

Theme for Sunday, July 24, 2011
The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

"You're Worth It!"
Matthew 13: 44 – 52

Today Jesus talks about someone paying everything for something of great worth. So, "Who's paying, and what's so valuable?" we might ask. Isn't it dangerous to say we're the ones paying for anything in a Lutheran church that teaches how we receive God's gifts by *His grace*? And on the flip side, doesn't it seem very arrogant to presume that we sinners are tremendously valuable and precious to a holy God? How can we understand Jesus' teachings on these things? Let's take a closer look this morning.

Introit

Selected Verses from Psalm 36

L: Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart;

C: There is no fear of God before his eyes.

L: The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit;

C: He has ceased to act wisely and do good.

L: Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens,

C: Your faithfulness to the clouds.

L: Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;

C: Your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast You save, O LORD.

L: How precious is Your steadfast love, O God!

C: The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.

L: They feast on the abundance of Your house,

C: And You give them drink from the river of Your delights.

L: For with You is the fountain of life;

C: In Your light do we see light.

L: Oh, continue Your steadfast love to those who know You,

C: And Your righteousness to the upright of heart!

L: Let not the foot of arrogance come upon me,

C: Nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.

ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

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The Old Testament Lesson

Deuteronomy 7: 6 – 9

(God has chosen for Himself a people to be His treasured possession. Though we are nothing in ourselves, In Christ, God has made us His own valued children.)

(The Lord says to Moses,) ⁶“For you 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. ⁷It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations...”

Epistle Lesson

Romans 8: 28 – 39

(Nothing can separate us from the love God gives us – namely, that He “would not spare his own Son”, but gave Him up to pay the unimaginable price for our forgiveness and eternal life.)

²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

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Epistle Lesson Cont'd

³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel Lesson

Matthew 13: 44 – 52

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("The kingdom of heaven" is all about what God does to re-establish His reign in His fallen creation. He pays it all in exchange for us!)

(Jesus said,) ⁴⁴"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.

⁴⁵"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

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Gospel Lesson Cont'd

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⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹ “Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.” ⁵²And 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.”

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Connecting Points:
Our Vision in Action

What do you think is the most valuable “treasure” our Lord has given you? Write that “treasure” first on a piece of paper, then make a list of as many “treasures” as you can find. Share your “treasure hunt” with a friend, or do this activity with children who are still living at home.

Our Lord says that those who do not know Him will be “thrown into a fiery furnace” (*Matthew 13: 49*). Choose one person in your life who does not yet know Christ and pray for him or her every day this week. Pray for yourself, too, that the Lord would open a door for you to share His Good News with that person.

Connecting People to Christ Now and Forever