

Kington Baptist Church

MESSAGE BOARD – 83

What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world but lose his own soul?

In these words the Lord points to the crucial importance of *profit* and *loss*. He says there's a huge imbalance between the value of the '*whole world*' and a *soul*. This difference in values we often turn inside-out: the *soul* is undervalued and *profit* and the '*whole world*' are over-valued.

Every day we're told of the threat to the environment – a threat brought about almost entirely by human greed: *profit* and damage to the *planet* are inseparable! The love of money, the drive for *profit* is the ultimate cause of the climate problem: *profit* and its side-kick, *science*. It's folly to suppose 'science will save us'. For the last two hundred years or so science, motivated by profit, has been the single greatest cause of damage to the planet – damage that science is now called on to remedy.

It's no coincidence that the last two hundred years have not only witnessed science inflict devastation on the planet, not least through its diabolical skill in producing instruments of war and mass destruction, these years have also seen 'science falsely so-called' attacking and undermining the authority and trustworthiness of Scripture; its core message of mankind's need of salvation through the blood of Christ; the unique dignity of human beings as created in the image and likeness of God; and, the unavoidable truth that we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ. It's rank foolishness to speak of science saving the world.

If this seems too prejudiced against science, consider that the twentieth century was by far the bloodiest century in human history, largely due to the effective killing machines science created. Consider too that the unparalleled global catastrophe we face is entirely due to the polluting materials, machines and methods of production science has invented, in the service of profit. These are not opinions but incontrovertible facts.

Even when it appears philanthropic science isn't geared primarily to the preservation of life but the promotion of profit. Where human life promises no profit the preservation of life has no priority. The frantic action to vaccinate the West and the profitable parts of the East is in contrast to the near complete failure to provide vaccine for people unable to contribute significant profits to the wealthy. The inadequate funds handed down by the wealthiest nations to the global vaccination project look more like cynical political self-promotion than serious concern for humanity. This assessment is strengthened by our government's massive reduction in overseas aid during a global pandemic, while hugely increasing its military expenditure.

The not-so-subtle determination of the wealthiest nations to secure profit from those at the very bottom of the economic pile is evident in the sale of arms to warring nations with complete indifference to the death and devastation that profits from military science bring to the poorest people: Yemen, Syria, Congo, Libya, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, the Central African Republic being only the most appalling cases. And let's not forget the self-inflicted death and damage to its population that profit from the sale of guns in the USA guarantees into its own long-term future.

Our Lord's words apply directly to the major concerns of *profit* and saving the *planet*; his words are concerned with the damage that greed for *profit* brings on the *planet* that feeds it, and with making 'saving the planet' our 'number one concern'. How contemporary are the words of Jesus!

The Lord's great concern is that the world's priorities put the *soul* in danger. He warns that obsession with *profit*, even if the *profit* amounts to the entire riches of the world, will, in the context of eternity, be no gain at all but terrible loss. He warns that conserving the *planet*, will, in the context of eternity, be no advantage whatsoever. In both cases he warns that the world's aims, ambitions and goals are fatally miscalculated.

Jesus is concerned with our true *profit*; he is concerned that we understand what should come first and what should come second. When we read, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son', we're not to think that 'the world' he speaks of is the planet; the world he loves are the people who inhabit the planet. The Son of God didn't shed his blood to save the planet; he shed his blood to save men and women; *we* are his great concern. He points us to real lasting *profit*. And he warns of the danger of losing what is infinitely more precious than any material *profit*, more precious even than the *whole world*. Jesus knows the value of a *soul*. He urges us to see the whole of life in the light of *eternity*. We face this great conflict: the value the world puts on *things* and the value God places on *us*. Satan aims to rob us of what's most precious. He uses two key methods: one is to appeal to our innate greed and selfishness – of *profit* and material wealth. The other method is to appeal to our 'better nature' – in this case the conservation of the *planet*: a worthy and proper project. The danger is allowing what's merely 'worthy' to have first place in our lives; to preserve the planet but lose our souls! It is fatal to our eternal future to treat climate change – or anything else – as more important and more urgent than the gospel of Christ. This generation of children know all about climate change and nothing about Jesus.

Jesus knows the *value* of a *soul*. The *soul's* value is measured by its *immortality*. The astonishing truth is a human *soul* is of more value than the entire world! *What profit if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul?* This for a simple reason: the world is *temporal* but the *soul* is *eternal*. The world is passing away, that's God's programme for it. Your *soul* is not passing away – and never will! The duration of the world is no more than a single tick of a clock compared with the eternity of your *soul*.

Lord, in the beginning you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. But even they will perish, while you remain forever. They will wear out like old clothing. You will roll them up like an old coat. But you are always the same; your years will never end. (Hebrews 1.11-13)

We can't grasp what *eternity* means – were we to see the horror of a *soul* lost for eternity we'd lose our minds – what has been called the infinite intensity of 'temporal vertigo'. But before we lost our minds we'd realise that, in comparison with an immortal *soul*, the 'whole world' is no more than a bubble – a bubble that'll burst and bring everlasting ruin and remorse for those who choose its wealth and pleasures and make it their priority. That's why Jesus says what he says! It's about priorities. Our most urgent need is to sort out our priorities: *seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and these things will be added to you.*