably like, is it worth it? Is the cost worth it? Is the treasure worth it? And look, at the end of the day, you can know what you value by what you're willing to pay for. You can know what you value by what you're willing to sacrifice for. We do this all the time. It's actually not that strange.

So let's ask ourselves the question, what are you willing to sacrifice your time, your energy, your money, your sleep for? What does that tell you about what you most deeply treasure?

Let's use time specifically as an example here. What are you willing to sell your time for? You know, if work is where you find the greatest joy in your life, the greatest sense of achievement, commitment, then getting up early, it's not going to feel like much of a cost.

[18:25] You know, staying late to get that promotion to get ahead, that's going to be no problem. And if your marriage or your family or taking care of your health or time with God or worship on a Sunday is an impediment to your career, then you will sell them to get the treasure you desire.

You know, I saw this on campus not that long ago. We do a lot of outreach at orientations, new students coming in. And I love those because they're often there with their parents and you get a little glimpse at a home life. And, you know, often it's a parent being like, please, my son needs this, you know, like tell him about Jesus. But there was one really sad one where, you know, the son came up to the table and he's like, oh, tell me more about this. He's really excited. And the mom jumped in.

She said, oh, he's not going to have time for this. He's going to be focused on studying. And my heart broke because you could see on this young man's face, he wanted to know more.

He wanted to get involved. But what his mom valued was more important than what Jesus values for his life. What do you value and what are you willing to sell your time and energy for? Because the truth is all of that's going to trickle down into your life and into your family. And look, man, I feel that.

Like, I don't know how that lands with you, but that lands pretty hard on me. I have three kids and, you know, I hope I am modeling, valuing Jesus and church and serving others. But, man, sometimes when I think about my life, I'm like, do I, am I, am I modeling that well?

[20:04] Is that actually what I'm showing them? Or do I show that I value more, you know, their just strict obedience or, you know, them getting straight A's or, you know, them staying away from troublemakers at school? What we model is what they will come to value as well. And think about that as a church, right? We love Jesus and we think that Jesus has called us to share the good news in a diverse context and to the poor of this community. We think that's a biblical value. And at times in our culture, that can be a popular culture thing too. They say, oh, we love diversity too. That's great. We value that. But when the culture stops valuing it, do we still value it? Because that's what Jesus values.

You know, the culture may say, yeah, yeah, we love the poor. We want to help the poor, stuff like that. But when the culture stops valuing it, do we still value it? Because Jesus loves the poor. I love being at New City because you guys have lived those values out so well. And I encourage you to continue in that, to be a light in our culture and in this city. The truth is, whatever you love and value, it will cost you in order to have it. If you want great wealth or a great body or just a comfortable life, you will have to give up other things to have it. And if you love Jesus and want to be his follower, it's going to cost you. Jesus is not just a little addition to your treasures on your mantle that occasionally you get to show off to friends. No, Jesus is a sell everything in order to have kind of treasure, a life encompassing prize. The truth is, when we think about the cost of this treasure, it's actually too high for us. There's nothing actually that we could sell that would truly earn it. And you see this in the parable. These guys are like, this treasure is so great, I'm going to sell everything to have because actually the value of the treasure far exceeds even what I own. It's such a good deal, I'll happily sell everything to gain so much more. It's almost like unfair how good of a deal this is. And that's really the gospel at the end of the day, that we could never pay enough or earn enough or sell enough to get Jesus' love, that God himself had to come down in our place and sell his own son into judgment on the cross for us so that we could be bought back from our slavery and redeemed. That we are ultimately the treasure that Christ came for. That like this treasure, we were buried in the dirt, dead in our sins. You know where you get pearls? They're in the bottom of the ocean, right? You got to swim down and bring him up from the depths. In the same way that we were completely dead and lost in our sins and Christ came down to pull us back up, to give us new life in the resurrection so that we would know just how treasured we truly are. You know, the book of Proverbs says, you are, it uses the language, you're the apple of God's eye. It's beautiful language, beautiful language. That Jesus was willing to pay it all to have us so that we would give up any of these tiny treasures so that we would know the greater treasure of him. That ultimately, if Jesus is your greatest treasure, he will not make space for other treasures in your life. That great sacrifice reveals the significance of the kingdom of God in your life. Great example of this, we have a really dear family friend. His name is Chris. We call him Uncle Chris. He's not my actual uncle, but you know, he's family like that, you know, friend that's as close as family. And Uncle Chris, he was an amazing guy. When he was in college, he was a star basketball player. And he had an NBA deal waiting for him when he graduated. But he had also come to faith during that time in his life. And he also had this offer to go teach basketball to kids in Southeast Asia through a non-profit. And he felt like as much as it'd be great to go in the NBA, and there's nothing wrong with that, and you can glorify God in that, he was feeling the call to go and serve. And so he spent the rest of his life putting on these basketball camps all over the world for needy children. And he'd use that as an opportunity to share the gospel with them. And at the end of his life, he died a few years ago, and his funeral was this beautiful thing, because the church was filled with people from all over the world who were saying, I'm a Christian today because this six-foot-five white man came to our tiny village and taught me how to dribble a basketball and then told me the good news of Jesus. That he spent his life doing that because he saw that Jesus gave him so much more, so much greater treasure than any he could earn from an NBA contract. And look, y'all, the key to recognizing what we would give up for Christ is that we do this in joy. That both men are described as giving it all in great joy. The man sold all they had in joy to buy the treasure. That finding Jesus means finding the source of true and lasting joy. That, come on, sometimes we treat, like, following Jesus a little bit like the spinach and Popeye. [25 : 30] You know, it's like, all right, you know, I'll eat it, and, like, it'll probably give me some strength to get through the day, but it's going to taste bad on the way down. That's not what Jesus wants for your life. Yeah, there's real suffering that we experience, but he wants you to know great joy.

I love the way that James Boyce puts this in his commentary. He says, Look, you will not find yourself disappointed at what will have proved to be a bad bargain. You will not find yourself coming back with the treasure or pearl, hoping to get your property back. It is never that way. In the exchange described by these parables, the men who made the purchase received a bargain. They made the deal of their lives, their fortune. From now on, they will be the happiest of men, and so it will be for you. You are not called to poverty in Christ, but to the greatest spiritual wealth, to fulfillment, to joy. How could it be otherwise when the treasure is the only son of

God? How can the outcome be bad when it means salvation? Our life circumstances, you know, we might experience lots of good and lots of bad and lots of all the above, but at the end of the day, if our treasure is in Christ, we know for sure where we're going, and it's a happy and good ending. And that's why it's truly worthy treasure to give it all four to have. My final point is the transformation of treasure. What does having treasure in your life do? How does it change your life?

That's the final thing I want us to see here, because the treasure transforms these men's life. You know, when they find it, it's not like they just go back to what they were doing before. No, it completely revolutionizes them. Tim Keller puts this perfectly. He says, look, when you find real spiritual treasure, one way to know it's legit is that every part of your life is revolutionized.

[27 : 23] It never just improves you. It completely remakes you. That having Jesus in your life should be completely remaking us day by day, more and more into the image of Christ.

And that's just as true when you're young and as a college student or whatever age to the day you die. So how does the treasure of the kingdom of God remake us? Well, three quick things I want you to see.

First up, that Jesus remakes how we see the world with this treasure. That the first man, he finds the treasure, he finds it buried in dirt. That the second man, he finds the pearl, and he finds it in the marketplace, you know, among just a lot of other items. The point here is that they find the treasure in ordinary places. And this is exactly how Jesus came down. He didn't come down, you know, all blinged out with gold and all that in a palace. No, Jesus came as an ordinary man.

Isaiah 53, 2. He had no beauty or majesty that would cause us to look at him. Nothing in his appearance would attract us to him. That Jesus came to earth in the form of a common man. And many people ignored him because of this. You know, the Pharisees and the gospels are constantly complaining. How can you be the Messiah? You know, do another miracle to prove it. They just, they couldn't believe it. They missed out though on the real treasure of the kingdom of God, because it wasn't exciting to look at. Is that what we long for? Just more worldly excitement. Or are our eyes being transformed so that we can see the treasure buried beneath the very ordinary things that God is using to transform and redeem his people? I mean, look y'all, here we are at church on a Sunday and it's easy to forget who we worship and why. We don't just come to church because of good moral teaching or really good music or like-minded people or, you know, maybe like 30 minutes of free childcare. We come to celebrate the life-changing treasure of Jesus. We're reminded of his incomparable beauty, the eternal value of our adoption as his children, and the vast extent to which we are loved. Worship is all about treasure and what you treasure shapes you. If we get to remind ourselves of the infinite worth of Jesus every time we gather, then we get to celebrate in glory in the treasure that is Christ. We get to see God at work in the ordinary instead of longing for fantasy.

That so much of this world and the treasures it offers are just trading in fantasies. But God says, I want to bring treasure into your ordinary life, into the dirt that you work in, into your very normal marriage, and into your very real children. That's where I want to bring transformation. The second thing I want you to see is that Jesus remakes how we see stuff.

[30 : 24] You know, people, when we get together, sometimes we'll play this game like, hey, let's daydream. If you won the lottery, what would you do with it? You know, and someone's like, oh, maybe I'd buy a new car. You know, someone very wisely says, I'd buy my mom a house. I'm like, that's a good idea. Smart, smart.

But there's always a party pooper, you know, who's like, I wouldn't change anything. I'd put it in savings and never, never touch it, never change a thing. And look, y'all, maybe that's smart finances, but that's a lame answer. If you won the lottery, if you got riches, what's the point of having riches if it doesn't change your life? I'm not saying blow it all on silly things, but look, we have great riches in Christ and it should change your life and how you live.

My pastor likes to say, we're playing with house money. You know, we can take risks because Christ has already given us his life. And it's not just dependent on what you've got and what you value.

That ultimately, you don't have to spend your days greedily searching for more and more because Christ has given you more and more. A friend recently said, look, we stew all day long in envy and dissatisfaction, but God so loved the world that he sent his son to give up his life out of his desire to seek and save the lost, his treasured possession. That in Jesus, we see a man who is the most self-giving. In Jesus, we have a savior who is willing to be buried so that we could rise to new life. In

Jesus, we have the hope that we as his body, the church can become a place of gratitude and giving instead of greed and envy.

That as a Christian, we don't really own anything. Everything we have is a gift from God. And so it's fine to also give it away. If the Lord blesses us, it's great to bless others. And we trust that he will continue to bless us as he sees fit. We're to steal another phrase from my friend.

[32 : 23] Life is gift, not gain. So you don't have to spend it striving to gain more because you've already been gifted at all in Jesus. Finally, Jesus remakes how we interact with people, right? That, you know, like what we treasure should be evident to our friends and neighbors and family. Do your friends and neighbors know that you treasure Jesus? Or to put it a little more spicy, do you even know your neighbors? How are they going to know what you treasure if they've never been in your house?

Take that as the application point right there. But look, is it obvious in your life and home what you treasure? It's going to be obvious one way or another, whether it's Christ or not. So let's make it obvious that we treasure Christ above all else. My mother says this about a family member, says, oh, you know, he never got over how much he loved his wife. And she meant that as a good, sweet thing.

And I love that. I think that's beautiful. Like, may that be true of our marriages. And may that be true of our relationship with Christ, that we never get over how much Jesus loves us and how much we love him in return. That that would be our testimony at our funeral, that they never got over how much Jesus loved them and they love Jesus. Can people tell that you are deeply affected by the love of Christ?

Are people just a means to an end? Or are others an opportunity to share this great treasure with? To wrap it up, Jesus is offering this treasure to you, his very life, so that you can experience the joy of being a part of the kingdom of God. How will you respond? Is it worth giving up everything you have for Jesus? Well, to close, I want to read an account from the book, Everything Sad is Untrue. It's a book by Daniel Nairi. It's a true story of this family who had to flee Iran because they had come to faith in Christ. It's a great book. I highly recommend it. The story's a little long, but once again, it packs a punch, so stay with me. They were a rich family, well-respected in Iran. His mother was a famous doctor, but when she came to faith in Jesus, they had to flee and live in refugee camps before they came to the U.S. And he says this, when I tell the story, people always interrupt me and say, okay, but why did she convert? And here is the part that gets hard to believe. Seema, my mom, read about Jesus and became a Christian, not just a regular one who keeps it in their pocket. She fell in love. She wanted everyone to have what she had, to be free, to realize that in other religions, you have rules and codes and obligations to follow, to earn good things. But all you had to do with Jesus was believe, and he was the one who died for you. And she believed. All the villages my grandfather owned, all the gold, my mom's own medical practice, all the amazing things she had that we don't have anymore, because she became a Christian. All the money she gave up. We're so poor now. People still ask, but why did she convert? And I don't have an answer for them. How can you explain why you believe anything? So I just say what my mom says when people ask her, because she looks them in the eye with the begging hope that they'll hear her. And she says, because it's true.

[35 : 54] Why else would she believe it? It's true. And it's more valuable than \$7 million in gold coins and thousands of acres of Persian countryside and 10 years of education to get a medical degree and all your family and a home and even maybe your life. My mom wouldn't have made the trade otherwise.

If you believe it's true that there is a God and he wants you to believe in him and he sent his son to die for you, then it has to take over your life. It has to be worth more than everything else because heaven's waiting on the other side. Dad or my mother is insane. There's no middle. You can't say it's a quirky thing she thinks sometimes because she went all the way with it. If it's not true, she made a giant mistake. But she doesn't think so. She had all that wealth, the love of all those people she helped in her clinic. They treated her like a queen and she's poor now. People spit on her on buses. She's a refugee in places where people hate refugees. She left behind family and friends and comfort and she'll tell you it's worth it. Jesus is better. It's true.

We can wonder and question and disagree. You can be certain she's dead wrong, but she can't make my mother agree with you. It's true. Christ has died. Christ is risen and Christ will come again. This whole story hinges on it. Seema, my mother, who was such a fierce Muslim that she marched

for the revolution, who studied the Quran the way very few people do, she read the Bible and knew in her heart that it was true. Beloved, I don't know a better way to tell you to believe in Jesus other than to say it's true and it's the greatest treasure anyone can have. Believing in Jesus will break you.

It will cost you everything and you will have to leave things behind, but you will gain so much more. Amen. Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for the good news of Jesus. We thank you that you treasured us so much that you would send your son to die for us, to be buried for us, and so that we could be resurrected in him and his resurrection. We thank you that we have a greater treasure in Christ, in Christ alone, a treasure that cannot be taken away. It'll never spoil, perish, or fade because it's kept in heaven for us. Lord, I pray that treasuring you would transform our lives individually, yes, and as your people, as your church. That New City Fellowship and every member of its body would be known as people who value Christ so much that they're willing to give it all so that others would know that great treasure as well. Lord, we praise you and we thank you in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.