

In a bad economy, people sell things - even themselves. Some things should never be for sale.

Our text is about the most expensive bowl of soup in the world. It costs a “birthright”. While the U.S. economy is inching back, many are paring down to essentials. EBay and Craigslist are full of items for sale – given up for a few extra bucks. It’s a dealer’s bonanza and a seller’s remorse. I think we all know of a home sold for less than its purchase price. Cash for gold and jewelry helps some make it through another day.

Are there some things that you would never sell? In a fallen world where sin dehumanizes people, slavery abounds – even selling children. Selling one’s own body in bad times makes prostitution “the oldest profession”. An illegal drug sale risks the slavery of addiction. Nothing is off the table when human life is diminished to a dollar value.

Some things should not be for sale. Integrity for example, or freedom, or love should never have a price tag. In the ancient world, one item may seem to us as a material thing however it was a whole lot more – the birthright. Sell it, and you sold your future. The birthright was the special privilege given to the firstborn male of any patriarch. The birthright’s economical value could set the eldest son up for life. It was double what his brothers would get. The inheritance wasn’t just economic, but also leadership. In short, the birthright was designed to ensure the future of the family. Screw it up, and you screw up the family. Sell it, and you’ve sold away the future.

In the story of Jacob and Esau, Jacob was not just making stew; he’s marketing. He knew his twin. All Jacob had to do was advertise, and Esau jumped on the deal. He was uncomfortable after hunting and not able to cook for himself. Esau was anxious and wanting it all and wanting it NOW! And we now know that being anxious is the fastest route to bankruptcy of both wallet and spirit.

The so called “Priceless” ads of a certain credit card company offer a short list of goods or services with their price tag. THEN they offer something intangible that you can’t put a price tag on – like a week camping with your family. The commercial announcer values this as “priceless.” It is a pretty slick campaign. It has made millions. One Ad Exec admitted: “What really hit home with consumers is that the company that is fundamentally all about money and paying for things would actually declare that the things that really count can’t be bought.” So, there’s the deception going with the “Priceless” campaign. The ad people are so certain the deception works, they don’t even need to be subtle about it.

So what is the real estate that is being passed down from Isaac, who was one of many sons of Jacob, to his twin sons born in his 40th year by his “barren” wife Rebekah? The twins were the epitome of diversity. One was father’s favorite, the first out of womb, hairy and red, and growing into a hunter and perfectly manly, and the other son who was birthed by holding on his brother’s heel who was mother’s favorite, living in the tents of the women, and learning the unmasculine trail of cooking. Who had the most value?

How do we comprehend the real estate? Of all that we know and value in the world, what would Jesus Christ have us understand? With all our being, knowledge and concerns, how shall we find what is genuine, actual, and an authentic inheritance or fortune?

I believe Jesus was really trying to make sense of that for us. (Matt. 13: 1-9, 18-23). There he sat on the beach thinking, and the crowd found him. He had to go to a boat in the water to seek refuge. So he told them a story. “What do you make of this? Someone scatters seed and the birds ate the seed that fell on the road. Seed on the gravel could not get its roots down before the sun baked it. The seed in the weeds got choked by the strong plants. But some fell on good ground and produced a good harvest. Are you hearing me??”

“Huh?” they all said, and turned to their neighbor to ask? “What did you hear Jesus say?”

Jesus continued: “Here is the meaning of that harvest story. If you hear about the kingdom of God and do nothing with it, it remains on the surface and the Devil takes it .. swooping down like hungry birds. Seed on gravel sprouts with enthusiasm, but has not enough moral fiber to put down roots in God’s World to withstand the difficult times. It dies. If a person hears about God’s Kingdom but is a worrywart and gets cast in the weeds of worry, they begin to want more than God is offering, then nothing comes of it. A good seed, or person, hears the Good News, “In Jesus we have been saved,” and then generates a yield further than their ordinary imaginings.

Friends, we understand that there are so many cultural and ethnic layers to the stories of the Old Testament that trying to appreciate it without the light of the Gospel is difficult at best. It’s like peeling an onion. We wear our rose colored glasses and try to understand, ‘WHO WON? - Jacob or Esau? We are left standing on the edge of the lake while Jesus tries to make us hear what a gracious God has given us. God gives us a kingdom without end. What an estate!

Jesus is building his kingdom with the broken things of earth. People desire only the strong, successful, victorious and unbroken things in life to build their kingdoms, but God is the God of the unsuccessful – the God of those who have failed. Heaven is being filled with earth’s broken lives, and there is no “bruised reed” (Isa. 42:3) that Christ cannot take and restore to a place of blessing and beauty. He can take a life crushed by pain or sorrow and make it a harp whose music will be total praise. He can lift earth’s saddest failure up to heaven’s glory.

Our real estate is in heaven not earth. Do not be troubled, nor be afraid.

Amen