

YOU ARE WORTH MORE THAN A HARLEY

The following story comes from Ron Mehl's excellent book, *Meeting God At a Dead End*. Bob loved garage sales. He was just getting ready to leave his last one for the day when he saw something that caught his eye. It was partially hidden underneath a tablecloth and an old comforter. Nevertheless, the shape was unmistakable, it was a motorcycle. As he lifted the covers, he could immediately tell that it was an old Harley.

Obviously it wasn't part of the garage sale, and that piqued Bob's interest. "Is the bike for sale?" he asked the homeowner.

The man shrugged. "Well... don't rightly see why not. The wife says it's all got to go. But I'll warn ya. That bike hasn't run since I've had it. Motor's sized up. Won't turn over. Could probably buy yourself a new one with what it would cost to fix up that old thing.

Bob nodded patiently. "All the same, how much do you want for it?"

"I'm sure they'd give me thirty-five bucks for the metal at the scrap yard. How does that sound?"

Bob looked at the rusty old heap. What would his wife say if he brought it home? But still... to a practiced eye, it had potential. Even if it didn't run, he could get it shined up as a conversation piece. And he could surely sell it again for more than thirty-five dollars. Parts alone would be worth more than that.

"Okay," he said, "I'll take it. Can I pick it up tomorrow?"

Shortly thereafter the old Harley was occupying space in Bob's garage. After a few weeks of procrastinating, he finally got around to calling Harley-Davidson, just to see what a few of the major parts for restoration would run him. He corrected with someone on the parts line and asked a few questions.

"Why don't you give me the serial number," the dealer said.

Bob gave him the number.

"Hold on just a second while I look it up."

Bob waited on hold, listening to a sixties rock station piped into the receiver.

After what seemed an inordinately long time, the parts man returned to the line. Somehow this time though, his voice seemed to be a little different. Strange. Self-conscious. Like something was up.

"Uh, sir...I'm going to have to call you back, okay? Could I get your full name, address, and phone number, please?"

Why does he need my name and address? Bob wondered. But then again, what was the harm? It was no big deal. He'd probably end up on some motorcycle mailing list. Bob gave the man what he wanted and hung up.

After a few minutes, however, he found himself getting nervous. He regretted giving information about himself over the phone. What if the bike had been involved in a crime of some sort? What if drugs were involved -- or murder? What if the bike was stolen? Was he in danger of prosecution? Maybe the police were already on their way -- or a Hell's Angel, ready to reclaim his bike and rearrange Bob's face.

Bob sweated for a couple of days without hearing back from Harley. But just as his worries were beginning to subside, the phone rang. This time, however, it wasn't the parts man; Bob found himself talking to a Harley executive. The man seemed overly friendly, making Bob feel even more uneasy.

"Listen, Bob, this is important" the man said. "I want you to do something for me, okay?"

"Umm. Well, I guess."

"Bob, I want you just to set the receiver down -- don't hand up...."

We'll come back to this story in a few minutes.

WHAT ARE YOU WORTH? If you were up for auction, what would some knowledgeable person pay for you? As luck would have it, we have the answer to that question. 1 Corinthians 7:23 (*The New Living Translation*) tells us that **“God purchased you at a high price....”** For the next few minutes, I want us to look at the price that He paid for you and me.

1. HE GAVE HIS LOVE; HIS GREAT AND AWESOME LOVE

John 15:13 declares, **“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”** *The Amplified Bible* says it this way, **“No one has greater love -- no one has shown stronger affection -- than to lay down (give up) his own life for his friends.”**

Think of the phrase, **“No greater love....”** That is the measure that God Himself set.

- Ellen Goodman is a newspaper columnist. A while back she noted that this is the “love carefully era.”
- Moishe Rosen, formerly of Jews For Jesus, once noted: “I have an imaginary Rosen Poll that I conduct every once in a while to “prove notions for which there is no factual information. My latest Rosen Public Opinion Poll on love found that 92% of the population would rather receive love than give it; 7% were uncertain; and 1% said that they gave at the office.”

So often today love comes without commitment and with conditions. Again, it is the love carefully era.

Not so with God. He doesn't know the meaning of loving carefully.

- He loved all the way to the Cross;
- He loved us in sacrifice;
- He held nothing back;
- He literally loved humanity to death!

Romans 5:8 notes, **“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ DIED for us.”**

Yes, there were easier ways to show love:

- He healed the sick,
- Raised the dead,
- Fed the hungry,
- Blessed little children,
- The Bible says that He went about doing good.

However, merely doing good wasn't enough. It was going to take more than a boy scout to redeem mankind, it was going to take a Savior!

Again, the measure had been set: **“NO GREATER LOVE....”**

- That was it!
- Anything less wouldn't work.
- It would be too cheap.

No, Jesus loved us in the greatest possible way to the greatest possible extent!

And I remind you, He did all of this **“While we were yet sinners.”**

The love of God is greater far
 Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
 It goes beyond the highest star,
 And reaches to the lowest hell;
 The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
 God gave His Son to win;
 His erring child He reconciled,
 And pardoned from his sin.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
 And were the skies of parchment made,
 Were every stalk on earth a quill,
 And every man a scribe by trade;
 To write the love of God above
 Would drain the ocean dry;
 Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
 Tho stretched from sky to sky.

Oh love of God,
 how rich and pure!
 How measureless and strong!
 It shall forever more endure,
 The saints and angels song.

Think with me of the people that Jesus ministered to during His time here on earth. Does anything strike you about those folks? With but few exceptions, they were people who would not be accepted in many of our churches across America this morning. Let's look at the list:

- The lepers,
- The blind beggars,
- The morally challenged (the woman taken in adultery, the harlot, the woman who was living with a man even though they were unmarried),
- A less than ethical tax collector,
- The demon possessed,
- The poor, hungry and unemployed,
- The diseased and unclean.

These were the very ones that society and even the religious circles turned away and yet like iron shavings are drawn to a magnet, so it was that these people were drawn to Jesus. They were drawn by His love. They felt His acceptance. When they were around Him, they felt new worth.

I was raised in poverty. I truly know what it is like to be in want. No doubt to some people, I was considered a less than desirable person. When I accepted Jesus, just to be honest, I was not all that moved by His miracles, His great healings, or even His wonderful teachings.

- The thing that struck me was that God Almighty loved me, "a sinner, condemned, unclean."
- He saw something of value in me.
- He wanted me for His own! Wow!

The thought still boggles my mind! I was one of those who was drawn by His love, drawn by His mercy, drawn by His grace!

Someone supposedly asked Daniel Webster what was the most profound truth in the world. Perhaps they thought this very learned man would try to impress them with his excellent vocabulary, amaze them with his vast linguistic knowledge, or blow them away with some great scientific truth. Instead Mr. Webster simply answered, "The greatest truth in all the world is this: 'Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.'"

That was it. That is it! There is no greater truth than the fact of God's love for you and me. A love so great that God would simply call it "**no greater love**" love.

2. **NEXT, PLEASE NOTICE THAT HE GAVE HIS SON**

Would you please take out a piece of scrap paper? I want you to write down the amount that you would pay for the following items. By the way, they are used. I know that I will not be giving you much detail. However, I am giving you all of the detail that I have. Ready?

- An oak rocking chair (What would you pay for a used one?)
- A golf putter
- A triple-strand, simulated pearl necklace
- A brass studded leather-covered storage trunk
- Two candlesticks
- 3 cushions

Now, what did you put down for the price of the **CHAIR**? How about \$453,500? That is how much one sold for in an auction back in the late nineties.

- Chicago's James F. Heinz paid \$65,750 for a **GOLF PUTTER** in the same auction.
- **THE NECKLACE?** It sold for \$211,500. (It was worth \$700)
- **THE BRASS STUDED LEATHER-COVERED STORAGE TRUNK** was worth between \$600-\$800. However, it went for \$21,850
- The **TWO CANDLESTICKS** were very nice. Again they were used and quite old though. Nevertheless they sold for \$40,250
- Finally, **THE 3 CUSHIONS** (estimated value \$50-\$100) went for an amazing \$25,300.

Did anyone price them right? Why then did they go for so much money? Well, you see, each of these items were sold as a part of the estate sale of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. These things had belonged to her and her late husband, President John F. Kennedy.

The worth of an item, any item, is relative to the value that another person places on it. While I would never think of paying nearly half a million dollars for a rocking chair, someone else did and they are no doubt delighted that they got the chair for that price. Some of the people at the auction said money was never a factor. They were going to bid until they got what they wanted regardless.

And yet, as willing as these folks were to part with their money, I can assure you, they did have a limit on what they would have spent. What if the auctioneer would have required not money but one's own child in exchange for the candle sticks or the pearl necklace? Money is one thing, but one's own child is an entirely different matter. I think everyone there would have drawn the line and said, "hey, wait a minute that is not fair. That is just too expensive."

Agreed?

It would be expensive. And yet that is the very price that God paid to purchase each one of us from off of the auction block of sin. He gave His Son, His one and only Son; His only begotten Son, His precious Son! 1 Corinthians 6:20 (*Weymonth's translation*) therefore notes, **"...for you have been redeemed at infinite cost."**

He did this **BEFORE** any one of us were ever born:

- Before we ever did one good deed,
- Before we ever gave one dime to a church,
- Before we ever attended one church service,
- Before we ever breathed one prayer,
- Before we ever confessed one sin,
- Before, before, before! You fill in the blanks!

Back in 1997 I went to Romania to minister. One of the many things that stands out in my mind from the trip is the number of street children that I saw in Bucharest. I understand that there are literally thousands of these kids on the streets at any one time. I particularly remember seeing two of them, probably seven or eight years old, begging from a busy sidewalk in the heart of the business district. They were very dirty. I still remember that they were begging with one hand and eating an equally dirty apple with the other. It is therefore no wonder that such kids are diseased and lice ridden. It is a proven fact that they have been abused both physically and sexually, even by the local police. They are looked on as being worthless; as being nothing more than human trash.

What would one of these children be worth? Interestingly enough, God paid the same price to purchase one of these street children in Romania, these nobodies, as He paid for you and me; as He paid for Billy Graham.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" period! Hebrews 10:10 teaches us that He paid one price **"once for all."**

Listen to the emphasis found in these verses of Scripture:

- Acts 10:34 **"Then Peter began to speak: 'I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism....'"**
- Romans 2:11, **"For God does not show favoritism."**
- Ephesians 6:9 **"...There is no favoritism with him."**
- Colossians 3:25 **"The Lord treats everyone the same."**
- 1 Peter 1:17 **"Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism."**

Do you get the point?

Many people in America have the mistaken idea that the rich, the successful, the famous person is of far greater worth than is a poor person. God doesn't buy into that though. He does not play favorites. Again, He paid one price **"once for all"** -- His only begotten Son Jesus!

Perhaps you came here today feeling somewhat low about yourself.

- Maybe you didn't have a decent dress to wear,
- A nice suit or sport coat,
- Perhaps you are feeling alone and unloved.
- Maybe you are even wondering what in the world you are doing here in the first place.

Have I just described you? If so, listen closely. God looks over the banister of heaven today and He sees something in you that you don't even see in yourself.

- He is directing this message just to you this morning.
- He is wanting me to speak to your heart.
- He wants you to know that when "**God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son,**" He was doing that for you.
- He bought you at a tremendous price.
- He gave up Jesus His Son for you.

You are infinitely valuable to Him. Don't you dare forget it!

3. **THIRD, HE GAVE THE BLOOD OF HIS BELOVED SON**

Who put the price tag on your soul? God. He set the cost of redeeming it -- the death of His Son on the Cross.

- Hebrews 9:22 says, "**Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.**"
- Leviticus 17:11 adds in the Old Testament, "**It is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.**"
- Thus the die had been cast. The price of purchase would be blood. Acts 20:28 notes, "**Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.**"

God did not affix a **DOLLAR VALUE** on you or me. Buying us with cash or some precious commodity would have been too easy. You see, "**The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.**"

- He owns the cattle on a thousand hills.
- He has gold enough to pave the very streets of heaven with the stuff.
- He has pearls so large that He is able to make gates out of the things.
- He has so many diamonds, rubies and other precious gems that He uses them like concrete. They are simply foundation stones in glory.
- He owns furs, mansions, and millions and millions of acres of timber and billions and billions of barrels of oil and gas reserves.

God is not at a loss when it comes to money.

But no amount of money would be sufficient to purchase you and me back from death and sin. Again, the Scriptures were plain. To buy us from off the auction block of Satan's slavery, God would have to give up His Son to death by crucifixion. That was the value that He Himself set for every man, woman, boy and girl.

Now, I must remind you again, **HE SET THE PRICE**. If any bargaining was done, it was simply between Father, Son and Holy Ghost. That was it. Why then did He make our redemption so terribly expensive? **HE WAS SIMPLY ESTABLISHING THE WORTH OF A HUMAN SOUL**. Matthew 16:26 therefore asks, "**What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?**"

Would you sell your soul if in return you could gain the whole world? If your answer was yes, the Lord says that you would be selling out much too cheap. He owns the world -- billions of them. He could have given up a world or two for you, but no. You were worth more than any old world. He said your soul was worth the blood of His Son!

I want to affect a change in your thinking this morning. I want you to view the Cross from now on as a giant plus sign. It is to add value to your life.

- Whenever you feel down and out, think of the Cross.
- Whenever you feel worthless, think of the Cross.
- Whenever you feel as if no one understands you or that no one cares, think of the Cross.
- Think of that giant plus sign that God suspended between heaven and Earth on your behalf. It once and for all declares your worth to God.

No person is to be despised (even by himself or herself) if the great and eternal Jehovah God loved him or her enough to give up His one and only Son to death for that person!

The message of Easter is that you are worth more than a world,
 You are worth more than gold, silver, and precious stones,
 You are worth more than this beautiful \$17,000 Harley Davidson motorcycle that I have here on display! **(STAND BY MOTORCYCLE)**

Speaking of the Harley...

AGAIN, THE HARLEY EXECUTIVE ASKED BOB, "Bob, would you take the seat off your bike and see if anything is written underneath. Would you do that for me?"

Bob grabbed a screwdriver, did as he was told, and returned to the phone. "Yes," he said, "it does have something written there, it's engraved, and it says, 'The King.'

Listen, is there some kind of trouble here? What is this all about?"

There was a moment or two of profound silence on the other end. Bob felt like the man on the long distance commercial listening for a pin to drop.

"Bob, I have been authorized to offer you \$300,000 for the bike, payable to you immediately. How about it? Do we have a deal?"

Bob was so shunned he could hardly speak. "I--I'll have to think about it," he stammered. He hung up the phone and let himself slump slowly to a sitting position on the kitchen floor. The next day Bob got a call from Jay Leno, the late-night television talk show host. Leno explained that "he had a thing about Harleys" and offered Bob \$500,000.

"The King," of course, was none other than Elvis Presley. The serial number had made that clear, and the engraved legend under the seat had removed all doubt. The bike Bob had redeemed from the scrap pile for thirty-five dollars had once been owned by "The King of Rock 'n Roll." And it was worth half a million dollars -- at the least.

The value of the motorcycle, of course, wasn't in the metal or the parts. It didn't even run! The value had nothing to do with the bike's beauty, what it was made of, or how well it performed. What was the value then? It was all tied to the fact that it had once been owned by "the King."

- He had touched it,
- ridden it,
- taken pride in it.

DOESN'T THIS LITTLE STORY HAVE A LOT TO SAY ABOUT YOUR VALUE AND MINE?

- I read somewhere where we have enough lime in our bodies to whitewash one chicken coop.
- There's enough potassium to fire one toy cannon.
- Enough sulfur to rid one dog of fleas.
- Enough fat for one medium bar of soap.
- Enough phosphorous to make three matches.
- Enough iron to make a twelve-penny nail.
- Enough gas to fill a quart jar.
- Then too, there's gallons and gallons of water.

Where, then, is our value? If all of the ingredients of our physical bodies are worth about the same as a can of Coke, what is there that can keep us from feeling worthless? What gives us a sense of merit and significance? I will tell you what...

THE KING OF KINGS AND THE LORD OF LORDS

- Owns us.
- Lives within us.
- Has stamped His name deep within our hearts.
- And has His own fingerprints are all over us.

Jay Leno was willing to pay a half a million for Elvis' Harley. God, on the other hand, purchased you by:

- **BY LOVING YOU,**
- **GIVING HIS SON,**
- **AND BY THE SHED BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST!**

Yes, friends, any way you look at it, you are worth more than a Harley!