

Life Sunday 2027

Matthew 13:44-52 "So, What Are You Worth?"

Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske, Executive Director of Lutherans For Life
lutheransforlife.org

How do you determine the value of something? Think of a house or a car. How is the value of a house determined? It's not assigned value by some assessor. It's not done by a realtor. The value of a home is determined by the market. The same goes for vehicles. The retail price isn't determined by how much it costs to manufacture it; it's based on the market value. In other words, the value of a house or a car is determined by what someone is willing to pay for it. The average price of a home or a used car today is only what it is because people are willing to pay that price.

With that in mind, let's ask the same question about the value of the treasure and the pearl in Jesus' parables. How much were they worth? We don't know anything about them; we don't know how big they were, what condition they were in, etc., and yet if we follow this same logic, we'd have to say, at least to that man, they were priceless. To him they were worth everything he had because that's what he was willing to pay to have them.

Of course, these parables aren't really about pearls and buried treasures, are they? Like every other parable, these are about Jesus and His Church. When Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is like ..." it's as if He were saying, "This is the way things work in the kingdom of heaven." Jesus uses the parables to describe to us the mystery of our salvation.

Just think of how beautifully these parables describe our salvation! Jesus left His heavenly throne and came to earth and He found *us*, lost and condemned sinners. And

Life Sunday 2027

Matthew 13:44-52 "So, What Are You Worth?"

Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske, Executive Director of Lutherans For Life

lutheransforlife.org

yet in His grace, He wanted us for Himself so deeply that He was willing to give up all that He had to have us. He gave up His glory, His honor, and His very life to cleanse us from the stain of sin and to purchase and redeem us, just as Luther teaches us in the Small Catechism. Jesus "has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death."

So ... what are you worth? What is any person worth? Well, what was Christ willing to pay to have us as His own? Everything! Your life is as valuable as the life of Christ ... perfect God and perfect man! Think about this the next time you feel anxious or worried about something! Think about that when you feel lonely or worthless, or when you sin and feel guilty and ashamed. Remember this the next time you get sick or receive a bad report from the doctor. And definitely keep this in mind when you experience the death of a loved one or are facing death yourself. You are as valuable to God as the life of His own dear Son.

And not just you. Every person ever conceived is that precious. After all, Jesus gave His life to redeem the whole world. As St. John said, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." It is not a coincidence that Jesus followed up the first two parables with a third one about casting a net into the sea. He doesn't cast His net into the sea to catch only a few fish. He sends out the Gospel to gather in all of them. He brings in the good and bad because they are

Life Sunday 2027

Matthew 13:44-52 "So, What Are You Worth?"

Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske, Executive Director of Lutherans For Life

lutheransforlife.org

all precious to Him. Jesus wants all people to be saved, even if they don't want to be saved by Him.

Every single person is as valuable as the blood of Christ. That includes especially those who are most vulnerable: those in the womb, the sick and aged, the disabled, and the dying. They are all immeasurably precious to God. And so are all the youth struggling with their sexuality, and so are the men and women who've been deceived into destroying the lives of their children, and so are all those who seek to undermine God's gift of marriage. Christ loves them all. He fearfully and wonderfully created each and every one of them, and He shed His blood for each of them. Which means that they are all precious. As precious as Christ's life. And as precious as you.

Sadly, we don't always see them that way, do we? As sinners, we have a tendency to devalue others and to treat them as if they were less worthy of love than we are. Sometimes we do this simply because other people annoy us. Sometimes we do so because they pose a threat to us or impose a burden on us. Sometimes it's because they do things that we don't agree with or wouldn't do ourselves.

This is why we can be harsh with people or roll our eyes at them or lose our tempers with them. This is why we sometimes secretly wish that harm would come to others or even say or do things that cause harm to others. We do these things because we erroneously think that some people are less valuable than we are.

It's this exact line of reasoning that has led to the vile practices of abortion and human trafficking and assisted suicide and the destruction of human embryos for scientific research. Every one of these things exists because society has determined that some people, or groups of people, are less precious than others and are less worthy of God's love and protection than the rest.

But the mystery of our salvation is that nobody is worthy of God's love! That's an important thing to remember when considering these parables. We are valuable because of what Jesus paid for us, not the other way around. When Jesus came and found us, we were anything but bright, shiny gold or polished pearls. We were filthy and stained and good for nothing. In fact, St. Paul says that Jesus saved us when we were still His enemies (Romans 5:10).

Jesus didn't lay down His life because we were worthy of it. Far from it! He laid down His life for us because there was no way we were going to save ourselves, and in His mercy and compassion, He chose to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. He gave His life to redeem us, and He washed us in His blood and turned us filthy pearls and rusty treasures into His own glorious riches.

Furthermore, God's Word teaches us that when Jesus claims us as His own, He not only cleanses us from the stain of sin and imbues us all with immeasurable value, He makes us look more and more like Him. He restores us to the image that we lost when Adam and Eve fell to sin. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be

Life Sunday 2027

Matthew 13:44-52 "So, What Are You Worth?"

Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske, Executive Director of Lutherans For Life

lutheransforlife.org

conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Romans 8:29).

So, not only are you forgiven for all the times that you fail to see the worth in your neighbors and love them, but you are also being sanctified to love your neighbors as Jesus loves them. That is, Christ is working in you to teach and empower you to love your neighbors more than you love yourselves. By the power of the Holy Spirit, and through His means of grace, Jesus is helping you recognize that each one of them is precious to God.

In Christ, fathers and mothers treasure each other and their children, and children love and obey their parents. In Christ, we learn to be patient and kind to those who disagree with us and make bad decisions. In Christ, we are strengthened to defend the unborn and truly care for the sick and the dying. And above all, Jesus motivates us to love each of our neighbors enough to share the Gospel with them that they might all live with us and with Christ for all eternity.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, you have been purchased by our Lord to be His own along with every other person. You are His treasure and so are they. May we each be filled with the love of Christ who bought us that we may value each person the way Christ does. In His holy name. Amen.