

# “Give Me Jesus!”

Responsive Reading: “Give Me Jesus!”<sup>1</sup>

*“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” (Matthew 13:44-46).*

What images come to mind when you hear the words, “hidden treasure”? Do you think of pirates, buried sea chests, and sunken ships? The truth is that people really do find “hidden treasure” from time to time.

One of the most popular television programs these days is the PBS series, *Antiques Roadshow*. The idea of the show is that appraisers from the nation’s leading auction houses travel the country to offer free appraisals of things people have sitting around in their living rooms, bedrooms, attics, and garages.

In 2001, a man from Tucson, Arizona brought in an old blanket that had been in his family for as long as he could remember. He’d simply thrown it over a rocking chair in his bedroom, but decided to take it to the Roadshow when it came to town.

The appraiser told him, “When you walked in with this, I just about died.” The “old blanket” was a Navajo chieftain’s blanket that had been woven in the 1840s. In pristine condition, it was one of the oldest intact Navajo weaves to survive into the twenty-first century, and one of the only ones to exist outside of museum collections. To this day, that blanket remains one of the five most valuable finds ever discovered by the show, easily worth between \$350,000 and \$500,000.<sup>2</sup>

If you follow Major League Baseball, you may have heard of Matt White, who had a rather lack-luster career pitching for several teams across the nation and around the world. In 2007, one of Matt’s aunts needed to sell her fifty acres of land in Massachusetts in order to be able to pay for needed nursing home care. The property was appraised at \$50,000, and he bought the land as a kindness to his aunt.

Matt intended to build a house on the land, and while exploring the property looking for a suitable location, he discovered some interesting outcroppings of stone ledges. Matt brought in a geologist to survey the land, who informed him that the stone was known as “Goshen Stone,” a type of mica highly valued for sidewalks, patios, and other landscaping. The amount of Goshen Stone beneath the surface of this \$50,000 property was valued at about \$2.5 billion, and proceeds from just the first year’s quarrying amounted to more than \$600,000.<sup>3</sup>

In September 2009, British archeologists announced that Terry Herbert, an amateur treasure hunter in Staffordshire, England, had made what is probably the most significant discovery of buried Anglo-Saxon treasure in English history. Herbert made the discovery on July 5, 2009 while using a metal detector to search a friend’s farm for metal objects. What he found was a buried cache of 1,345 gold and silver objects that date back to the seventh century A.D.

The objects were created by metalworkers of the Anglo Saxon tribes that dominated England during that time. Archaeologist Kevin Leahy, who catalogued the find, said, “The quantity of gold is amazing but, more importantly, the craftsmanship is consummate. This was the very best that the Anglo-Saxon metalworkers could do, and they were very good.” Another expert was so excited that he likened the find to the discovery of Tutankhamen’s tomb. Archaeologist Roger Bland, who

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<sup>1</sup> A sermon by Dr. David C. Stancil, delivered at the Columbia Baptist Fellowship in Columbia, Maryland, on February 16, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> [www.dailyfinance.com/2010/09/01/the-antiques-roadshows-five-most-valuable-finds/](http://www.dailyfinance.com/2010/09/01/the-antiques-roadshows-five-most-valuable-finds/)

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matt\\_White\\_\(baseball\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matt_White_(baseball))

managed the excavation, estimated that the find was worth at least a million dollars, noting that “I think wealth of this kind must have belonged to a king.”<sup>4</sup>

As amazing as these stories are, don’t buy your metal detectors yet. I want to talk to you now about another kind of treasure. Jesus described the Kingdom of Heaven in ways very similar to the treasure in these stories, when He told us that “*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*” (Matthew 13:44-46).

Like Matt White and the fellow with the blanket, one of the persons Jesus mentioned found treasure that he hadn’t been looking for; and like Terry Herbert, one of the men Jesus mentioned found treasure for which he had been searching. And in all of these cases, what was found was truly amazing and wonderful, far more than had been hoped for. Here’s one more story:

It was 7:51 a.m. on the morning of Friday, January 12, 2007 when he emerged from the Metro at the L’Enfant Plaza Station and positioned himself against a wall beside a trash basket. By most measures, the man was nondescript—a youngish white guy in jeans, a long-sleeved T-shirt, and a Washington Nationals baseball cap. Removing a violin from its case and placing the open case at his feet, the man threw in a few dollars and pocket change as seed money and began to play.

For the next 45 minutes, Joshua Bell flawlessly played the most difficult and beautiful music ever written for the violin as over 1,000 people streamed by, most hardly taking any notice at all. When it was all over, Joshua had gathered \$32.17.

Do you recognize the violinist’s name? Joshua Bell is acknowledged as the best classical musician in this country, and just three days earlier, he had played to a sold-out Boston Symphony Hall, with the cheap seats going for \$100. He was playing one of the finest Stradivarius violins in the world, valued at more than \$3.5 million . . . and only three people stopped to listen in forty-five minutes . . . for free.<sup>5</sup> I’ll post a link this afternoon so you can watch this amazing event online.

The story of Joshua Bell at L’Enfant Plaza causes me to think of another story: *He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected . . . Like one from whom people hide their faces . . . we held him in low esteem. . . . But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed* (Isaiah 53:2-5).

Joshua Bell’s music had nothing to at all do with our salvation, of course, but with both Joshua and Jesus,<sup>6</sup> the persons in question were traveling incognito, and much more was going on than was apparent to most people who encountered them. When you and I think of Jesus, we probably picture a first-century, blue-collar fellow who was a carpenter by trade and a pretty fair (!) public speaker. We may think of a young man whom the children and the crowds adored, but whom the “powers-that-be” feared and detested. But like Joshua Bell in jeans and a baseball cap, Jesus of Nazareth was far more than what He appeared to be.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/staffordshire/8272058.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/staffordshire/8272058.stm)

<sup>5</sup> Gene Weingarten, “Pearls Before Breakfast,” *The Washington Post*, April 10, 2007.

**Video:** [Joshua Bell Playing in a Washington D.C. Metro Station](#)

<sup>6</sup> “Jesus” is actually the Greek form of the name “Yeshua,” which is a common variant for “Joshua.”

Our responsive reading this morning highlighted some important texts that reveal who Jesus really is, and I want to return to one of them. Hear again these words from Paul: *“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.*

**“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.** And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Colossians 1:15-20).

Although I’m sure that you’re familiar with those words, I wonder how seriously you really take them? While Joshua Bell concealed his identity as the premier classical musician in America so that only those “with ears to hear” would recognize him, Jesus of Nazareth cloaked His unimaginable divine power and glory in human flesh so that only those “with eyes to see” would recognize Him. It would have been sad to pass through L’Enfant Plaza Station that morning and to miss Joshua Bell. It would be infinitely more tragic to pass through life and to miss Jesus.

Duane Litfin, the retired President of Wheaton College, has argued that Jesus of Nazareth, the Second Person of the Godhead, is **“the unifying key to all that humans can know or understand, such that in the end nothing can be adequately grasped apart from Him.”**<sup>7</sup> Writing about Christian higher education, Litfin pointed out that “Christ-centered education does not merely *arrive* at truth claims; it *begins* with them, and with the most staggering truth claims at that. We claim that Jesus Christ is the Truth (John 14:6).

“As the great *Logos* of the universe, He is the very embodiment of Truth in every way. We *begin* with the claim that Jesus Christ stands at the core of all we can know, and follow with an insistence that we cannot grasp anything aright apart from Him. Thus the Christian thinker’s ultimate task is nothing less or other than to seek out the meaning of the Lordship of Jesus Christ for every dimension of human experience, throughout every discipline.”<sup>8</sup>

“From a biblical standpoint,” Litfin continued, **“human language can scarcely craft a more profound declaration than this one: *Jesus Christ is Lord.* . . .** What do we mean by the Lordship of Christ? We mean that He is:

- The **Creator** of All Things;
- The **Sustainer** of all Things (such that the entire created order is contingent upon Him and Him alone at every point and in every moment); we mean that He is
- The **Goal** of All Things;
- The **Redeemer** of All Things; and
- The **Judge** of All Things.

All of this is what Paul has in mind when he informs us that the central affirmation of the Christian is *“Jesus is Lord”* (1 Corinthians 12:3). It is an outrageous claim—unless it is true. **But if it is true, as Christians affirm, then it means that the person of Jesus is utterly central to all that humans can know or experience. It means that there is nothing imaginable that is**

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<sup>7</sup> Duane Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> Litfin, p. 66.

**irrelevant to Him or to which He is irrelevant. It means that there is no quarter of human learning in which He is not the central figure.**<sup>9</sup>

The truth of the matter is that if we're really serious about Jesus being "Lord of All," then **we're saying that having a relationship with Jesus of Nazareth is crucial to the true understanding of anything**, whether it be the chemical processes of algae growth, the proper methodology for interpreting Babylonian pottery shards, or understanding the kinship patterns of our hunter-gatherer ancestors. Pick your topic. Jesus is the Key.<sup>10</sup>

Instead of pursuing a compartmentalized life—science during Monday-Friday in the lab, faith and worship on Sunday at church—the Christian scholar/scientist experiences a profound unity, an integrated wholeness where the business of science and the practice of worship come together, each enhancing the other. In the profound unity of such learning and discovery, we begin to "move beyond the study of the things in themselves and to begin to discern, however dimly, their true meaning and significance in the universe."<sup>11</sup> In the profound unity of such learning and discovery, we experience what Arthur Holmes called "**doxological learning**,"<sup>12</sup> in which the very chemicals and processes and stars we study are seen to be Christ's own handiwork, and, if we allow them to do so, they will declare to us His glory (Psalm 19:1).

Why were the disciples so astonished when they watched Jesus still the storm (Mark 4:35-41)? These men were knowledgeable observers of wind and waves, having studied them all their lives. When they looked at each other in terrified astonishment and asked, "**Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!**" (Mark 4:41), they gained a new, "Christ-centered" understanding of reality that changed their worlds from that moment on.<sup>13</sup> They were being introduced to unseen realities that were—and *are*—far more Real than anything we can observe or measure in a lab.

And this brings us to a key epistemological truth. Epistemology is the study of how we know what we know, and while the wonders of science are strong on measurements, they are helpless before questions of meaning. Meaning in the ultimate sense can only come from the Creator's self-disclosures of personality and purpose, disclosures we generally refer to as "revelation."

When Paul wrote about "*things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities*" (Colossians 1:16), he was writing about things that are truly Real, but of which we have absolutely no knowledge unless God chooses to reveal it to us. But happily, through Scripture, God has told us what we need to know about such things. Through God's self-revelation in the Bible, we learn what things look like from the perspective of heaven. We learn what we otherwise could never know, namely, how things appear to God. Through the Bible, we are given "a view from above expressed in language from below."<sup>14</sup>

This is why serious study of the Bible is not an optional activity for those who would follow Jesus. As God's special revelation, the Bible provides us our starting point: the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Bible is the source of our knowledge that this nondescript Galilean carpenter is

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<sup>9</sup> Litfin, pp. 38-44.

<sup>10</sup> Litfin, p. 164.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Litfin, pp. 160-161.

<sup>14</sup> Darrell Bock, *Purpose-Directed Theology: Getting Our Priorities Right in Evangelical Controversies* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), p. 31; Litfin, pp. 182-183.

actually “the central person of the Bible and of the universe, the key to understanding all of existence and the lodestar for all our learning.”<sup>15</sup>

“In the end,” Dr. Litfin writes, “we must stand or fall before Jesus Christ. It is infinitely more important to please Him than to satisfy [any other demands placed upon us in this life]. . . . Jesus Christ is a scandalous stone of stumbling to the world. The all-encompassing nature of the Bible’s claims for Jesus renders Him [absolutely] unique. He is not merely one Lord, one Savior, among many; He is the singular Sovereign of the universe, the only-begotten Son of the Father, the once-for-all God-man. If He is truly the universe’s Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, the very Goal of all things, then there can be no other.”<sup>16</sup>

This is our faith, nurtured through study of Scripture but anchored in personal experience of and relationship with One far, far greater than the violinist at L’Enfant Station, One whom to know is a Treasure greater than Tutankhamen’s tomb a thousand times over. And it is for these reasons that you and I can sing today, together with the resurrected saints from years gone by, who were enslaved in body but not in spirit,

In the morning, when I rise,  
In the morning, when I rise,  
In the morning, when I rise,  
Give me Jesus.

Give me Jesus,  
Give me Jesus.

**You can have all this world,  
Just give me Jesus!**

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<sup>15</sup> Litfin, p. 200.

<sup>16</sup> Litfin, pp. 78, 81.

# Give Me Jesus!

Leader: *“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.”* (Philippians 3:7-8a).

People: ***“I consider them garbage, 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 on the basis of faith”*** (Philippians 3:8b-9).

Leader: *“I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead”* (Philippians 3:10-11).

People: ***“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him”*** (Colossians 1:15-16).

Leader: *“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross”* (Colossians 1:17-20).

People: ***“Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?’”*** (Revelation 5:1-2).

Leader: *And then all the hosts of heaven “sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth”* (Revelation 5:9-10).

People: ***“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”*** (Revelation 5:12).

Together: The Word of God for the People of God.  
**Thanks be to God!**