

PRIORITIES: FIRST THINGS FIRST

Matthew 16:26

By Raymond White

Matthew 16:26 *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Here's a silly little story from ages ago. Most of you won't remember the advertising jingle from the 60's but I think you'll get the punch line anyway.

A man found a magic lamp. He rubbed it and of course a genie appeared and granted him three wishes.

"I know I should wish for heaven," the man reasoned, "but I have three wishes so I'll wish for a million dollars first." Poof! The money was there.

Then he considered his second wish. "I know I should wish for heaven," the man reasoned, "but I still have two wishes and I have to move all this money so I'll wish for a Mercedes Benz." Poof! The Mercedes was there.

As he shoveled the money into the trunk, he reasoned, "I know I should wish for heaven, but, heck, there's no harm taking some time to think about it." So when the money was loaded, he got in the car, started the engine, and drove off towards the bank.

While he was driving, he was so happy about his good fortune that he started singing a happy little song. "Oh, I wish I were an Oscar Meyer wiener!" Poof!

Lots of people are unhappy — many of them, not because they can't get what they want, but because they got exactly what they want, or asked for anyway, and now they are stuck with it. The very thing that they pursued and acquired has become their torment.

How can you avoid that? How can you find happiness that really is happiness and not unhappiness? It's simple, really.

Matthew 6:33 *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

It's just a matter of putting things in the right order. Once you belong to Christ, then you are free to enjoy all the rest of God's blessings. Until then, everything seems pointless because everything *is* pointless.

Jesus asked a simple question, and he expects us to answer: What's the point of gaining the whole world and losing our own soul? This is a great spiritual insight. It is also immensely practical. The words of God offer not only the promise of heaven but also the rules for a happy life. Did God forbid stealing and adultery because he is a cosmic kill-joy? No. He forbids certain things because he knows their cost in terms of human misery, and misery is not what he wants for us. He really wants us to be happy.

How hard is it to decide to spend eternity with God? Should that be a hard decision to make or an easy decision? Just do it. It's no big deal to decide to live in God's will rather than out of his will. But the difference is a very big deal.