



Links Players

Lost and Found

For what has a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26, KJV)

If you've played golf, you've lost golf balls. Some lose more than others but lose them, you will. Rope-hooking a brand-new golf ball deep into the forest where Robin Hood couldn't find it hurts deep in the bones—splashing any ball, old or new, into the lake fronting the green can leave irreversible scar tissue on the psyche.

Many will attest that looking for a lost ball is a miserable experience. Consider the following: If it's not found, you will be assessed "stroke and distance." If it is found, you are probably still in a "spot of bother. The pace of play for your foursome is slowed down. Finally, as you search, your mind hears the inaudible "tick-tock" until someone says, "times up."

Watching Harris English lose his ball on his opening tee shot in the final round of the US Open at Winged Foot was excruciatingly painful. Watching him walk back to the tee knowing millions were watching by television, was almost unbearable.

Let's be clear, losing a golf ball is, without a doubt, a miserable experience, but losing one's soul is infinitely worse.

Jesus rhetorically asks, "what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul." Usually, this is understood to suggest that spending one's life chasing after earthly things and neglecting to ensure one's soul is right with God will cause one to miss eternity. Whatever else we might want to say about "losing one's soul," this is the clear teaching of Scripture.

As true as the above reflection is, it fails to cover all that Jesus is getting at. We tend to assume that earthly things (i.e., fortune, recognition, success, festivities, etc.) are inherently evil. Thus, if we interpret Scripture this way, we should avoid all else and focus entirely on the hereafter.

While it is true that the Lord places a premium on our eternal security, he does not empty life in this world of its meaningfulness. "Losing one's soul" is not only a matter of being eternally lost but neglecting to nurture our souls in a Christ-enriching way during our "brief stay" in this world.

To be biologically alive yet spiritually dead is to miss out on the wonder of what it means to be a creature in the Creator's good world. Furthermore, Christians are not among those who deny the goodness of God's created world.

To feast one's whole life on the many good gifts provided by our Maker and yet to fail to know and worship him is, indeed, the very essence of "futility." Yet, to know him and deprive oneself of his many good gifts in this life is some form of Asceticism. It is most certainly not Christianity.

Living in the paradoxical balance required by our Savior requires the twin truths of guarding against the external dimensions of work, study, and play, eclipsing your inner life of prayer, meditation, and communion with God.

And, while yielding oneself to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, we should give ourselves to explore the immeasurable riches waiting to be discovered in his good creation.

The old quip about Christians being "so heavenly-minded that they are no earthly good" could not be more inaccurate. In truth, those who are the most heavenly-minded are those who not only "taste and see that God is good, they also feast on the lavish riches of his gifts found in creation and use them for the good of humanity.

After all, Jesus came to redeem and restore God's purposes for the world he created from its calamitous fall, not destroy it! Let's do all we do unto the glory of God now and forevermore.

Prayer: Jesus! As David prayed, "may we see you in the land of the living."

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