

Sermon: The Greater Reward

Text: Revelation 2:8-11

Discussion Questions:

A story that has captured my heart like perhaps none other is the account of five men who gave their lives trying to share the gospel with a remote group of people in the Ecuadorian jungles back in the 1950's. The man who led these efforts was Jim Elliot. Elliot graduated from Wheaton College in 1949, and had a burning passion to share the Good News of the Gospel with those who had never heard. This passion eventually led him to Quito, Ecuador, where he learned of a tribe of people who were clouded in spiritual darkness and refused contact with the "outside" world.

Along with four other young men, Jim Elliot began several years of extensive preparations to make inroads with this remote tribe of people. He met a young woman named Daymua who several years earlier had left the tribe, and explained the struggles of her fellow tribesmen. Elliot's heart BURNED with passion for these dear people—people that Jesus had died on the cross to save.

The story is fascinating, and takes many twists and turns (a good re-telling is the movie "End of the Spear", 2005). It culminates on January 8, 1956, when five or six young men from the tribe emerged from the jungle and speared to death Jim and his four friends on the riverbank where the missionaries had made camp.

But the story doesn't end there. Not even close. One of the most widely circulated magazines of the day called "LIFE" highlighted the story, complete with pictures of the river where the deaths took place. Jim's widow, Elisabeth Elliot, wrote a detailed account in a book called "Through Gates of Splendor." Millions and millions of people around the world learned of what happened, and untold thousands of people gave their lives to missions work around the world. Elisabeth Elliot and several other relatives journeyed back into the jungle, and eventually lived side-by-side with the very men who killed their loved ones. Eventually, many from the tribe opened their heart to the Good News of God's Word, and gave their lives to Christ. The story goes on and on—powerfully impacting people to this very day (including YOU by simply reading this!).

In the wake of all of these things, Jim Elliot's journal that he kept as a student at Wheaton College in the late '40's was made available and published. In one small entry on October 28, 1949, a 22-year-old Elliot wrote these simple words: ***"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."***

- Have you ever heard this quote?
- What do you think Jim Elliot was talking about when he said this?
- It's interesting that he uses the word "fool." When people read the LIFE magazine article detailing how five bright and gifted young men in the prime of their lives were senselessly speared to death, how many thought these men were "fools"?
- What did these men give (that they couldn't keep)? What did they gain (that they couldn't lose)? Which was of greater value—the thing lost or the thing gained?

Examination:

- Read **Matthew 13:44-45**
 - Jesus tells two very simple and short stories. One is about a treasure hidden in a field—the other is about a priceless pearl. In the stories, Jesus compares these two things to “the kingdom of heaven.” What do you think Jesus means by this? What do you think is “the kingdom of heaven”?
 - When the treasure and the pearl are found, how does the person respond? What does the finder do once he or she realizes what they’ve found?
 - The finder goes and sells “everything they had.” Think about that for a minute. What would that include? What would motivate a person to literally sell EVERYTHING in order to go and purchase something else?
 - Was the person a “fool” for doing this?
 - Is this an example of “giving up that which we cannot keep” to gain “that which we can never lose”?

- Read **Revelation 2:8-11**
 - This letter is being addressed to the church in a place called Smyrna. Included in this city name is the word “myrrh.” What do you know about myrrh? Do a little research—what was myrrh used for?
 - According to verse 8, who is it that is writing this letter?
 - Jesus is the one who “died and came to life again.” We refer to this as “the resurrection.” Jesus literally faced death, He endured it, and then He came back to life again on the other side. Why is this important for us to understand? What is so important about the resurrection? Why do you think Jesus is pointing this out about Himself?
 - In verse 9, Jesus tells the believers in Smyrna that He knows two things about them—what are these two things? And yet Jesus tells them that they are “rich.” How can this be? What does He mean by this? How are they “rich”?
 - The believers are being “slandered.” By whom? It doesn’t seem likely that Jesus is talking about these Jews in an ethnic sense—you are either a Jew or you are not. He seems, rather, to be referring to Jews in a spiritual sense. Read **Romans 2:28-29** and **Romans 9:6-8**, and discuss how these verses apply to our text here in Revelation 2:9.
 - The phrase “synagogue of Satan” is strong! What do you think this means?
 - Verse 10 describes the persecution that the people in Smyrna are going to face. Where will this persecution come from? What will they have to endure? Does Jesus promise to save them from death? What DOES Jesus promise them?
 - Talk about what you think the “victor’s crown” means? Is this a real thing? How valuable is this crown? When does a person receive this?
 - Verse 11 talks about a “second death.” What is this second death? How does a person escape this second death?

Application:

Meditate on Jim Elliot’s quote this week. Do you agree with him? Do you believe heaven is real? Are you being “foolish” by holding on too tightly to things that you can never really keep?