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Sermon Notes

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Paul's Greatest Treasure: Knowing Christ

Philippians 3:7-11

Introduction: The False Treasures of the World

Illus. Helping empty a missionary's storehouse of "treasures"... "gomi" day, TV's, VCRs, furniture, Japanese antiques, rare books, keepsakes... those things were all "priceless" to the owner, but she was leaving Japan in one month, and was selling her house... the new owner of the house wanted all of these things gone within two weeks. What was once treasure had simply become trash

Illus. 1989, Adamstown, Pennsylvania: flea market, a man picked up an odd-looking picture with a dismal, dark-looking country scene... there was nothing attractive about the picture to the man, but the frame was ornately carved and gilded, and the price was right: \$4... so he bought it

When he took it home and tried to get the picture out of the frame, the frame fell apart into many pieces; the man felt he'd wasted his \$4 on a piece of trash... when all of a sudden a document folded to the size of a business envelope fell out... when he opened it up he saw that it was the Declaration of Independence, and assumed it was just one of those many copies that had been mass-produced in 1976 for the bicentennial... until he noticed that it looked different: there were no signatures at the bottom. John Hancock's name was printed there in type like the rest of the document. He folded it back up and kept it in a drawer until two years later he showed it to a friend

The friend urged him to have it appraised, and he contacted Sotheby's in New York.

It turned out to be one of the original press runs of the Declaration of Independence, printed by the Continental Congress on the night of July 4, 1776!! Only twenty-four survived that night, because anyone found with such a document could be hanged for treason. This folded up piece of paper bought for \$4 at a flea market was auctioned for 2.4 million dollars later that year.

So it is that someone's trash can become priceless treasure

It can also be the case that what someone thought was a priceless treasure can be exposed as a forgery... worthless trash

- Between 1915 and 1921 the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired three large terra-cotta statues of Etruscan warriors. They were valued parts of its collections until 1960 when it was discovered that they were fakes. Apparently the black glaze with which they were covered contained manganese,

which was not used as a dye during ancient times. One of the forgers, Alfredo Fioravanti, was found to still be alive. Fioravanti proved that he had created the statues when he produced a thumb that was missing from one of them.

While the difference between trash and treasure materially can be immensely costly and shocking, how much more vital is it concerning **SPIRITUAL MATTERS**... the difference between a spiritual treasure and spiritual trash

Between what is worth selling everything to possess and what is dragging you down to hell, despite its attractive appearance

The world offers many counterfeit treasures: Human esteem and praiseRare and valuable possessions Total net worth in stock and real estate Academic achievements.... Awards from a prestigious academy or agency

How much more do false religious systems offer the treasure of counterfeit righteousness, a false assurance of right standing with God, a forged ticket to heaven.

Too late the person discovers they have been duped and will lose their soul

So it would have been with the Apostle Paul... clinging to the counterfeit treasure of an ambitious religious resume, he was suddenly jarred back to reality by seeing the glory of the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus

Suddenly, what had been immense treasure became utter trash, and what had been despised trash now became unspeakable treasure

I. Review: Paul's False Treasure

A. Paul's False Treasure: Self-Righteousness Through Religious Achievement

Salvation by religious ritual....Salvation by race.... Salvation by rank....Salvation by tradition....Salvation by religious schools....Salvation by zealous sincerity....Salvation by legalistic righteousness

B. Paul's Conversion: Trash Becomes Treasure, and Treasure Becomes Trash

1. What Was Gain Becomes Loss
2. Completely new understanding of personal righteousness

II. Paul Assesses His New Treasure and Rejects His Old

A. Assessing the Worth of Treasure: "I count", "I consider" "I assess it to be"

vs. 7-8 ***But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ***

- **Yard sale:** when you put on a yard sale, you go through all the possessions you are going to sell, and you assess the value of something; you put a price tag on it based on the value you feel it has; professional yard sale connoisseurs then show up early to your sale and move through looking at everything quickly... their discerning eye dismisses most of what you have to offer as trash... But then they stop, pick up some antique jewelry your grandmother gave you and immediately want to buy it at the price you've listed... now you know you've valued something way too lowly

2. Everything has a value

So it is with all things... everything has a value, a price, a worth

Paul had placed ultimate eternal value on his spiritual resume... and considered Christ a blasphemer worthy of death by crucifixion

Now for Paul everything had inverted: he assesses his own spiritual resume as trash, utterly worthless in the light of Christ's resurrection glory; and he assesses Christ Himself as of infinite WORTH

vs. 7-8 ***But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ***

C. Paul's New Value System: All other things WORTHLESS by comparison

Knowing Christ has become the most valuable thing in the universe to Paul... worth losing EVERYTHING in order to obtain

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. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.

Paul had TRASHED his career in Judaism... he could NEVER go back again. He'd burned that bridge for good

Paul had TRASHED his reputation as a Roman citizen... in the end Rome itself would execute Him

Paul had literally suffered the loss of ALL THINGS because of his relentless zeal in pursuing Christ... but it was WORTH IT TO HIM

III. Paul Names His New Treasure: Knowing Christ and Being Found In Him

In place of Paul's previous treasure is something far greater... Christ Himself... a diamond with five facets

NOTE: How astonishing is this... the apostle who had a personal vision of the resurrected Christ on the Road to Damascus, who had been lifted up to the third heaven and had seen unutterable things that no one is permitted to talk about, who had written twelve letters of New Testament scripture with the deepest theology imaginable, who had walked with God through one incredible trial after another... **STILL WANTED ONLY ONE THING: TO KNOW CHRIST!!!** One would think, "If anyone knew Christ it was this Apostle to the Gentiles" but he wasn't satisfied yet! He wanted still more!

That's the way it is with knowing Christ... the ones who know Him best only want to know Him more. The ones who know Him least don't care if they know Him more!

Paul's central treasure: knowing Christ... in five facets: 1) Personal Knowledge ABOUT Christ and OF Christ; 2) Gift of Righteousness through faith in Christ; 3) the Power of Christ's Resurrected Life Inside Him; 4) Fellowship of Christ's Sufferings; 5) Glory Through Christ's Resurrection

A. Facet #1: Personal Knowledge ABOUT Christ and OF Christ

1. Knowing ABOUT Christ just the start

People denigrate "head knowledge" in favor of "heart knowledge"... but ALL heart knowledge begins as head knowledge... it is unspeakably precious to know ABOUT Christ; it's just not enough if that's all there is

- a. I want to know all about you, Christ
- b. I want to know what you taught, all your words... I want to memorize your teachings line by line
- c. I want to know the story of your life... every event, every temptation you resisted, every conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees, every interaction with a humble sinner seeking healing
- d. I want to know all of your miracles, how they demonstrated your character, your love, your compassion, your power over demons
- e. I want to know how you considered it joy to die on the cross for my sins
- f. I want to know why you wept over Jerusalem and at Lazarus's tomb
- g. I want to know why you sweat great drops of blood when you prayed in Gethsemane

- h. I want to know your humility, your love, your gentleness, your tenderness for your sheep
- i. I want to understand how God the Father created all things through you
- j. I want to know how you uphold and sustain all things by the word of your power

I want to know everything about you, Christ... but that's not all

- 2. Knowing Christ like a spouse knows the spouse
- 3. Intimate, personal face to face knowledge is the ultimate goal... that God would reveal Himself fully to Paul through Christ in face to face love relationship

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

- 4. Moses achieved the highest the Old Testament had to give
 - a. Miriam and Aaron jealous of Moses' position of leadership; God put them both in their place

Numbers 12:6-8 he said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. 7 But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. 8 With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

- b. we see this intimate friendship in Exodus 33

Exodus 33:11-23 The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent. 12 Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' 13 If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." 14 The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." 15 Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. 16 How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" 17 And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." 18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." 19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." 21 Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. 22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a

cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

- c. BUT there is still the limitation: you cannot see my face and live
- d. Paul has also seen the glory of God in the resurrected Christ

Acts 22:6-11 "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?' 8 "'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. "'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. 9 My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. 10 "'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. "'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.' 11 My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

Paul had tasted the goodness and power of Christ... He had seen some of His resurrection glory; He had tasted the power and glory of the coming age, and he desperately wanted more. That one vision of Christ transformed everything for Paul... He would never be the same again, nor would his tastes, his desires, his yearnings

"I have tasted Christ... BUT I WANT MORE!! I have known Christ... but I want to know Him MORE!"

B. Facet #2: Gift of Righteousness Through Faith in Christ

vs. 8-9 that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

1. "To be found "in Him"... that's perfect spiritual union; justification through faith alone
2. I want to know what it means to be positionally perfect in Christ
3. I want His robe of righteousness all over me
4. I want to stand in that righteousness on Judgment Day and know that it is HIS and NOT MINE
5. I have rejected forever my own righteousness... it is a positive evil to me, more disgusting than the clothes of a drunkard found in the gutter
6. I want CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS and none other

C. Facet #3: Power of Christ's Resurrected Life Inside Him

vs. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection

1. I want to know the power of Christ's resurrected life in me

Resurrection power over sin and temptation

Resurrection power to serve God mightily with great love and perseverance

2. I want to feel that power in the moment of temptation, proclaiming me dead to sin but alive to God through righteousness
3. I want to feel that power driving me on to a life of total, unqualified service to the Kingdom of God... overcoming my fears, conquering my love of human praise; feeling Christ's resurrection power in me as I preach the gospel in Corinth, overcoming my weakness, fear and much trembling; feeling his resurrection power when I am stoned and left for dead in Lystra
4. I want Christ's resurrection life in my SPIRITUALLY until the day I die, protecting me from sin and evil, overcoming my selfishness, crushing the devil under my feet as I march on in the path of good works which God has laid out for me to do

Ephesians 1:18-21 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

5. But that's not all the power of Christ's resurrection Paul wants to know, as he will make clear in a moment

D. Facet #4: Fellowship of Christ's Sufferings

vs. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death

1. I want to learn how to die... how to die every day to myself and my own desires
2. I want to learn how to suffer joyfully, to be glad to go to the lesser cross of persecution and hardship so that others might have eternal life because Christ went to the greater cross of wrath and atonement
3. I want to know what it means to take up my cross daily and follow Christ

4. I want to know how to suffer each temptation to its fullest extent, not yielding for a moment, just as Christ suffered fully when He was tempted, and felt the weight of each temptation rather than yield for a moment
5. I want to know what it feels like to be rejected and hated and despised and mocked and spat upon and trampled by the world, because my master was so treated and a servant is not above his master
6. I want to know how to suffer like Christ did, who was a “Man of Sorrows and familiar with suffering”
7. What is more, I want to KNOW CHRIST IN HIS SUFFERING... in the context of the suffering, I want to be surprised by joy when He is standing right by my side

Acts 23:11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

2 Timothy 4:16-17 At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.

8. Paul knew what it was like to have an unmistakable sense of Christ's immediate presence during times of immense suffering for the gospel... and to Paul, it was all worth it

I want to know Christ in His suffering, and I want to know Christ in MY suffering for His sake

The central lesson of sanctification: to learn how to die, and to die daily for Christ; to die cheerfully, to die for the joy set before us, to die to self, to die to sin, to die to earthly pursuits, to die

Michael W. Smith, “Too Many Times”

Too many times
 I'm back inside
 Wanting desperately to hide
 Yet I know, I know you say
 You have to die
 Too many times
 You hear my cries
 I'm at the end of all my tries
 So, I'm open Lord, so
 Teach me how to die

Illus. Amy Carmichael, *A Chance to Die* (Elizabeth Elliot's biography) Amy Carmichael was an Irish missionary who spent 53 years in South India without a furlough, rescuing Indian children from degraded temple prostitution. The name of her mission was the *Dohnavur Fellowship*, and if you wanted to serve with her as a missionary, she asked twenty-five simple questions. Among them :

- Do you truly desire to live a crucified life? (This may mean doing very humble things joyfully for His Name's sake)
- Does the thought of hardness draw you or repel you?
- Can you mention any experience you have passed through in your Christian life which brought you into a new discovery of your union with the crucified, risen, and enthroned Lord?
- Brief summary of it all: Do not come unless you can say to the Lord and to us, *The Cross is the attraction...* in other words, do not come unless you view it as **A CHANCE TO DIE**

2 Corinthians 4:10 (Philips) "Every day we experience something of the death of Jesus, so that we may also know the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours."

This has always been the secret to a truly fruitful Christian life... Jesus Himself gave this as a universal spiritual principle:

John 12:24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

Jesus' death on the cross not only is our atonement, our redemption, our salvation... but it is also our example and the way of spiritual fruitfulness and maturity for the rest of our earthly lives... day after day after day:

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.

George Mueller: To one who asked him the secret of his service he said:

"There was a day when I died, *utterly died*;" died to George Mueller, his opinions, preferences, tastes and will-- died to the world, its approval or censure-- died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends-- and since then I have studied only to show myself 'approved unto God."

What day was that? Galatians 2:20 tells us it happened once for all time when he trusted Christ:

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

But from then on, it was up to George Mueller to keep "considering himself dead" to selfish interests... it happened once for all at conversion, but it was made effective daily by reckoning on Mueller's part:

Romans 6:11-12 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Paul wanted deeply to learn the secret of the crucified life... to know Christ in His sufferings

9. Know Suffering, Know Glory; No Suffering, No Glory

- a. without knowing Christ in his suffering, we will never know Him in His glory

Romans 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

- b. Paul doesn't care the cost, the occasion, the pain, the circumstances... all He wants is Christ!!!

E. Facet #5: Glory Through Christ's Resurrection (vs. 11)

Philippians 3:11 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

1. The ultimate goal of perfection in Christ is uppermost in Paul's mind
2. He wants to know Christ in a dirty Philippian jail, and on the bottom of a pile of rocks, and in the middle of a shipwreck, and trampled in a riot, and on the end of a flogging... yes he wants to know Christ in all of that... BUT FOR A PURPOSE
3. He truly wants to share in Christ's resurrection glory!!! He wants to know Christ perfectly in eternity... in a body that will never perish

Philippians 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

4. Paul wants to know Christ in a way Moses never could, nor could any man who was still burdened by the flesh and blood, by these "jars of clay" that are our mortal bodies

1 Corinthians 15:42-45, 48-50 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. 50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with

immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." 55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

Paul's central treasure: knowing Christ... in five facets: 1) Personal Knowledge ABOUT Christ and OF Christ; 2) Gift of Righteousness through faith in Christ; 3) the Power of Christ's Resurrected Life Inside Him; 4) Fellowship of Christ's Sufferings; 5) Glory Through Christ's Resurrection

IV. Application: Some Questions

1. Do you treasure Christ like Paul?
2. Do you have a deep and abiding hunger and thirst to know Christ?
3. Are you willing to study the Bible more and more for a single purpose... to know Christ better
4. Are you willing to live every moment of every day with one single purpose in mind: I want to know Christ, and become like Him more and more?
5. Do you see yourself clothed in Christ's righteousness alone? Have you rejected your own spiritual resume as completely as Paul trashed his? Do you see your own righteousness as trash and Christ as treasure?
6. Have you suffered anything at all or lost anything at all so that you may know Christ better? Is the world dead to you and you to the world?
7. Do you yearn to learn how to die like Christ? To learn the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings? Do you want to become more and more conformed to Him in His death?
8. Have you totally set your heart on the future glory of resurrection with Christ?