

Gems and Real Beauty

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[0 : 00] is Jonathan Clark. I've been with you many times. Most of you should know me by this point, but if you don't, my name is Jonathan. I'm a Presbyterian minister here in Colorado Springs. My calling is to college students with a ministry called Reformed University Fellowship. So I minister mostly at UCCS, but with other places as well. Man, it's always a treat to come and be with you.

I've tracked with Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church for a long time now, and it's so fun to see y'all growing. And I can see you growing in numbers. I can see you growing in knowledge and wonder of the Lord, and it's a delight to come every once in a while and to see you again. So yeah, it's great to be with you. I'm married to my wife, Caroline. We have two little girls, Phoebe. She's five, and Molly. She is eight months almost. If this is your first time, as Matthew said earlier, welcome. We're really, really glad you're here. It is a brave thing to come to a church that's new or you don't know well, even if you've come for a little while.

It's just, I understand it can be strange. It can be awkward. So thanks for taking that brave step. So RUF is Reformed University Fellowship. Y'all as a church are a supporting church.

And let me just say thank you so much for your support over the last years, in particular in the last months. If you get my emails, you've known that the last few weeks or months have been pretty challenging for our work. It's just been blow after blow after blow. And y'all have really supported me in prayer. And so I am so, so grateful. Thank you for that. And please don't stop.

We really need your prayers. To that end, I'll just quickly give a quick update because I know that y'all are interested. RUF is the campus ministry wing of our denomination, the Presbyterian Church.

[1 : 47] And the goal is simple. It's to reach students for Christ. That is to tell them that Jesus loves them in ways that they find compelling and they want to follow him. And to equip them, which is to send them into churches knowing their gifts, knowing how to lead Bible studies, knowing how to serve, knowing how to love one another. And by and large, friends, we're seeing that happen.

I have a student who grew up in a Christian context. And she, when she got to college, was like, I'm just going to go do my own thing and walked away from the faith. And then another friend invited her to RUF earlier this semester. She said, you know, I grew up in the church, but I've left and I want to try this again. I want to try this on again. And she texted me after coming to RUF and meeting with some students, meeting with me. She said, RUF is the first church setting in my life in the Christian community where I've learned it's okay to be broken and not perfect. That is what God is for.

I appreciate you and how much you and RUF have helped me to find God again. And so there's a story of a student who's walking, who was walking away and is saying, actually, no, I think I can follow Jesus or Jesus is actually chasing me. Another story of us equipping students. I was, I've been sick the last week and I texted my student leaders on the night that we were supposed to meet and said, hey guys, you know, I don't want you to get sick. I need rest. Let's just not meet this week.

And then without me knowing it, they got on their own chat thread and said, let's meet without Jonathan because we've got stuff we want to talk about and we've got stuff we need to plan. And so they, without me, put together the plan for a meeting and they got together and they planned RUF. And I was so proud of them and so encouraged because they are, they said, we don't need Jonathan.

And I was like, you're right. You don't need me. You can plan and lead and run this ministry without me. And I, my prayer is that these students, when they graduate, would come to churches and say, we know how to do ministry. Let's get work done. So thank you for your support. Please keep praying.

[3 : 50] Please keep giving. The Lord is at work. Turn with me or scroll with me, however you get to your Bible to Matthew chapter 13, Matthew chapter 13. We'll just be looking at a few verses and I, this is my fault.

I think I texted Matthew, not quite the right verses. We will include verse 46, but we're going to start with verse 44. This is Jesus giving a series of parables where he's talking about the kingdom of God. And the kingdom of God is this great movement, political entity, spiritual reality that Jesus, when he comes to earth, says, this is here because I am here. The kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God is now among you, but it's hard to wrap your head around. And so let me try and describe to you what it is through a series of parables, which are allegorical and analogous word pictures that Jesus describes what the kingdom of God is. And in here, he gives us two similar parables and we will look at them today and see how and what they have to say about the human experience and the kingdom of God and how they apply to our life. And so if you have your Bible or your phone, please look at Matthew 13, verse 44. We'll read through verse 46. This is Jesus speaking.

He says, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. And 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, who on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had and bought it. This is God's word. Would you pray with me? Lord in heaven, we pray now that as we come to your word and peer into things mysterious, things deep, too deep for us to understand that your spirit would be with us to equip and encourage and fortify our hearts and our minds and our hands to faithfully follow you while you tarry, that you would be glorified and we would be conformed to the image of your son. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So a few days ago, while I was, I have, like I said, a five-year-old little girl, she and I went for a walk. We were going for a walk around our neighborhood and we walked past somebody who had done some landscaping on their front yard. Nothing novel.

You've seen this a million times. And there was a particular, some river rock around this landscaping. And she stops and she squats down like little girls will do. And she starts picking through the rocks, digging through the different rocks. And finally, she finds one particular rock and says, this is a good one, daddy. And I go, okay, this rock looks like every other rock in this pile of landscaping. It's gray. It's a river stone. There's nothing much about it. And pretty much like every other river rock you'd ever seen. I said, Phoebe, what makes this rock special?

And she says, I don't know. I just thought this one was pretty and I want to keep this one. And she took and she put it in her little pocket and we kept on walking. And I was thinking as I was, you know, of course, I'm a pastor. So you're always looking for something to talk about on a Sunday morning. And I was like, you know, what she just did there is something that I think a lot of us are probably doing more often than we realize is we're looking for something beautiful. And nobody told her to find that rock. Nobody told her to go, hey, find the rock that's pretty. Nobody told her to stop by something that might look sparkly and find the pretty one here. There was something within her little five-year-old heart that just knew to find the one that was beautiful, to find the one that was pretty, the beautiful rock, right? And I didn't train her to do that. You didn't train her to do that.

[7 : 37] She just knew this intrinsically in her little heart, right? And as I thought on this, I was thinking, you know what? You and I are not that different. You and I may be a little bit more sophisticated. We may get used to a river rock and say, oh, that's, you know, a dime a dozen. But there's still that impulse within our hearts to find, to search for, to perceive, to desire beautiful things. Things that we say, oh, this is valuable uniquely in its own right, or this is better than all the other alternatives out there. We may phase out of looking for river rocks, but I would argue that each person is on the same quest as any four-year-old, which is a search for beautiful things. The search for beautiful things. And our text today confirms that. And it shows us that this is not just some random human trait, but it actually gets to the core of what every single person is looking for in their journey around the blue marble that we call our earthly home. Our text today shows us that every person is searching for something beautiful. And Jesus here tells us and shows us what that beautiful thing is. What the beautiful thing that your heart is looking for. And we'll look at this in three ways today. Three ways. We're going to look at, first, the search for beauty. Second, the value of the beautiful thing. And third, how we respond. So first, the search for beautiful things. Second, the value of the beautiful thing. And third, our response. So let's start here with the search for beautiful things. And so the context, as I've said already, is in Matthew 13. Jesus is telling a series of parable

to describe the kingdom of heaven. Jesus was more interested in the kingdom of heaven than anybody else more often than we are. Jesus was obsessed with saying the kingdom of heaven is now here. That is, with the arrival of Jesus Christ, something new is happening on the world. That is, the realm and reign of God himself has invaded our world in a special, significant way to bring God's whole world, his whole presence, his whole reality to earth in an incredibly significant and special way. The kingdom of heaven is Jesus's term for the coming and present realm and reign of God as he rules and subdues his enemies. As his elect respond to him in faith, we've already talked about effectual calling. And as he brings peace to the whole universe. It's light piercing the universe and at the speed of light invading the whole universe, invading our lives, invading our world with hope and peace. It's water cleaning brokenness. And Jesus describes the kingdom of heaven through parables, which are word pictures that give at different angles or different facets of what the kingdom of heaven is like. And so here we will look at two complimentary word pictures or parables that

Jesus uses, right? And so verse 44, Jesus says, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure in a field. He says the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure in a field, which is waiting to be found. It's valuable, but it's hidden. And it's hidden until someone discovers it. And the second one, he says, the kingdom of heaven is like a man looking for pearls. And in both of these, they're just, it's a slightly different twist on the same idea. In one place, something valuable is hidden. In the other place, someone is looking for something that is hidden. But the idea is the same in both cases, that there is something beautiful out there, something valuable out there that someone is looking for and that is waiting to be found. It's the search for beauty. The right rock is waiting around there, waiting for a four-year-old to pick it up. Or the human heart, our hearts are in this great search for something precious, something beautiful, something of value. And as I think, particularly on the idea of a man or the picture of a man looking for pearls, I think, man, that is, at least for me, what I spend a lot of my time doing. And if you peel back kind of the reasons and the behavior of all the things that I do on a day-to-day week, why do I do the things that I do?

It's because I want to have a sense or I want to find something that is beautiful behind all the things I do, right? Like when we were, while it was snowing so much this week and everything closed down and we all got to wake up because it was, most of us got to wake up and just say, there's no school today, there's a delayed start on work and we just see beautiful snow.

And the peace that we all felt in that moment was a powerful feeling. There's something that we all, I think, pursue. I go on vacations in the mountains or the beach because we want to see something beautiful that we don't get to see very often. Something that transports us to something valuable, right? Or think about the sublime ecstasy of when you first make eye, make and hold eye contact with someone you deeply love. And you say, oh my goodness, this is, this is new. This is beauty. This is a sublime ecstasy that I, this is what my heart has been looking for. Or think about, for me, I love the, I love watching a fire crackle in my fireplace at night and everything just feels at peace, right? Everything just feels like it's the way it's supposed to be.

[13:24] And I'm tired. I've had a hard week, whatever, but there's a fire in the fireplace and some warm tea in my hand and it says, it's okay. This is the moment where it all makes sense, right? Again, the same idea of, I took my daughter to the Natural History Museum in Denver and there's a, there's a particular exhibit where there's full of all kinds of geodes and gems that have been found in Colorado. You've, you've probably seen this and it's particularly fun, again, to go with a toddler because they're so honest. And she just runs from gem geode, gem geode displayed and then it's, daddy, look at this one. This one's green and blue. Daddy, look at this one. It's triangular and red.

And daddy, look at this one. It's so sparkly. And she's just running from gem to gem, display to display, looking for the next beautiful thing. And I would argue that we all do this behind our compulsion for another paycheck, for another accomplishment, for love, for people to praise us is a deep desire to participate in, behold, and have beautiful things.

We are a man searching for a beautiful pearl. He knows it's out there. We know beauty when we see it. And we're looking for it. Now the problem, of course, there's always a problem, is that we live in a world that has two things, that presents two things to us. First, it says you need to diversify your portfolio. And two, it says there's a lot of fakes out there. It says, first, you need to diversify your portfolio. I was talking with my money guy the other day, and I like to dabble in stocks. And I showed him when he's like, bro, we got to broaden your portfolio. You are very exposed.

We got to get you some other ideas. We got to invest you in some banks, all these things. Because if one thing goes wrong, you're in big trouble, right? The world tells us that we need to diversify our portfolios. That is, don't put all your value, don't put all your stock in one thing. Because if that thing tanks, you are in big trouble, right? And we've all experienced this, right? We've found out that sometimes you throw your life into a romantic relationship, and when it goes sour, you're devastated. You are left exposed, deeply exposed. Or any of you have dabbled in money and thrown everything into one thing, or too much of your money into one thing, and the wrong news hits the right, hits the media at the right time, your portfolio is devastated, right? It turns sour, or things turn into be frauds. Money is easily lost.

[15 : 59] Silver tarnishes. And we are taught by the school of hard knocks to hedge our bets, to diversify our heart's beauty portfolio, and to even sometimes numb the desire for beauty. To just say, no, no, no, no, I'm not going to do this. The other thing, the other threat is that there are a lot of rhinestones out there. There's a lot of fake where you can have something that looks really, really beautiful, but it's not real. You can go to a jewelry store and get the test on your diamond and go, oh my gosh, this isn't real. It's just plastic covering up some aluminum foil.

It's not real. It's worthless, right? And so we live with this great tension between, I want, I need to know something beautiful, participate in something beautiful, but also the real threat. If I go all in on something and it goes bad, I am deeply exposed. And what if, maybe if this isn't real, maybe this isn't actually true, valuable beauty, and I'll get really, really hurt. And so we get cynical. We never go in on anything. We don't trust.

We never pursue something all the way. And I find myself here longing for something beautiful, longing for something of true value, but also a little jaded, a little resistant, a little bit sour, right? And our parable today tells us that it starts with the desire for human beauty and the search we have. And yet our all too cynical world and my all too cynical heart says, don't go all in, slow down, don't trust it. And yet here's Jesus saying, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. And then in joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls and who won on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had and bought it. So here's Jesus saying in a world where there's rhinestones and cynicism, the kingdom of heaven is the one thing Jesus says that is a value that you can go all in on. It is the thing that is not fake, is of true value. The thing that your heart, this is the contentious claim of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is the thing that is most valuable. The beauty that you, behind all the other beauties, the value behind all other values that you most need. That is the kingdom of God. Now,

I've grown up in the church my whole life. And when I hear that, I go, eh, I don't know about that. Prove it. What is it about the kingdom of heaven that is this valuable, that is this much beauty that it can persuade me? And so this brings us to our second point, which is the value and the beauty of the kingdom of heaven, the value and the beauty of the kingdom of heaven. What is it about this thing that is so valuable? Well, if you think about it, think about it this way. You are digging in a field someplace over here behind the church. You're digging and all of a sudden you feel thunk and your shovel hits something in you hard and you go, doggone it, another rock. I got to dig this rock out. So you start digging the rock up. You realize, oh my goodness, it's not a rock. It's a chest. Oh my goodness, this chest is something in it. You open it up and your whole life changed in that moment. Everything about your perspective, everything about what you value has changed in a moment. Your whole life has changed in a moment with the wealth beyond your wildest dreams or you're a merchant of pearls and you're shucking oysters and most of them have nothing in it. A couple of them have a couple ugly oysters, but then all of a sudden you crack one open and this is it. This is the oyster that you base your career around. The Greek text says this one is mega valuable. Everything else pales in comparison to this pearl, the one that is in this oyster. The best pearl you've ever seen. And Jesus says something astounding here. He says, this is what the kingdom of heaven is like.

[20 : 19] This is what the kingdom of heaven is like. It's not only that the kingdom of heaven of the Christian faith is true, which it is, not only that the Christian faith is good, which it is, but it's beautiful. It's valuable. Well, what is it about that? Jesus says the kingdom is more valuable than even our wildest imaginations. And this makes me question, what is it? It's two things. It's the beauty of the kingdom and the beauty of the king. The beauty of the kingdom and the beauty of the king. So what is it about the beauty of the kingdom? What is the kingdom of God? Well, we've said

already, but I'll say it again. The kingdom of God is the rule and the reign and the realm where God is recognized for who he is and he is enjoyed for that. He is enjoyed for what he is. It is the space and the place of total peace, of total and complete joy, of purity. And this is so hard for us to understand because we never in our wildest imaginations can even get an inkling of what this is like.

Our imaginations are too small and our best moments are tarnished by sin. And so we have to use parables and stories to understand this. And so I'll use one. I grew up working at a wholesale plant nursery for 14 summers. It was great work. It was hard work. And we pushed carts all day long. And we would load plants and we were outside and we would walk eight to 10 miles a day. And we had dried and cracked hands and we were covered in dirt. And then every Thursday afternoon, we would have wine tasting. And we would go and sit by a pond. And we would drink one or two bottles of wine as a team. And we would eat meat and cheese. And we would laugh about the day. And we would talk about stories about who flipped a cart and what happened. It was shade. It was drink. It was friend.

It was food. And friends, that's about as close to heaven as I can think. After a hard day's work of just resting with friends and drink. It was peace and it was rest. There was no anxiety. There was no to-do list. There was just a full stomach and wine to make the heart glad. That is a tiny piece of what the kingdom of heaven is like. And you have a story that's like that too. Maybe it's a ski retreat. Maybe it's a weekend on the beach. You have that story of peace and tranquility. That is what the kingdom of heaven offers. The kingdom of heaven is a place of total peace. We read about this in Daniel chapter 2 that there's this coming presence and rule and reign of God. It's friends gathered together for eternity in joy and laughter and love. It is a land flowing with milk and honey, which is in the Bible's terms, sweetness and fat put together, which is really all we want, right?

[23 : 16] Sweetness and fat. That's all we really want. And even scripture struggles to describe how glorious the kingdom of heaven is. One of the best places it gives us is in Isaiah 11, when it says that sworn enemies will be friends. Carnivores and herbivores, right? Will rest together.

Sure. I grew up in, I mean, I was a pastor in southern New Mexico for a long time. And if there's anything you know about southern New Mexico, there are thousands of rattlesnakes. Thousands of rattlesnakes. But you know how the kingdom of heaven is described in Isaiah 11? It says a small child will play by the snake's hole. I was terrified in northern, when we lived in southern New Mexico, that my daughter would go toddling around and she would stick her hand in a hole and there would be a rattlesnake there.

In the kingdom of heaven, that will not exist. There will be peace between sworn enemies. Isaiah 11 says that every boot soaked in blood will be burned. In contrast to that, think of the violence and the horrors that we feel exposed to every time we check our phones. Any part of the world of war, of children and women bombed, of oppression, our doorstep and around the globe of corruption, of injustice, of abuse, of trauma piled on trauma, the kingdom of heaven is the promise that all of that is gone forever.

Eradicated from the face of the earth. No more tears. That the promise of total political and economic and racial and gender peace, not just the absence of violence, but the presence of peace.

If that is true, if that is what the kingdom of heaven really offers, it is the most beautiful and valuable thing that we are desperately, all of us, longing for and searching for.

[25 : 05] The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure that our hearts are desperately looking for. It's the hope of all our politics. It's the hope of all our economics. The hope of our social agenda.

The dream of all of our lives. That's what the kingdom of heaven is, Jesus says. But second, it's the beauty of the king. Even if we sought out just the kingdom for what it is, we would still be instrumentalizing or using Jesus for what we could get from him.

Right? And so in that sense, it would just become, the kingdom of heaven would just become another form of consumerism. We would just be using Jesus for what he can give us, which is peace. Which is beautiful, but the kingdom of heaven is more than that.

The kingdom of heaven is peace with our God. It is fellowship with our creator. The real deepest value of the kingdom of heaven is its king, which is Jesus.

It is the delight and the joy and the euphoria of knowing and being known by God. Of being welcomed into, this is the great mystery of the Christian faith, welcomed into the delight and the giving of the Trinity itself.

[26 : 20] And somehow mysteriously, we are brought into that. C.S. Lewis talks about this in *The Weight of Glory*. He talks about the desire for the human soul, that there is a desire within each human soul that is beyond anything that this world can satisfy, that we have desires that nothing on earth can satisfy.

And he talks about this. He says this, We want something which can hardly be put into words, to be unified with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become a part of it.

Friends, that is what is offered in union with Christ, which is the Christian faith, which is the kingdom of God. A miracle of becoming so closely connected to Jesus, that where Jesus starts and we stop is indecipherable.

We are no longer, we are not just citizens of this beautiful, peaceful kingdom, but we are one with beauty and peace himself. I think this is what Peter is getting at when he says, We become partakers of the divine nature.

That is what the Christian faith offers. That is why Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is of this incredible value, because it offers everything that you have been, will be, and ever could desire.

[27 : 41] Everything that you're looking for. And if that's true, friends, then there can only be one response. One response, which brings us to our third point, which is joyfully selling out.

Joyfully selling out. Look at the text again. When the man finds the treasure, in his joy he goes and sells all that he has.

In his joy he goes and sells all that he has. Here's the question. What would it take for you to go and sell literally everything you own?

All that you have so that you can have that one thing. Your house, your home, your clothes, your cars, liquidate your stock portfolio. Everything you have, gone because I want that.

I want that treasure. I want this pearl. He went and sold all that he owned so that he could have of that. The Greek in our text here emphasizes that.

[28 : 47] It says this. Because of the joy or from the joy, out of the joy that he has, he goes and sells everything. He's not begrudging like, man, this is going to be a really good investment.

I don't want to do it. It's going to sting, but I'll do it. No, he says, easy, done, easy choice. Selling everything I have to have that treasure. I need this treasure in my life.

The merchant, when he finds the pearl, sells everything he owns to have that pearl. And here's the reality. When we find something of beauty and of value, we will do anything to get it.

We'll do anything we get it. And to our cynical, diversified little portfolio hearts, this is strange.

Because I just, I struggle to imagine anything so valuable in this world that I would sell out completely.

Head, you know, get rid of all my other bets and just go all in, right? All the chips on the table. This is it. I'm following this, right? A loss of the sake for everything.

[29 : 52] And I ask, what can motivate that? What can motivate our hearts to follow this so recklessly? And the only thing that it can do is beauty. That's the only motivation.

The analogy I can only think of to compare this with is falling in love. Think about all the rash, impulsive, silly things that we do when we fall in love. We'll just say, I'm in. Doesn't matter.

Whatever you want.

Right? And that's why I love this quote. Oh, I left my bulletin down there. On the back of your bulletin, there's this quote by Jonathan Edwards. Read that quote. He says, the only thing that can motivate our hearts is to be moved deeply from within.

That's what it takes is to perceive something so beautiful, to be moved by that thing, by beauty. And friends, this is the power of grace.

The kingdom of heaven is a gift from God. And we call that grace. And Jesus, the king, is grace to us. We don't deserve it. We just don't. And yet he gives himself to us.

[31 : 01] And that grace, that beauty, when your heart encounters that for the first time or for the thousandth time, you sell out. You say, I'm all in. The response is to sell everything.

Perhaps you're here today and you're saying, I don't know what the Christian faith is. Maybe you've grown up in church for your whole life and you're just wondering, what have I been doing all my life? And perhaps you're here for the first time and you're wondering, I'm curious. Hear me say this. The Christian faith is so much more than Jesus died for your sins.

That is the start. That is just the tip of the iceberg. More accurately, the Christian faith is the conviction, the joy that Jesus is ushering a new world ordering of peace and of joy and of celebration and of delight.

And you get to be a part of it. You are welcomed into it. All that your heart has longed for, for as long as you can remember, Jesus offers that to you freely in the kingdom of heaven.

[32 : 05] So come get in on it. Come follow him. Come be a part of that kingdom that he is bringing. Sell all your other assets that you've been looking for and come to the kingdom.

There's a challenge here for those of us who are searching, who are not sure if they believe this, right? And here's the challenge.

If Jesus isn't the most beautiful or compelling thing you've ever seen, then to be honest, you haven't encountered Jesus fully yet. You haven't quite got there yet. And that's okay.

But my exhortation is to press in deeper. Keep going. You can hear persuasive arguments. You can be met by warm and welcoming people in and out of the church. But until you feel yourself caught up into something bigger than you, until you see that this is everything that your heart has ever longed for, until you see the beauty of the kingdom, you're not there.

When you see that Jesus, the king and the savior is more radiant than you ever imagined, then you will say, that is the kingdom of God. And I must be a part of that. That is why we confess effectual calling, where he works in your heart to say, I'm in.

[33 : 14] How would I not be in? We call this irresistible grace. Jesus doesn't strong arm us into the kingdom, but he says, here is beauty on display. And you say, yes, I'm in. I must be a part of this.

For those of us who are Christians, there's also a challenge here, because I would ask you and I would ask myself, what parts of my heart have grown cold to the beauty of the king and the kingdom and want to hold back a little bit?

What parts of your heart are still trying to diversify your portfolio and say, yes, I'll give. I'm in on this Christian thing, but I need to hold this still.

What part of your heart is still a little cynical? What part of your heart is still not sure that the kingdom is all it's cracked up to be?

Is it with your money? Is it with your romantic life or your marriage? Is it with your political position? What is it for you?

[34 : 16] Is it with your recreation? Is it with your education? We all have places in our hearts where we're still trying to find value and beauty and something other than the kingdom of God. And it's not going to measure up.

It will disappoint you. And to those of us, to myself, I would say, go back to the kingdom. Look anew at the value, the beauty of the king and the kingdom and sell out.

For the joy of knowing and being known by God. For the joy of participating and being caught up in what God is doing to save your life and our world.

Sell out. Reexamine the kingdom and the king. I'll finish with this. In the 1800s, there was a natural scientist, a man named Louis Aguiz.

And he was a master of studying the natural world. He did everything. Ecology, geography, geology. But one of his real passions was fish.

[35 : 13] He was an ichthyologist. The story goes that he asked one of his students, a man named Samuel Scudder, to study a fish. And so the student, Scudder, looks at the fish and says, oh, that's easy.

That's a sunfish. I know this fish really well. And he moved on. And Aguiz says to him, he challenges him, he says, well, I know you know what the fish is, but I want you to write a description of the fish. And so the student, Samuel Scudder, he studied the fish for about an hour.

And he studied, he wrote everything he could see about it and waited for his professor, for Louis Aguiz, to return. But Aguiz didn't return all day. He was gone all day. And in fact, he didn't return for an entire week.

He just left this fish on the table for Samuel Scudder to study. And so Samuel Scudder says, well, I'll write us to the challenge. And he made notes for the entire week.

He spent over 100 hours studying this fish. And finally, Aguiz returned. And he says, well, what have you learned? And he says, well, I've learned this.

[36 : 17] And he presents all his notes. And everything that he had learned, and Aguiz just said, that's not right. And left him there and says, go back to it. So Scudder was furious.

And he went back and he studied the fish for 10 hours a day. He threw out all his notes. He poured himself into studying this fish. And after several days, finally, Aguirre comes back in and asks him, do you see it?

And Samuel Scudder in his frustration says, no, I certainly do not. But I see how little I saw before. I certainly do not. But I see how little I saw before.

And this student eventually moves from glancing at the fish to hating the fish to marveling at it. And to saying, this is a specimen that is full of beauty, that is full of intricacy, the detail, the design.

Right? And he says, there's more here than I ever thought. And I must keep looking. I see how little I saw before. And at the risk of sounding irreverent, this is how the kingdom of God is.

[37 : 26] For us to say, I must go back to it again and again and again. I see how little I saw before. To throw out the old notes and to pour ourselves into knowing it more deeply.

The grace of God in your heart and in your life and in our world. The love of God for creating you, for sustaining you. The mercy of God for creating the people of God for you could be sustained and nourished and grow.

The courage of God in sending his son to redeem us at the cost of his son. The sorrow of Christ poured out on the cross so that you would never feel eternal sorrow.

The joy of God being raised from the dead on the third day and saying, the kingdom is now here. Rejoice. Go and examine the kingdom anew this day, the rest of your life.

This is the beauty of Christ, what Jonathan calls the excellencies of Jesus. To satisfy our hearts in every way. Friends, our world will tell you to calcify your heart to beauty or to diversify your portfolio.

[38 : 45] To never go in all up for everything. But our parable today shows us that when you encounter beauty, true beauty, you go all in. Have you encountered that beauty?

Go all in. Dostoevsky in your quote on your bulletin says, beauty will save the world. If you know anything about Dostoevsky, he was a Christian. And he knew that beauty is and comes from the person of Jesus.

Beauty will save the world. Jesus is that beauty. He is the kingdom with us. The pearl of infinite value. And as you see that, when you see that, as you are moved in joy to that, to following him, you'll sell out.

So study that for the first time, for the thousandth time. And then go sell out. To know and love and be loved by your king.

Let me pray for us. Father in heaven, our hearts long, as Lewis says, too little. We satisfy ourselves dabbling with mud pies when there's a full feast.

[39 : 53] We look at phones. We numb ourselves when there's the great excellencies of Jesus on full display. Forgive us for that and give our hearts new and greater courage and diligence to look again into the value of knowing and being known by you.

Of being caught up in the great king and the kingdom that he is bringing. That the value, beauty, delight of Jesus and his kingdom would transfix our hearts, hypnotize us once again.

And that we would serve you with every breath that we have for your glory until you come. And then forevermore after that, it's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.