

1. “I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” Imagine hearing that from your child, your spouse, or your friend. That is one of the most terrifying sentences you can hear from a loved one. How do you finish that sentence and not end up sleeping on the couch?

“I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” magic beans, a painting, an antique, stock in a company that the owner insists will be as successful as Apple one day? There’s a fine line between a hobby and an obsession, an obsession and an addiction, an addiction and a disease. The parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl of great price really straddle that line. Is this man really onto something, or is that treasure just fool’s gold?

American Pickers, a show about some antiques collectors who search the countryside for something of value. Their discernment is the only thing separating them from making a fortune or wasting their money. It’s exciting to watch, but even harder to duplicate in real life. One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.

“I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” Could those antique collectors justify selling their shop and all its inventory for one great find? Dear Christian friend, is there a treasure that’s worth so much that you’re willing to sell all that you have?

2. **“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.”** That man was either foolish or really knew what he was doing. Otherwise, how do you return to your family and explain what happened, and not end up getting laughed out the door?

“I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” A treasure in a field? A pearl of great price? Even a seat in the kingdom of heaven?? **“Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life,”** We can’t buy heaven; we can’t choose Jesus. We as Christians often get it wrong. These two parables are not about us selling everything we have to follow Jesus.

This painting by the artist Edward Riojas says it all. It is a painting of Jesus pulling a coffin out of a gravesite. The caption at the bottom reads, **“Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”** Jesus gave up everything to win you back. Not because He had to, but because He wanted to. Paul tells us that He emptied Himself for us, and from the cross, Jesus had nothing, even His clothing was auctioned off.

“I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” you. To win you back from Satan’s kingdom. To set you free from your selfish ways. To give you a new start, and life eternal. To give you peace in turbulent times. To give you safe haven when the world seems to be crumbling to pieces all around us. Jesus gave up everything for you.

3. **“who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”** Jesus is that merchant in search of fine pearls. He is that American Picker looking for the diamond in the rough, the priceless collectible hidden under a pile of junk.

But “I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” a sinner? But Jesus is the redeemer of sinners. “One does not choose a Redeemer for oneself, you understand, nor give one’s heart to him. The heart is a rusty old can on a junk heap. A fine birthday gift, indeed! But a wonderful Lord passes by, and has mercy on the wretched tin can, sticks his walking cane through it, and rescues it from the junk pile and takes it home with him. That is how it is” (Bo Giertz, *Hammer of God*, 1973, page 147).

A rusty old can on a junk heap? Is our savior out of His mind? Sell the shop for a rusty can? That is certainly not the advice He would have received from the antiques experts or a financial advisor. That is not the kind of thing you want to hear from your spouse after they come home after a long day of work.

Jesus says, “I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” you. He knows your faults and foibles. He knows every one of your sins and failings. Yet He still loves you. He takes you as a rusty old can, but He doesn’t leave you there. He restores you. He builds you up. He is making you into the valuable, honorable, and virtuous man or woman that He intended you to be from the beginning of the world. Just as He rose from the grave on the third day being perfectly restored and perfected, He is working to resurrect you, little by little every day, with its final culmination being on that day when He raises you from the dead.

4. “I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” this wonderful collection of fish. **“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind.”** Not only has Jesus redeemed you alone, He has redeemed us.

“I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” the whole lot, the entire collection. When Jesus stops at the farmhouse, He doesn’t just buy the one prize antique, He goes on to buy the whole collection. He’s like that antique dealer who wants one more gem in His collection. He is the investor who wants to fund one more company. He’s the fishermen who wants to go out for yet another big haul of fish.

“When [the net] was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad.” The Church is all Christians across time and space gathered together by their Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ. Jesus has bought us with His lifeblood as the price and we **“are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”** The Church is the collection of the good fish that Jesus Christ has

redeemed, and we are the ones being made holy and purified by the Holy Spirit through His mighty Word and Sacrament.

“I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” this entire school of fish. The day is coming where the dragnet will be pulled across the sea, and we will all be gathered together in one place. All of humanity will stand before Jesus, and He will either declare us to be good or bad—not on the basis of our works, but on the basis of us believing in Him as our Redeemer. Do you believe that you are the rusty can that Jesus spent everything to save, or do you not need a savior and are doing quite fine on your own?

5. “I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” treasures who themselves would go out and find treasures. Jesus has bought us, redeemed us, and restored us so that we can declare the excellencies of the one who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

“I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” treasures for my treasury. **“‘Have you understood all these things?’ They said to him, ‘Yes.’ And he said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.’”** Our reading concludes with a conclusion to the string of Jesus’ parables that we’ve been reading through for the past few weeks. Jesus combines both the old and the new to provide us with a message that is familiar, but fresh. That builds off of what has been said by the Old Testament teachers, but also gives us new insights never heard of before.

A picture of Norman Nagel, a seminary professor who is now with Jesus. He once said, “The purpose of seminary is to fill you with words, so that at any time, the Holy Spirit may draw those words from you to minister to God’s People.”

You don’t have to be a pastor and you don’t have to go to seminary to have this apply for you. God’s Word, both the Old and the New Testament is that treasury from which we as Christians draw. And so we as Christians come to Church every Sunday, we attend Bible study, we read the Bible in our free time to fill us up with parables, to fill us up with God’s Word, to saturate our lips with Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs so that the Holy Spirit can further this work of Jesus buying us back, forgiving us, and gathering us as His Church.

“I went out and sold all that I had to buy...” you, to buy His Church, and to buy saints who would go on and share this good news with others. Jesus joyfully and willingly sold all that He had, suffering sin, death, and the devil on the cross, setting aside His divinity and He bought that field. He bought that pearl of great price. He did this so that at the end of time, that we as the Church may gather together as good fish into a container. He did this so that we too may declare His excellencies to others, we as treasures sharing treasures with others, to proclaim the love of the Savior who loved the world that He gave up everything... for you.