

# Worth

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Preacher: Andrew Longwe

[ 0 : 00 ] It would be really helpful and good if you had your Bibles open. It looks Gospel in chapter 9 and verse 25. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

On the back cover of one of my favourite books entitled Don't Waste Your Life by the American pastor John Piper, it says this, I will tell you what a tragedy is.

I will show you how to waste your life. Consider this story from the February 1998 Readers Digest. A couple took early retirement from their jobs in the Northeast five years ago when he was 59 and she was 51.

Now they live in Punta Gorda, Florida, where the crews on their 30-foot trawler play softball and collect seashells. John Piper says this, picture them before Christ at the great day of judgment.

Look, Lord, see my shells. And then Piper says, now that is a wasted life.

[ 1 : 17 ] Today we're continuing in our new series, which we began last week called Disciples in a Dock and God willing over the coming weeks we'll be looking at a number of key questions that Jesus asked his disciples in the gospels.

And it is my prayer that these studies would enable all of us, whether we're Christians or not, to search our hearts and to have them exposed about what we really believe Jesus Christ, who we believe Jesus Christ to be and what we believe about the message of the gospel.

Maybe this is your first time in church and you know very little about Jesus. Well, it is our sincere prayer as a church that you would come to know and love Jesus Christ, the one who the Bible proclaims to be the saviour of sinners.

As a church, we exist to exalt Him, to make much of Him, to worship Him. And that is our desire for all the peoples of this nation and world.

We also, as a church, exist to build up those of you who already know and love Jesus Christ. And so it's my hope and desire that these studies will be immensely challenging, yet wonderfully encouraging for all of us.

[ 2 : 27 ] I don't know about you, but I think that it is amazing to have, to take the time to ponder and hear the questions that our saviour has for us.

Last week we were looking at that question concerning Jesus' identity when he asked these disciples, but what about you? Who do you say I am? Well, this week we turn our consideration to a question that naturally and logically flows on from that.

It's found in Luke chapter 9 verse 25. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

This is a question that concerns worth. And today our title of this sermon is simply worth. I want to look at this question under three very simple headings.

The nature of the question, the purpose of the question, then we'll spend our last few moments considering the application from the question. So the nature of this question.

[ 3 : 27 ] Well, to really appreciate the nature of this question, it's worth well noting that this question is found within a context which is fundamentally concerned with what it means to be a disciple.

That's verses 23 and 27. You may not know that in verse 23 Jesus says to all the people standing before him, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.

Those words, if anyone indicate to us that this is an open invitation to everyone and anyone, it does not matter who you are. It was an open invitation to those who stood before Jesus in that day and it is an open invitation to us this morning.

And really what Jesus goes on to lay out in this section is the terms and conditions of what it means to be a follower of him. Terms and conditions that are both blunt and startling.

One of the things that nobody could accuse Jesus of after reading through the gospels is saying that Jesus obscured or hid the cost of what it means to be a follower of him.

[ 4 : 37 ] You know, like the modern salesman or women who comes to your door, they might phone you up and offer you the latest gadget or product that's in offer. One of the things they're really good at doing is hiding the cost in a small print.

Well, that's one of the things we could never accuse Jesus of because in the gospels and in this passage before us today, Jesus tells us the cost of what it means to be a follower of him.

There is no small print. In fact, he makes it abundantly. One might think painfully clear what it means to be his follower.

Another point about the nature of this question that we need to appreciate is that last week's question required an answer from his disciples. A verbal answer. This week's question in verse 25 is a rhetorical question.

Jesus is really trying to provoke us. He's trying to get us to think in our hearts. He wants us to do some serious heart searching. I'm sure we've all experienced a similar question like this.

[ 5 : 39 ] I remember growing up, my mum would always ask me questions like, what good is that, Andrew, that you're going to do? And she wasn't really asking me a question so I'd answer her.

She was asking me the questions so I'd think about the decisions I made. So, say, for example, it was my pocket money. I would say, mum, I'm going to buy sweets and football stickers with my pocket money. My mum would often say, Andrew, what good is that?

What benefit will that bring you? I'm asking a question to make me think about the decision I'm about to make. And that's really what Jesus is doing here in this passage before us today.

He wants us to weigh up the options. Whether or not we want to be a follower of Him or not. What good is it, says Jesus, for a man to gain the whole world and yet lose a forefoot his very self.

Jesus is looking for us to weigh up what it is that we are living for. What it is that we find are worth in. So that's the nature of this question. Now, what's the purpose of this question?

[ 6 : 45 ] As I said, its purpose is to cause us to think. To cause us to think about what we place are worth in. Here, Jesus is making it painfully clear that a life that is set on gaining the world and rejecting Him means certain loss.

Notice it's not just any loss. He speaks about losing or forfeiting your very self. In other words, he means being separated from God for all eternity.

You see, when Jesus is not our worth, when our worth is not in Jesus that means that we cannot have this relationship with Him. A life saving and life transforming relationship with Him.

And so this question is really intended to expose our hearts and reveal what we place are worth in. It is intended to expose what we value, what we love and what we adore.

This is really a question about, is Jesus of more worth to us than anything else? Is He infinitely more precious, infinitely more valuable to us than everything in the world?

[ 8 : 06 ] You might be sitting here as a non-Christian and thinking to yourself well, what's the big deal with Jesus? Why should I value Jesus above everything else?

To answer this question, we need to appreciate who He is and what He's done. As we were doing last week, we were appreciating who Jesus is and answering the question, who do you say I am? You are the Christ. In other words, you are God. You are the maker and the sustainer of the universe. In you Jesus, all things hold together.

He's the one who gives us our breath. He's the one in whom we live, move and have our being. We also need to appreciate what He's done. Jesus Christ is the one who was just singing a few moments ago who left the glories of heaven and entered this sin-sick and broken world so that He could live the perfect life that we could never live.

So that we could have a perfect record when we stand before Him in that day of judgment. Jesus Christ came into this world to die that sacrificial death taking upon Himself the punishment and the guilt of our sin so that we could have a relationship with Him.

[ 9 : 27 ] Jesus Christ is also the one who was raised from death defeating and conquering the power of sin and death.

Friends, we need to understand the worth of Jesus by meditating on who He is and what He's done. We need to realize that we don't need to find our worth in anything else in this world because in Him our worth is found.

So the reason why Jesus is worthy of all our affections and attentions is ultimately because He is the Savior of sinners. And the question before us today is do we value Him above all? We read earlier in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 21 for where your treasure is, there your heart also is.

I suppose in a very similar way to the question that we're looking at today we need to answer the question what is our treasure? What is it that has mastered our heart's attention and our heart's affection?

[ 10 : 40 ] A really practical way to think about this is to ask yourself what is it that you spend most of your time thinking about? What is it that you boast about in your self-talk each and every day with things to your most value?

Is it Jesus? Is it money? Is it a person, a relationship? Is it materialism?

Friends, you may gain the world. Jesus says to reject Him you will lose and forfeit your very self. And so in this great magnificent question Jesus asks us what does it profit a man? What good is it to a man if he gains the whole world and uses his life?

By using this hyperbolic statement Jesus is saying imagine if you had everything, imagine you had everything you ever dreamed about you had all that the world offers, the money, the house, the car, the perfect wife, the perfect relationships, the luxuries, the expense of clothes, the jewels, the diamonds and the list could go on and on.

[ 12 : 02 ] Imagine you had everything that this world has to offer you. Here's the question, what good is it? What benefit will it bring to you?

I don't know if you know this but Boris Becker, probably one of the greatest tennis players to ever live. A six-time Grand Slam champion, an Olympic gold medalist, the youngest player to ever win the singles men's title at Wimbledon at the age of 17.

When he was at the highest peak in his life, he was on the brink of committing suicide. In fact, he once said in an interview after recognizing all his achievements as a tennis player, I was rich. I had all the material possessions I needed, money, cars and everything. And then I went on to say he felt like all the movie and pop stars who have everything you are so unhappy. He felt like he wanted to commit suicide. So much so, he said, I had known her peace. I was but a puppet on a string.

[ 13 : 20 ] In one sense, this is a picture of so many people in our world today. So many people inside the church and outside the church.

They have everything, yet they can feel so empty. I wonder is there anybody, any of us here who feel like that? We have everything we really need, but still at the same time we feel empty.

The way we overcome this is we just get more and more and want more and more. We want the nicer house, the bigger house, the bigger car. We wish we had a better wife or husband, a better spouse in life.

John Calvin, a preacher and theologian of bygoneer, once said our hearts are like idle factories. And I just love that picture because what he was saying is, our hearts find it so easy to take things and to make them things in which we love, adore and we end up worshiping.

How many of us would be honest and say there are things in this life that capture us more than Jesus Christ? Capture our affections, capture our attention.

[ 14 : 39 ] But friends, what Jesus expects of his followers is that they realize that Jesus Christ is more satisfying than all this world has to offer.

Our life at best in this broken, since it world can only be temperate, satisfying. There's nothing that this world can offer that will satisfy the deepest desires of our hearts.

We might fill them with relationships. We might fill them with all the good things of the world. But they're just echoes and dim pictures of a reality that we were made for in Christ.

Perhaps you long to have more money and all the resources and all the things that you want to buy for yourself. Friends, in Jesus Christ, we have everything we need.

I say as in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3, Jesus Christ has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing. It says in 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 3, in God's divine power, He has granted us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Jesus.

[ 15 : 58 ] Perhaps it's a relationship you long after, but friends, it is just a mere echo of the relationship that we were created to have with Jesus Christ.

A relationship in which our lives are met with one who loves us, with an unconditional, unchanging love.

A love that went so far to lay down his life for us. I want all that to say there is nothing in this world that compares to Jesus Christ.

And so with a few moments that we have left, let's consider the application that can come from this very question. What good is it if a man gain the whole world, yet forfeit or lose his own soul?

Picture that man and woman that John Piper spoke about in the back of his book. And their 30 foot trawler playing softball and with their seashells, spending their lives merely for their own enjoyment. [17:10] And they get to that last day and they stand before the great judgment seat of God. And all they have is these shells. Look Lord, see my shells.

For Christians, I shouldn't be a deeply disturbing picture. Because in this passage, Jesus is calling us to give our lives for him.

He's calling us to count the cost. And I often think that in the 21st century Christian church, we've lost sight of what it is to be a Christian.

Perhaps I could illustrate this with a story from history. I don't know if you know about C.T. Stud. C.T. Stud was a missionary who lived in the 19th century. And when C.T. Stud was a young man, he was an incredibly able cricket player.

It wasn't long before that he was probably the best cricket player in Britain. But amazingly in the providence of God, C.T. Stud came to the place where he recognized that he needed a saviour.

[18:14] He was convicted of his sin and so he cried out and asked Jesus Christ to become Lord and saviour of his life. Not long after C.T. Stud became a Christian. In obedience to God's call upon his life, he gave up all the fame, all the fortune that he had.

And he went to the mission field. He was part of a group of men known as a Cambridge Seven, led by Hudson Taylor. And they gave up everything to go to China to serve and to be spent serving God through preaching the Gospel.

C.T. Stud was given an inheritance, an enormous inheritance. It was once said it was like a king's inheritance. And C.T. Stud thought to all that he had and he gave it away.

And he went. He served many years in China laboring for the Gospel. He then went into India and labored there serving the Gospel. He then went to Africa and spent his life preaching the Gospel.

C.T. Stud lived a life of maximum commitment to Jesus Christ. But the question that I find myself asking, what would compel a man to make such a radical sacrifice for Christ?

[19:26] What would drive him to leave behind the world that he had here in Britain? What would motivate him to attempt so much for Christ? Well, in his diary, C.T. Stud gives us a brief window into his heart when he wrote this.

If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice is too great for me to make for him.

If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice is too great for me to make for him. What I'm trying to say here is that C.T. Stud's life communicates something very clear to us.

It displays that he considered Jesus Christ to be the ultimate worth in his life. That he would go and be spent for the Gospel.

Now, I'm not saying that all of us are to give up our jobs and give up everything that we have. Get on a plane and go to China and serve the Gospel. God might be speaking to some of you here and saying that, but it's not what I'm saying.

[20:32] What I see in C.T. Stud is that he lived with a Gospel-centered Christ-exalting perspective.

He lived a life in which Christ was of infinite value to him. That all the riches of this world would not compare, that he would give his life so freely for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jim Elliott, another great missionary, once said these words, he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

And the question that Jesus is asking us today is he of more value, of more worth than anything else in this world?

I recognize that we live in a sin-sick broken world and once tomorrow comes and we begin our week in work, begin our week in our studies, whatever it is that we find ourselves doing, that it is so easy for Christ to fade in our hearts, for the worries and the problems of our hearts to take control and them to beat the forefront of our mind in Christ to have this small place.

[ 21 : 51 ] And just one of the most practical ways we can go about keeping Christ preeminent in our hearts is to make sure that we spend time in regular communion with him, taking the time to appreciate who he is and what he's done in the pages of the Gospel and in the pages of Scripture.

A love that will drive us to constantly and continually worship him. After all, his worship not declaring what we value the most.

His worship not declaring what we value the most. Often when I find myself struggling, struggling to keep Christ at the centre of my life, I often find myself singing that great hymn, all I once held dear, built my life upon.

All this world reveres, all and wars to own, all I once thought gain, I've counted loss, spent and worthless now compared to this, knowing you Jesus, knowing you, there is no greater thing. You're my all, you're the best, you're my joy, my righteousness and I love you Lord.

[ 23 : 17 ] Well when said, live for self and you'll live in vain, live for Christ and you will live again.

Let me leave you with this picture, a picture that will capture your hearts hopefully. In Revelation chapter 5, a living, the Apostle John tells of a time when he stood and he looked up into heaven. He said he looked up and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, 10,000 times 10,000. They encircled the throne of all the living creatures and the elders and in a loud voice they sang, worthy, worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and praise.

And in a sense what this very text calls us to do, is to go before Jesus and say Jesus you are the one who is worthy. If you're not a Christian and you've never come to know that Jesus Christ is the one who has to be preeminent in our lives, I would encourage you to make it your prayer today, to confess to him that you've made so many other things important, but today you want to make him the most important.

If you're a Christian here this morning and you've found that your life in recent days has been a struggle, you've been lukewarm in your faith and so many things have crept in and stolen this affection and attention for Jesus.

[ 24 : 58 ] And perhaps we too need to bow and pray and ask God to restore to us the joy of our salvation, that we may live for him with that gospel-centred Christ-exalting perspective.

So what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, yet lose or forfeit his very self? Let's pray. Phalan Hivan, we come before your throne of grace and we thank you so much for this question asked by your son, a question that really calls us to stop and to ponder and to think, what is it that we place our within?

Are those of us who are Christians here, we realise that so often so many things snatch and grab our hearts?

And we would confess even now that Father we have not seen just how supreme and preeminent and glorious our Saviour Jesus Christ is. We would pray that you would have mercy upon us and forgive us, that you would restore to us the joy of your salvation, that we may ever live with that perspective where Christ is the one who's worth living for and even dying for.

[ 26 : 25 ] And Father if there be anybody here this morning who doesn't know you, who's never made Christ the centre of their lives, it is in our hearts prayer that today they would come to know and to love Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners.

Father go before us, watch over us and continue in our worship for the praise and honour of Jesus Christ, the worthy King. Amen.