

# I'D RATHER HAVE JESUS

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## Psalms 11:4–5

Ancient Jewish rabbinical tradition is laced with stories and legends aimed at communicating the supreme value of devoting one's life to the study of the Law (Torah). The second-century Rabbi Jose, son of Kisma, was once walking by the roadside when he met a man who greeted him and asked where he was coming from. "I come from a great city of sages and scribes," replied Rabbi Jose. The greeter offered the rabbi a thousand golden dinars and precious stones and pearls if he would be willing to dwell with him and his people in his village. Without missing a beat, the rabbi said, "Even if you were to give me all the silver and gold and precious stones and pearls in the world, I would not dwell anywhere but in a home of the Torah."

The rabbis of old regarded the Torah as the ultimate treasure because it allowed them to draw closer to God and commune with Him. As such, they would not give up their study of the Torah for any amount of wealth. Jesus appealed to this Jewish understanding of the importance of the Torah to impress upon His hearers that the kingdom of God, contained within the Torah, is the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:44–45). Whether one stumbles upon the kingdom of God by chance (Matt. 13:44) or at the end of a long and diligent search (Matt. 13:45), it is worthy of our utmost sacrifice and devotion. Jesus' point is that the salvation that He offers to us freely by His sovereign will and grace, which is hidden from many people, is priceless. It outranks all the pearls that the world can offer to us.

The Torah points to Jesus the Messiah and His redemptive work in history. On the road to Emmaus, the risen Christ met with two disciples who were discouraged and in a state of despair. Jesus expounded to them how the Law (Torah), the Prophets, and the Scriptures all point to Him (Luke 24:27). The apostle Paul wrote, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4). In fact, everyone who is in Christ and is led by the Holy Spirit stands before a holy God as having fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law (Rom. 8:4). The reason is that only Jesus fulfilled all the demands of the Law and lived a sinless life (Matt. 5:17; John 8:46).

When Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, his priorities became inverted. What was once important to him no longer held any charm in life. As a result, he made it his singular goal to know Christ, experience the power that raised Him from the dead, and suffer with Him (Phil. 3:10). Paul was willing to disown and disavow all earthly pearls to possess Christ. He wrote, "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:7–8).

Is it your primary aim in life to know Christ? How precious is He to you? Recently, a dear missionary friend of mine, who had spent four decades of his life ministering to the people of a western African country, wrote to me: "The golden years for me are not golden, but the gold is in the hope of and joy of soon seeing Jesus. I am content with the hope He has given me." Are you content with Jesus alone? Or do you seek your satisfaction in the things of this world? Are you prepared to sacrifice your security, safety, comfort, and other earthly possessions to know and follow Christ?

God is looking for people who seek after Him without any reservation and in unconditional obedience. The Quaker theologian Meister Eckhart wrote: “There are plenty to follow our Lord half-way, but not the other half. They will give up possessions, friends, and honors, but it touches them too closely to disown themselves.” Our willingness to disown ourselves is the price of entry into the kingdom of God.

The late George Beverly Shea, America’s beloved Gospel singer, put to music the words penned by Rhea F. Miller entitled, “I’d rather have Jesus,” and sang it to millions around the world. In the song, Mr. Shea states that he’d rather have Jesus than anything this world can offer to him.

Here is my humble rendition of [TD RATHER HAVE JESUS](#). I hope this familiar song will be a blessing to you.