

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." – 2 Corinthians 5:20

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Pearls of Wisdom

Matthew 13:44-46

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Sometimes I feel like we Christians are the Eors of the world. We seem to be infatuated with talk of persecution, bearing our crosses, sacrifice, and all that other good stuff Jesus promised us. Don't get me wrong, those things should be a substantial part of a healthy Christian diet. They are inevitabilities for the one who lives as Christ lived. But sometimes I feel like we undersell our Savior. It seems to me that we tend to rarely speak of the benefits of Kingdom living, and when we do, we speak of those benefits as only being future oriented in "heaven." Whatever benefits following Christ has to bring us, they're not for this mortal body and this temporally fleeting world.

Dallas Willard helped to snap me out of such morose thinking as I was reading his book recently, entitled "The Divine Conspiracy." Willard chastised me for reading Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, which is all about Kingdom living, as a Sermon of hopelessness. "Love your enemies?" "Don't worry about tomorrow?" "Give to the one who asks?" Seriously? What a difficult time living a Kingdom life would lead to! But Willard pointed to Jesus's comparison of what Kingdom life is truly like, as depicted later in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. Jesus says that the Kingdom is like finding a treasure in a field. Were I to find a treasure of immeasurable value, I wouldn't sullenly go and sell my possessions reluctantly to purchase that field. Not at all! I would rush to sell all of my meager belongings - every pittance I owned - and I would do it happily because I would know what I was getting out of the deal. In this, Willard chastised me for concerning myself so much with what I was "losing," as that loss was not a loss, but rather an investment in something so much more valuable. What I gained provided proper perspective on what was being lost.

I know what you're thinking. "Yes, but that reward of the Kingdom is some far off, esoteric, incorporeal substance which awaits us in the distant future of our heavenly existence." Maybe that's true, but it's a terribly incomplete picture.

A few nights ago our family read Matthew 19:29 at our mealtime devotions. In that passage, Jesus says, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life." As we reflected on that, especially considering our current situation of feeling like we are without a home in all of our transitions, Willard's chastisement resurfaced in my mind and helped me to see the blessed nature of living in the Kingdom. A statement of Jesus which seemed so utterly false - that we are gaining a hundred times as much as what we're giving up - does indeed end up being profoundly true.

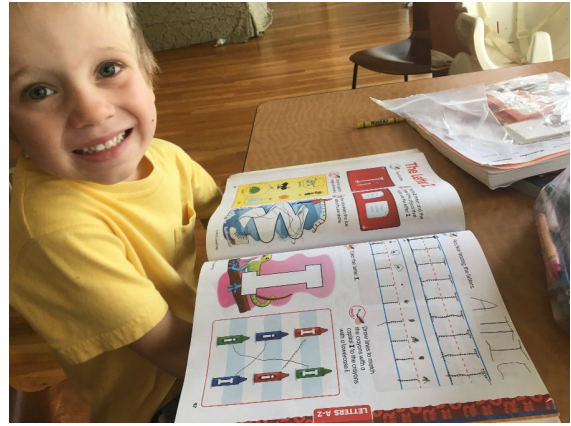
“Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?...whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother [Mt. 12:48-50].” This is one of the most pronounced beauties of the Kingdom we have been able to experience first-hand, in a fashion more pronounced than most have the opportunity to experience it. While bouncing from house to house and place to place makes one feel a sense of deep loss and loneliness at times, it's also a beautiful thing. We have, in a sense, lost our mothers and fathers in our departure to extend to the Kingdom. But we have gained mothers and fathers a hundredfold. And for me, an only child, I now have some sense of what it is like to have brothers and sisters. We have mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters in Romania, in France, in Greece, in Peru, in Georgia, in Pennsylvania, in Texas, in Florida, in South Carolina, in California, and a hundred other places. In fact, those brothers, sisters, and mothers are yours too, you just haven't met most of them yet! We have brothers and sisters who have allowed us to live in their houses, who have provided us with meals, who have given resources to our work, who have reached out to us in our grief, and who have loved us continually. This is one of the treasures you get when you buy into the Kingdom. You may give up your "family," but the whole concept of "family" is deepened and expanded in the Kingdom of the eternally interpersonal, lovingly relational God.

I certainly don't want to glamourize or simplify Kingdom living. We all know that following Christ is difficult, and it does hurt, at times. But I'm not too worried about our ability to muster up this pessimistic sort of thinking, as we so often seek to dwell on the difficult. I'm concerned that we rarely see, experience, or acknowledge the wonders which accompany the work of Christ in our lives, in our community, and in the world. Our Lord not only reigns at the right hand of God now, but he has also secured for us all spiritual blessings in the heavenly realm, he has left us with his Spirit, and he has fashioned us into his body. The one whose work was accompanied by signs and wonders now does a wonder in each of his own so that we can be his hands and feet to a world in need of hope. I can tell you from experience that hopelessness isn't assuaged by any program our churches offer, nor

by any theological insight we may have in response to a difficult question. It's not even assuaged by missionaries or pastors who are so often viewed as the "professionals" out doing God's work. No, the world is in need of real mothers and brothers and sisters - not the kind born of blood, but the ones born again - born of both water and Spirit. It is as the world sees our familial love for each other that they will know we are the disciples of Christ [Jn. 13:35]. And just as Moses, after meeting God face to face, had his countenance shine magnificently to all who saw him, so may it be with those of us who walk with Jesus.

PRAISE AND PRAYER:

- Please continue with us in prayer for our teammates, the [Ebbers](#), as they must creatively find ways to raise support during this pandemic.
- Praise the Lord that Atticus's ear tube surgery was successful. Now we're praying that the holes will close up nicely and that this will be a big help for him and his health whenever we're able to return to Romania.
- On May 15, Romania began loosening their restrictions and went from "State of Emergency" to "State of Alert." However, non-Romanian citizens are still not being allowed into the country, and we've heard that they will be re-evaluating that plan on June 2. PLEASE PRAY that we will be able to get back to Romania by the end of June because we recently found out that the housing we currently has will come to an end on June 30. We are confident that God will provide another place for us to stay if necessary, but the thought of moving AGAIN sounds so miserable. We recently counted that in the past four years, we have lived in 8 different places for at least 30 days. The constant transition and lack of stability is honestly wearing on us. Please pray for our endurance.
- If you remember our Roma friend *Alexa (pseudonym), we'd like to report that she has found our teammates still in Romania and is frequenting their house now. Please pray for our teammates to have wisdom, discernment, and the Lord's love for her.





0:36 -40:56
 art Means Confidence in God A Quiet
 Helps to Holiness — April 25, 2012



Life in the States Update:

We've celebrated a lot this May - Jemma turned six month old and is very close to crawling, Grampa's birthday, Mother's Day, Derek's 35th birthday, and we're looking forward to Elin's 6th birthday on June 2! Otherwise, the past month has been similar to the other months in quarantine, though we've enjoyed getting into a better family routine in our own space. The front porch of the home we're in now is just amazing, and we love spending a lot of time outside with all the wildlife in our area. And Atticus has made sudden, rapid improvement in learning his letters, letter sounds, and writing!

We are very grateful that Atticus was able to have his surgery, and the picture of Derek's PPE for his beard is one of my favorite things from the month of May! haha!!

I've been able to listen to several Elizabeth Elliot lectures on peace, confidence in God, and the Lord's sovereignty in times of crisis. And The Chosen video series have been very encouraging to us in our faith this month. We highly recommend these resources to you! We pray that you have found many moments of peace and encouragement right now, too. Thank you for your continual love and support!



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

04/03/2020 - [Bonhoeffer, Pacifist or Assassin?](#) (podcast) by Derek

05/07/2020 - [Bad Christian Arguments Against Abortion](#) (podcast) by Derek

05/15/2020 - [Economic Pornography and Pet Sins](#) by Derek

05/15/2020 - [The Argument for Abortion Based on Bodily Autonomy](#). (podcast) by Derek

05/22/2020 - [Would You Save 1 Toddler or 1,000 Embryos?](#) (podcast) by Derek

Continuing - [Podcast Series](#) by Derek

Check us out on Facebook! We post on Catalina's ["From Dacula to Transylvania"](#) album or our ["2019-2020 HMA"](#) album so that you can stay up to date with us. You can also follow [our photos on instagram](#) or check out our [video archive](#). But best, of all, you should let us know if you want to join our secret Facebook Group to get more updates!

Support Account Reminders:

- If you're interested in one-time giving and would rather support projects, we have a project account for the Romanian church which goes towards things like the youth program, elder trainings, etc. The account is **#94978** for the Romania church plant.



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