

The Parable Series: Ghosts, Lizards, and Pearls

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Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship.

And so the message today we're continuing, guess what? A series on the parables of Yeshua. Such a basic topic, because these are things that we've read so many times in like Sunday school or Sabbath school. We're familiar with the parables, and we wouldn't run the risk that when we get so familiar with hearing something over and over and over again, we lose what Messiah was actually trying to portray, what he was trying to reveal in these very powerful short stories.

So this week's message title is "Lizards, Ghosts, and Pearls." Yeah, what in the world is he talking about? I've seen a lot of stuff on the internet about lizards and about ghosts and what is Matthew fixing to say? Well, you'll see here in a minute.

How I Came Up with This Title

Here's the short story: This week I was putting together a message title, and I was talking to two very, very good friends of mine, Ryan White over at Rooted Intercom. I was kind of probing him: "Hey, have you ever seen these parables in this light? I'm trying to figure out the best way to portray this." And then Tyler Don Rosenquist over at the Ancient Bridge (dot com), I was speaking with her about the parables that we're going to talk about today, and she called me and she read me a large section out of a chapter of a book that I have never read before. And this book is written by C.S. Lewis and it's called "The Great Divorce."

This is a book I had on my bookshelf for a very long time, but you know, it's C.S. Lewis, fairy tales and magic and snow and wardrobes, like, what could this book possibly have in it? So I picked the book up, went to a coffee shop, and I read it. Have you guys ever read this book? It's an older book. Wow.

So this book was painful to read in a good way, I guess. Mr. Lewis, Clive, he's a Christian author. And of course, his books have to do with Christian theology and relationship with God. And the book is, essentially, very short. It's a fiction book, but it's about a guy who wakes up and he's in this place called Gray Town. Gray Town is a town that really has no joy, there's no happiness, there's really nothing fun to do. It's just great. It's Gray Town.

Gray Town and the Journey Across

He realizes very quickly in the story that this is actually a type of purgatory realm where the dead live after they die. He looks up and sees people, everyone is a ghost. The author, C.S. Lewis, actually defines a ghost, and then they have spirits later in the story. The ghosts look a little bit different, they're kind of smoky. Some of them were white, some of them dark, some of them kind of icky looking, just kind of smoky figures that move around.

And there is a bus stop in this purgatory, slash hell, and every day these people line up at this bus stop. You guys interested yet? I mean, this guy's imagination! Everyone lines up at this bus stop, and they get on this bus, and this bus takes them to a place known as the valley of the shadow of life. And it's at the foot of these beautiful mountains where everything is perfect and the beauty is indescribable. And essentially, this is like heaven, if you will.

When they get off the bus, they can be visited by spirits. The spirits are unlike the ghosts, they're the residents of this happy place, heaven, if you will. The spirits come to visit, family members, and they say hello and so on and so forth. But when the ghosts get out of the bus, it's a very uncomfortable place to be, almost agonizing. The blades of grass don't bend underneath their feet; they're described as sharp, jagged diamonds that stick up. Imagine if grass didn't bend and you were walking around barefoot, it would hurt. It's painful to walk around.

There's a leaf that some guy tries to pick up, but it's too heavy, he can't pick it up. And look, a flower! He wants to pick a flower, and a guy goes down to pick the flower, and he puts so much effort and this time to tear up a dandelion, he can't do it.

And this is the story of these people who are in Gray Town, because they're not compatible with heaven. They're still carrying things around with them that keep them from going into the mountains if they want. But they have the spirits there encouraging them: "Just take another step. I know it's uncomfortable. I know it's going to hurt, but it won't kill you. You will become stronger with every step that you take, every step away from Gray Town, every step away from the things that are keeping you from the kingdom. It's going to hurt when they leave your life, but you will be stronger because of it."

The Stories These People Tell

And so we have these stories. This one big bully who went from Gray Town, and it pains him to be in the mountains because a lot of the people there were people he saw as beneath him. They were insignificant people. And he couldn't convince himself that it was worth going to heaven if he had to be there with all these people that he didn't really want to be there with.

There was a businessman who went there. He got off the bus, walking around painfully. He sees some golden apples and he's like, "Wow, I can sell some of these in Gray Town, sell little pieces of heaven in hell, right?" And he goes to pick up an apple, and the spirit says, "You can't take that with you." And he has this little apple, and it is just agonizing, trying to carry this thing, just trying to take it out of the bus. And the spirits are like, "You can't take that with you, but if you stay, we can teach you how to eat it, teach you how to gain nutrients from it, teach you how to engage with it." He's like, "No," and he just kind of wanders off in the distance, agonizing pain, trying to take heaven to hell.

You have a poet who arrived in Gray Town because he committed suicide. He thought himself better than everyone else, constantly complaining about everybody else and every little thing in his afterlife: "This is wrong, and that is wrong, and this is wrong." He gets off the bus, this is wrong, that is wrong. Just one person gets off the bus and shrieks because it's so agonizing and uncomfortable, and he runs back on the bus.

The Conversation with the Spirit

And then I want to read, can we read today? You guys got a few minutes? We're going to read a few pages because there's one character who had a conversation with a spirit, and Clive, the author, nailed it. The conversation with this spirit is about whether or not he should or could do away with this thing that he's carried with him that is preventing him from going to the kingdom.

And in this man's case, it was lust, lust he still carries as this burden with him. And it takes the form of an ugly little red lizard on his shoulder that's always there whispering things into his ear. And I want you guys to listen to the dialogue between him and the angel, the spirit, if you will. The spirit may not be an angel; the spirit that is trying to help him, and wants to tell him, "Listen, you can follow me into the mountains if we can kill the lizard, if we can kill the dick, if we can kill the hate, if we can kill the anger, if we can kill the impatience, if we can kill the fear."

There's one story about a mother who loved her son more than God, and she could not proceed up the mountain because of that, her son was in heaven, but she couldn't see him. She has this convicting conversation with her brother who was a spirit there.

And so as I read this dialogue, I want you guys to kind of think about, maybe some time in your life, or maybe that's you right now, where you've had a lizard on your shoulder. And just think about if you've ever sounded like this man. Okay, you guys ready? Super excited about this. All right!

So this is it, whether we look, and I saw coming towards us a ghost who carried something on his shoulder. Like all the ghosts, he was unsubstantial, but they differ from one to another as smokes differ. Some had been whitish, this one was dark and oily, and to the side of his shoulder was a little red lizard, twitching its tail like a whip and whispering things into his ear. And as we caught sight of him, he turned his head to the reptile with a snarl of impatience. "Shut up! I tell you, shut up!" It wagged its tail and continued to whisper to him. He ceased snarling and presently began to smile, then turned and started to limp westward away from the mountains.

"Off so soon?" said a voice. The speaker was more or less human in shape, but larger than a man. He was so bright that I could hardly look at him. His present smoke was on my eyes and my body too, for heat was coming from him as well as light, like the morning sun at the beginning of a tyrannous summer day.

"Yes, I'm off," said the ghost. "Thanks for all of your hospitality, but it's no good. You see, I told this little chap", indicating the lizard "that he'd have to be quiet if he came, which he insisted on doing, of course. But his stuff won't do here. I realize that, but he won't stop, so I'll just have to go home."

The Offer

"Would you like me to make him quiet?" said the flaming spirit, an angel, as I understand.

"Of course I would," said the ghost.

"Then I will kill him," said the angel, taking a step forward.

"Ooo, look out! Oh, you're burning me! Keep away!" said the ghost, retreating backwards.

"Don't you want him killed? You didn't say anything about killing him at first. I hardly meant to bother you with anything so drastic as that."

"It's the only way," said the angel, whose burning hands were now very close to the lizard. "Shall I kill it?"

"Well, that's a further question. I'm quite open to considering it, but it's a new point, isn't it? For a moment I was only thinking about silencing it because it's so embarrassing. But may you kill it?"

Hesitation

"Well, there's time to discuss that. There's time to discuss whether we want to kill it or not."

"There is no time," said the angel. "May I kill it, please?"

"I've never meant to be such a nuisance. Please, really, don't bother. Look, it's gone to sleep on its own accord. It's not even awake anymore. It's asleep. Really, I'm sure it'll be all right now. Thanks ever so much, though. May you kill it?"

"Honestly, I don't think there's the slightest necessity for that. I'm sure I will be able to keep it in order from now on. I think the gradual process would be far better than just killing it right now."

"The gradual process is of no use at all," said the angel.

"Oh, don't you think so? I think I should just think it over. What you said, I'll think it over very carefully and honestly I will. In fact, I'll let you kill it now, but as a matter of fact, I'm not feeling frightfully well today. It would be most silly to do it now. I'd need to be in good health for this operation. Maybe some other day."

"There are no other days. All days are present right now," said the angel. "Get back, you're burning me!"

"How can I tell you to kill it? You'd kill me if you did!"

"It is not so."

"You're hurting me now, though you burn!"

"I never said it wouldn't hurt. I said it wouldn't kill you."

The Final Choice

"Oh, I know you think I'm a coward, but it isn't that, really. It isn't. Let me run back to tonight's bus and get an opinion from my own doctor back in grey town. I'll come again at the first moment I can. I'll be back. Don't worry. Let me just go back home and get a second opinion."

"The moment contains all moments right now," said the angel. "Why are you torturing me? Why are you cheering at me? How can I let you tear me in pieces? If you wanted to help me, why didn't you just kill the damn thing without asking me? Before I knew it, it would all be over now if you had just done that."

"I cannot kill it against your will. It is impossible. Have I your permission?" asked the angel.

The angel's hands were almost closed around the lizard, but not quite. The lizard began chattering to the ghost so loud that even I could hear what it was saying. "Be careful," it said. "He can do what he says. He can kill me. One fatal word from you and he will. Then you'll be without me forever and ever. It's not natural. How can you live? You'd be only sort of a ghost, not a real man as you are now. He doesn't understand. He's only a cold, bloodless thing. It may be natural for him, but it isn't for us."

"Yes, yes, I know. There are no real pleasures now, only dreams. But aren't they better than nothing? And I'll be so good. I admit I've sometimes gone too far in the past, but I promise I won't do it again. I'll give you nothing but really good dreams from now on. All sweet and fresh and almost innocent, you might say quite innocent."

"Have I your permission?" said the angel to the ghost.

"I know it will kill me."

"It won't. But suppose it did? You're right. It would be better to be dead than to live with this creature."

"Then I'm a wretch. Go on! Can't you get it over? Do what you like!" bellowed the ghost, but ended whimpering, "Help me. Help me, God."

The Resurrection

Next moment, the ghost gave a scream of agony such as I never heard on earth. The burning one closed his crimson grip around the reptile, twisted it while it bit and flung its tail, and then he tossed the broken-backed reptile on the turf.

"Aha! That's done for me," gasped the ghost, reeling backwards. For a moment I could not make out anything distinctly, but then I saw, between me and the nearest bush, unmistakably solid

but growing more solid every moment, the upper arm of this man and shoulder, becoming a man. Then, brighter still, stronger, the legs and hands, the neck and golden head, materialized while I watched. As if my attention had not wavered, I should have seen the actual completing of a man, a real man, naked, not much smaller than an angel. But what distracted me was the fact that at the same moment something seemed to be happening to the lizard.

At first I thought the apparition had failed. Instead of dying, the lizard was still struggling and even growing bigger and bigger and bigger. It was morphing into something else. It was changing. Its hind parts were round. Her tail, still flickering, became a tail of hair, still flickering, between huge, glossy buttocks. Suddenly I started back, rubbing my eyes. What stood before me was the greatest stallion I had ever seen: silvery white, but with a mane of gold. It was smooth and shining, rippled with swells of flesh and muscle, whinnying and stamping on its hoofs. And at each stamp, the land shook and trees dwindled.

The new man turned and clapped the new horse's neck. It nosed its bright body, horse and master breathing into each other's nostrils. And the man turned from it, flung himself at the feet of the burning one, and embraced them. The man mounts his new horse, this beast that he had conquered, and jolted out into the mountains almost in a flash, into the kingdom.

The Application

The narrator who's watching is talking to the spirit, and the spirit looks at him and says: "The biggest thing here is what happened to the lizard. The biggest thing is what happened to the lizard. It turned into the animal that no longer controlled the man, but the man had conquered it and now rode it into the heavenlies."

Is it worth it? Is it worth it to kill the things in our lives that hold us back from experiencing the kingdom of God, even if it hurts now? Of course, it's just a fictional story, but how many of us have ever had a conversation like that, a split, I guess, internally or with God? "I can take this from you. I know, but let me do that and gradually. Let's just take it gradually, just a little bit every day, and soon it'll be gone out of my life. I'll work on it. Let me go. Let me talk to my friends first. We can take care of this now. I don't know about that. It'll hurt. It'll be embarrassing to come forward. It'll be embarrassing to go to leadership in the fellowship or the prayer team. But I don't want them to know. Let me just take care of it."

We need to take care of this now. And so today we continue our series on the parables of Yeshua with a few of the shortest parables in [Matthew 13](#). And if you can turn with me to Matthew

chapter 13, verse 44. These are two parables that you've heard before, many times. And guess what? You're going to hear them again today, because they're important.

Matthew 13:44: The Treasure and the Pearl

Verse 44, and I had a lot of fun researching this, it's fascinating. We talk about what these parables mean, and 2,000 years later we still almost don't have a clue what a lot of these parables mean because there are so many commentaries.

Verse 44 says: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which someone found and hid. 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, and finding one pearl of great value he went and sold all that he had and bought it."

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, someone found it, hid it, and joyfully sells everything to buy the field. The person understands that the field is worth it. The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant, and he finds a pearl in what the world.

Interpreting the Parables Through History

I've read many commentaries, and it was fascinating. Many commentaries seek to make all of Yeshua's parables allegory, because several of them are. I mean, we have the wheat and the tares, and we have the seed sown on the four types of soil, and at the end of the chapter, Yeshua says these are allegory, here's what every single thing in the story means.

We have some older commentaries here. There's John Chrysostom, a stout name in biblical and Christian history. He says the treasure is the gospel and the field is the world. Sounds nice, doesn't it? We have Jerome, another stout name in biblical history and Christian history. The treasure in the Bible is the Bible, and the field is the church. That's his opinion of what these things mean.

And then there's Saint Hillary. He was a saint in France, and his full name was actually Hilarius, it means joy. True story. He's Hillary for short. I thought that was funny, I've never seen someone named Hilarius. But Hillary says the treasure is Jesus in a field of human flesh. That sounds like a creepy movie.

Setting Aside the Commentaries

I want to put all of the commentaries aside because 2,000 years later we still have no idea about all the details, whether this actually represents something or if it's just the bigger story that he's trying to tell. So let's just read the story. They're very short. The kingdom is like a merchant that found a pearl. The kingdom is like this story, and he sells everything.

What I See in These Parables

What I see in these parables, and this is just me, I see the parables being about identity, and an identity that changes. You see, the man that finds the treasure in the field, he cannot obtain the field currently. What you have to do first is get rid of all of the stuff that currently occupies his life in order to take ownership of the field. In other words, he can't take all of his stuff and take ownership of the field too, that will not happen. He has to sell everything, get rid of everything, not almost everything, everything, before he can take ownership of the field which contains the treasure. And with this treasure he can build a stronger new life, can build a big life. But he's joyful to do it. He can become a new person with this treasure in the field. But before that happens, it's to get rid of everything.

The parable is a little bit different but kind of the same. You see, when we see merchants, we think of some cool peddler off of Etsy, right? Some cool, hip person like, I don't know, someone who mixes their own wooden spoons and stuff, and we'll see them at our house tomorrow. We think of people who make homemade wares and sell them, and this is really neat, right? So I would submit that this is because of our current culture. In the first century, a merchant wasn't necessarily a positive thing, could be neutral, but it wasn't positive.

Understanding "Merchant" in First-Century Context

You see, you have this word "merchant," right here, which is two Greek words that make up this word: and throw pots, which just means people or human, anthropology, right? And in pori-us, which is emporium. These two words indicate a person who sells by the sea, or a trader by the seas, that's where this phrase for merchants is used here in Matthew. And then it's used elsewhere a couple of times within the same chapter of [Revelation 13](#), involving the merchants who get rich because of the horror of Revelation or Babylon the Great, where Babylon the Great has defeated some merchants that are crying because no one will buy their things now.

So, you know, we have a couple of titles that are not always bad, but what if the Bible said "used-car salesman"? Now, used-car salesmen are definitely not bad people by any means, I have friends who are used-car salesmen, but our culture has kind of tainted the title with

stereotypical views. Lawyers, it's another great example. I know a lot of great lawyers, but the title has been corrupted in our generation as people who are self-seeking and just out to get rich off other people.

A merchant in the first century, what is a merchant? It's someone who goes out and buys stuff really cheap and then seeks to sell it for a lot more money than they bought it for at the expense of the ignorance of the people buying it. So a merchant, it's not a great thing, but it is what it is. It just has that kind of corrupt, negative undertone.

The Merchant and the Pearl

And here a merchant finds a pearl, and this pearl is so awesome that the merchant becomes completely infatuated with it, and he chooses to sell everything, everything. Now, as a merchant, what is the one thing you need to continue staying a merchant? Capital. Merchandise. This man sold all of his merchandise, everything, to buy this one pearl.

Now what's fascinating about this story is he's finally gotten this pearl, but he had to sacrifice his identity as a merchant. It may have been successful. The undertone of the story is maybe he was kind of a wealthy, successful merchant, maybe had some ships, who knows. He sold everything, and now he's standing there with this beautiful pearl, naked with nothing. Now he can go back to his old life. He can go back to his old life at any moment. What does he have to do if he wants to go back to where he was before he bought the pearl? You've got to sell the pearl. You can't have both. In the story, these stories are about people killing their lizards, stories about people, one possibly rich, one possibly poor, chasing something they know is more valuable than anything else they have in their lives. The man that found the treasure in the field did it with great joy, excited that nothing in his life is worth keeping for this. Of course, the merchant made the ultimate decision to leave his identity as well.

The Rich Young Ruler in Matthew 19

Now, see in [Matthew 19](#), there's a story about a rich young ruler. What does this man say? He's a rich young ruler, right? And we know the story from [Matthew 19](#). He comes up to Yeshua, and right off the bat, he just says, "Hey, how do I get some of this eternal life? How do I get into the eternal life?" Or I would like to rephrase it: the eternal age. In Judaism, they call it the age to come. It's the age when God makes all wrongs right, essentially, it's heaven on earth, when God's age to come, the eternal age that we will be living in, or that I dare assert that we have already started living in now.

A lot of people have the idea that eternal life starts after you die. It's kind of silly because if you've committed your life to Christ, if the kingdom is among you now, if you're in the kingdom now, then the age of eternity, your life, your eternal life, you're living in it now. It started now, and it will progress past death, but it started now. You guys never thought of that? You're living in eternal life now. You're living in God's kingdom now, and so much so that you will continue even past death. When you wake up in the morning, do you think about that? Like, if I'm a new creation and I've been given the vocation that was given to mankind in the garden to go out and tend and maintain God's creation as his ambassador, so how do we treat our lives? Or do we have the enemy whispering into our ears?

And so this man wants to know: How do I enter into this age of eternal life, this age to come? How do I get into this, O great Yeshua? And essentially, in this summed-up story, Yeshua tells him. He responds, he says, "Well, you need to not murder folk. That's a great place to start. Don't steal. Do not commit adultery. Don't bear false witness. Honor your mom and dad. And, oh yeah, love your neighbor as yourself." The man says, "I've done all these things. What more do I lack? There's got to be something else. What more do I lack? I'm doing all these things."

And Jesus says, "If you want to be perfect, complete, mature, to enter God's kingdom fully, to cross over and hike those mountains, if you want nothing holding you back from experiencing the mountains ahead, where the grass beneath your feet doesn't just bend out of the way, where the flowers you can pick and you have access to these golden apples, and if you want access to that, then go and do it. Sell everything and give it to the poor."

Now, this is, this is in our first century, in a country that is very, very, very zealous for capitalism. We do not like it when Yeshua says to sell all of your stuff and give it to the poor. And I would assert that this was for this man specifically, because we see that everybody didn't sell all their stuff. Later, we have those who are wealthy being instrumental with their wealth in the kingdom of God. But regardless, Yeshua is very tactful in his response when he tells him to go sell the stuff.

The Ten Commandments and the Tenth

Because Yeshua starts out by telling him what several commandments, we've heard these commandments before, right? So we have five commandments here and a sixth one. Five of them are very familiar because they come from [Exodus 20](#), and this is the Ten Commandments, right? And then one from [Leviticus 19](#): love your neighbor as yourself.

Now the Ten Commandments, depending on how you count them and how you read them, they can be read several different ways. The first four, don't make idols, don't have any other gods before me, don't take my name in vain, honor my Sabbath, these have to do with our relationship to God, right? The latter six commandments, five through ten, have to do with our relationship with our neighbor.

And this is where Yeshua begins quoting from. Notice that commandments five through ten, there are six that have to do with loving your neighbor. But he only mentions five: don't murder, don't steal, don't commit adultery, don't bear false witness, and do not dishonor your mother and father.

The man says, "I've kept all of these." But what commandment did Yeshua not mention to the man before he tells him to go sell everything? It's the last one of the Ten Commandments: do not covet.

Covetousness and the Weight of Possessions

If you want to be perfect, if you want to be perfect, this man's identity was wrapped up in his wealth. This is who he was as a rich young ruler. What motivates people to pursue wealth? What motivates us to keep it all for ourselves? It's simple: if we don't get it, someone else will. I'll be better if I get it first. We don't want everyone else to have it, right? A twisted spirit whispers into our ears and says that you're better off as long as you have this or that, this or that, whether you have that car, that home, that money, those kids, that family.

The man's nature was bound by covetousness, I assert. When Yeshua asks him, "Do you want to kill it? Do you want to get rid of it?", the man walks away sad because he had many possessions, many things that had taken a hold of him.

Peter: Denial, Restoration, and Calling

Peter stood among the people late at night. He was a little anxious, and there was a lot of clamoring, lots of shouting. He was warming himself beside a fire because they had arrested this Yeshua figure, this man whom he was a follower of. Someone sees him and says, "Hey, aren't you one of his followers? Aren't you one of the guys?" What does he say? No, I'm not. He rejects his allegiance to his king in that moment. No, no, no, three times he rejects his allegiance to the king of Israel.

We know that Yeshua is beaten, tried, taken up to this hill, carrying a cross, brutally crucified, with Peter somewhere in the background. Imagine the weight that was on Peter's shoulders during this. Imagine what Peter thought when he heard the tomb was empty, when he realized the tomb was empty. What do you think went to his head? I think it was a mixed emotion, oh yeah, oh no.

A little bit later, on the beach, Peter's the guy who jumps out of the boat. It's like the second or third time he does this in the Gospels. He rushes to Yeshua, and Yeshua offers him breakfast. They're sitting around eating breakfast, and Yeshua asks him something. He says, "Peter, do you love me?" Peter says, "Yes, I do." Then: "Feed my sheep. Peter, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord, of course I do." "Peter, do you love me? Are you allegiant to me? Will you commit your life back to the kingdom that I represent, under my reign? Even though these three times you denied me and you cursed your allegiance to me, will you repledge your life to me, in this kingdom that I'm proclaiming? Take care of my sheep."

Forgiven, restored, offered completeness in the kingdom of God, fully raised back up, right? Can you imagine the relief off Peter's shoulders just falling to the ground? "Whoa, yes, Lord, Peter, I want you to be with me in the front lines of this kingdom that has been proclaimed, and it's starting to move forward, and it's crashing into this world. And all rights will be made wrong, I mean, all wrongs will be made right in this kingdom, Peter. All offenses will be forgiven, Peter. All relationships will be reconciled, Peter. God's peace, his Shalom, the completeness of all relationships with God will be made manifest and full, with no cracks, no brokenness. Everything will be solid, Peter. I want you to stand with me as we do this together." Do you love me? Yes, Lord, I love you.

Don't Worry About Others

What's the very next thing that happens? So in John chapter 21, verse 20, at the end of that conversation, then Peter, turning around, saw a disciple whom Jesus loved following them, we assume John, who also had leaned on his breast during the supper and asked, "Lord, who's going to betray you?"

Peter, seeing him, and this is right after the conversation, Peter's been restored, forgiven, offered completeness in the kingdom, officially commissioned as an ambassador of the kingdom: "I'm going to feed and take care of your sheep, Peter." Peter, seeing him, this other disciple, said to Jesus, "Hey, what about him? What about this man over there? What about that guy?"

Peter is more worried about what someone else is doing, what's going to happen to this other person's life, what this person's going to get, what the conclusion of their duties in the kingdom will be. He has anxiety over another disciple, yeah, the one that Jesus loved, right? Do you know what Yeshua's response to him is? It's a huge lesson here. Jesus said unto him, "If I will that he remains until I come, what is that to you? What is that to you? You follow me. That's what verse 22 says: You follow me. What is that to you?"

Your Own Path

There are many, many, many things that we need to kill, that we need to let die, to enter into this life in Christ, and they look different from person to person. Some struggle with addiction, some struggle with anger. Some love their kids more than God and don't give God the gratitude for the blessings he's given to them. Some covet, some lie, some cheat. Some are so focused on the successes and failures of others and establishing their own identity, when the reality is, God created you. God created you to be you. And God foreknew the circumstances in your life: the stones that you would stub your toe on, the devastations that would come your way, the downfalls that you would rise from one day, the places where you would be weak and the places where you would be strong, the moment that you would become fully restored and focused on what you're doing. God created you.

And we sit around and we look at other people's lives and we say, "Wow, how did he get that job? Wow, why is he so smart? Wow, she's so pretty, man. Their kids are just so well-behaved. Wouldn't that be nice? Man, my husband, why can't I do these things? Why can't I be as talented?" And we look at everybody else's life because, for some reason, and today it's easier than ever to post pictures on Facebook and social media and make your life look perfect.

Following Perfect Instagram Lives

How many of you guys follow someone on Instagram or Facebook that looks like their life is perfect? Yeah? A couple. Jenny follows these folks on Instagram who live out on a farm. There's all the kids running around the farm, half-naked, riding on sheep, making milking goats and making cheese. And "oh yeah, our life is great," and she's over here like, wouldn't that be fun? And I'm like, yes, but what is happening when the camera is not shooting? What happens when that sheep kicks the boy in the face and they're at the hospital getting a CT scan? Do they have health insurance? I don't know. They're living out in the woods.

Nobody has done your life. You are original. God made you and your life to be created for you to walk out. No one has any idea what you're going through, and you have no idea what others are going through, no matter how well their kids behave or how pretty their house is. Those people could not do your life, just like you could not do theirs.

Following Jesus, Not Others' Lives

Peter is so wrapped up watching what's happening with someone else that he's totally missed the entire conversation with Jesus. Jesus says, "Go and feed my sheep. I want you to feed my sheep. You're going to tend my sheep. I want you to take care of my sheep, because you love me, right?"

Peter says, "Yeah, I love you."

Jesus says, "That's great, awesome. This is your mission. Your life. Oh, and by the way, you're going to die on a very horrible death at the end. No one else is going to do this. You are."

That's what he says in the actual conversation. Peter, you have a life that I am going to walk with you every single step of the way, and I'm going to be there with you because I've empowered you to walk in this life. Walk in this life. Quit looking at everyone else's life and trying to figure out how to wish you could have their life or do that. Stop wondering what's going to happen to them or maybe they deserve this, or maybe wishing you had what they have. That is not what the plan was.

And if that's what you do from day to day, maybe you don't have this big lizard of lust or addiction, but you got a big lizard on you that's telling you that you are not capable of living the life that God has made you to live. And it's not always butterflies and rainbows. It's not always like that, because we're meant to live this life that God gave us. And there are times when it hurts. There's a time when suffering is involved, that's the gospel. And there's a time to represent God's kingdom through those awful and dark times and still continue to be that light.

The Kingdom Invasion

It's fascinating because we keep talking about the kingdom and how it's so opposed to this one. The vision in [Ephesians 2:6](#) says that we have been raised up to sit in heavenly places with Christ. Think about that. He died with you to rescue you and bring you out from death. Now it's just like a lifeguard jumping into the water. Maybe it's a bad metaphor, drowning with his victim to raise them to life, a dying with his victim in death and raising them to life. Not just

sitting about the curve at the pool, but bringing them up to the lifeguard stand with them. We are sitting in heavenly places with Christ, in the kingdom of heaven. If we were truly in Christ, that's a big deal. That's huge understanding.

When you wake up in the morning and realize that the life you have stepped into living is bigger than you, that you've been given a charge to walk it out. [James 1:18](#) says, "In the exercise of his will, he brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of firstfruits among his creatures."

Firstfruits. I found a reference to this, a Daniel Mase New Testament translation that I came across. This was a guy who rewrote the New Testament. It was heavily challenged and criticized. It was from way back, the 1700s or so when he wrote it. But I like the way he translated [James 1:18](#). He writes, "It is he that has voluntarily renewed us by the oracles of truth, that we might be the first converts of the new creation, firstfruits."

Do you guys know what firstfruits means? That more is going to happen. How many of you guys know that the eternal age is still happening? We're walking through it. It's not something we arrive at; it's something we walk through. The kingdom is not something that we just have; it's something we walk through, bridging the gap from the new creation and the old creation, from the kingdom of God to the corrupt creation of our own making. Firstfruits. Do you think God is done with creation? This is the question: Do you think that God wants your help with creation?

We never think about that. God doesn't need our help. He doesn't need our help. But in the beginning, at the front of the Bible, it speaks about God creating this beautiful creation that he called good. He called it good. He didn't call it perfect, because perfect means unchanging, nothing can ever be added to it or taken from it. It's reached its max. And he created fish and plants and animals. But he didn't just poof them all into existence at once. He created vegetation that would grow into a tree, and the tree would form fruit. The fruit has seeds. When the fruit falls to the ground, what do these seeds do? The creation keeps it going. Fish in the sea, they multiplied, that's what it says. This is a fully self-sufficient creation that was good and beautiful, that continued changing. I'd even say evolving, but that's a loaded word. I can't say it like that. But it continued to change and become better and do more with itself.

Image Bearers and Ambassadors

And then he takes a man and one woman, mankind, human beings, and places them right in the middle of it. And he tells them, "Listen, you're in charge here. I am giving you authority. You are

my image bearers, which means you reflect my reign in creation. And what I'm asking you to do is to tend and maintain creation. I want you guys to be involved in the progress of creation by the words that come out of your mouth, by the actions of your hands. I want you to represent my kingdom and my reign in this creation as it progresses. That is what your identity is. That's what your vocation is as an image bearer of God, as an ambassador of Christ, of the King, ambassador of the kingdom.

We have a vocation to walk out in this world every single morning when we wake up and say, 'You know what? I have a job to do. It's not always going to be easy, but my job is to represent who Yeshua is as King.' And we cannot do that when we're so focused on everybody else's homes or families or things or what's easy.

What does it have to do with you? Follow me.

The question is not what do you need to sell to make it into the kingdom. The question is: what are you not willing to sell to experience the fullness of God's kingdom in your life? What are you not willing to give away to obtain the treasure? What are you not willing to sell to get this big pearl?

I don't know what you're going to do with it, but here's what N.T. Wright says about these parables. He's a huge fan of his work on new creation, a great author and scholar. He puts it this way: "The gospel of the kingdom isn't a pleasant religious idea that you might like to explore sometime when you've got an hour to spare. It's like a fabulous hoard of treasure, yours for the taking if you'll sell everything else to buy the field where it's hidden. It's like the biggest, finest, purest pearl that any jeweler ever imagined, and it's yours for the taking if you sell everything else, including all of the other pearls you've ever owned, in order to purchase it."

That's from his book *Matthew for Everyone*.

When we stopped short of selling everything, we stopped short of obtaining the treasure. When we stopped short of saying yes, "This thing needs to die", we stopped short of obtaining the pearl. I don't know what that thing might be in your life today. I'm sure we can all identify certain things that we need to work out in our lives. But if anything, I hope that this message gives you a little bit of reflection to identify what lizard is whispering into your ear. What is that one thing that you would say, "Ah, it's going to hurt if I get rid of this thing in my life"?

I guarantee you it will not kill you. It will hurt. But it will not kill you.

Watch or listen: foundedintruth.com/bible-teachings/the-parable-series-ghosts-lizards-and-pearls/

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