

### Which is more valuable, Harry or the deer?

Some friends who went deer-hunting separated into pairs for the day. That night one hunter returned alone, staggering under an eight-point deer. "Where's Harry?" asked another hunter. "Oh, he fainted a couple of miles up on the trail," Harry's partner answered. "And you left him lying there all alone and carried the deer back?" "A tough call," said the hunter, "but I figure no one's going to steal Harry." — Our Scripture for this Sunday is about discerning and choosing the right path and course of action at the right time, so that we may fully receive and freely share the love of Christ and so inherit the kingdom of God, a treasure everyone is invited to possess and warned not to lose. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

### The Choice

She married a man she loved but, early on in the marriage, she was too immature to responsibly carry her part of the relationship. One night she went to a party with her husband, drank too much, and left the party with another man. Eventually she sobered up and repentantly found her way home, fully expecting the marital skies to be ripped asunder with anger. But her husband though hurt and shaken by what had happened was calm, philosophical, direct.

When she walked sheepishly into the room he demanded neither an explanation nor an apology. Ultimately, what is there to say? He simply said to her: "I'm going away for a few days so that you can be alone because you need to decide who you are: are you a married woman or are you something else?" He took a three-day sabbatical from her, she cried, sorted out the question he had put to her, and now, years beyond this painful incident, she is inside a solid marriage and infinitely more aware that the pearl of great price comes precisely at a great price.

Every choice is a renunciation. Thomas Aquinas said that, and it helps explain why we struggle so painfully to make clear choices. We want the right things, but we want other things too. Yet every choice is a series of renunciations. If I marry one person, I cannot marry anyone else; if I live in one place, I cannot live anywhere else; if I choose a certain career, that excludes many other careers; if I have this, then I cannot have that. The list could go on indefinitely. To choose one thing is to renounce others. That's the nature of choice.

In most areas of our lives we do not feel this so painfully. We choose and there isn't a lot of sting to the loss. **But the area of love is more sensitive.** Here we feel the **sting of loss more strongly** and here we often find it hard to accept the real limits of life. What are those limits? They are the limits that come with **being an infinite spirit in a finite world.**

That's what makes love difficult. We are over-charged in our own lives. We have divine fire inside us, want everything, yearn for the whole world, and yet, at a point, have to commit to one particular person, at one particular place, and in one very particular life, with all the limits that imposes. Infinite desire limited by a finite choice, such is the nature of real life and love.

Life and love, beyond the abstract and beyond the grandiosity of our own daydreams, involve hard, painful renunciation. But it is precisely that very renunciation that helps us grow up and makes our lives real in a way that our daydreams don't.

In trying to explain some of the deeper secrets of life, Jesus gives us this parable: the kingdom of God is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he finds a single one of great value, he goes and sells all that he owns and buys that pearl. That, the pearl of great price, the value of love and its cost, is in essence the challenge which the young husband put to his wife when he told her to sort out the question, "are you a married woman or are you something else?"

For what are you willing to renounce other things? What is our own pearl of great price? Are we willing to give up everything in exchange for it? Are we willing to live with its limits? Until we are clear on these questions there is forever the danger that, like the wife who left the party without her husband, we will act out in dangerous and hurtful ways. By Ron Rolheiser

### **"No price too high."**

A story is told of a wealthy socialite who traveled to Europe with several friends. Her husband stayed home and played the stock market. While in Paris she found a fur coat that was the most beautiful she had ever seen. She sent a telegram to her husband that said, "Have found the perfect coat for only \$50,000. What do you think?" He responded immediately with a telegram saying, "No, price too high." Imagine his surprise when she returned home with that \$50,000 coat. The angry husband said, "Didn't you get my telegram?" "Yes," she said, "and here it is." The husband had forgotten to put a period after the NO. But with life in the Kingdom, when through Jesus you catch a glimpse of how wonderful life is in the Kingdom, YES, there really is no price too high to pay for it. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

### **"You will be both glad and sorry."**

There is an ancient legend about some men who were on a long journey. They came across a great desert and rode into a wilderness area. At sundown they came to a river. They got off their horses and knelt down by the river to drink water. Suddenly a voice spoke to them. The voice said, "Fill your pockets up with pebbles from along the river. And tomorrow you will be both glad and sorry." So, they did what the voice commanded. They got on their horses and rode away. On through the night they rode. Finally, the sun began to peek over the horizon. They stopped and reached into their pockets and there they found diamonds and rubies. They held a treasure in their hands, and they were both glad and sorry. They were glad they had it, but they were sorry because they had not taken more. [T. Cecil Myers, *Faith for a Time of Storm* (Abingdon Press: New York and Nashville, 1963), p. 91.]

The Good News for us is we can have all we want of the treasure of God's Kingdom; all we are willing to take. If we will take that treasure, we will learn it is the discovery of a lifetime. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).