

PARABLES
OF THE
KINGDOM

44 "THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE TREASURE HIDDEN IN A FIELD. WHEN A MAN FOUND IT, HE HID IT AGAIN, AND THEN IN HIS JOY WENT AND SOLD ALL HE HAD AND BOUGHT THAT FIELD.

45 "AGAIN, THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE A MERCHANT LOOKING FOR FINE PEARLS. 46 WHEN HE FOUND ONE OF GREAT VALUE, HE WENT AWAY AND SOLD EVERYTHING HE HAD AND BOUGHT IT.

MATTHEW 13 VS. 44-46

THERE ARE ROUGHLY THREE NEW YORKS. THERE IS, FIRST, THE NEW YORK OF THE MAN OR WOMAN WHO WAS BORN THERE, WHO TAKES THE CITY FOR GRANTED AND ACCEPTS ITS SIZE, ITS TURBULENCE AS NATURAL AND INEVITABLE. SECOND, THERE IS THE NEW YORK OF THE COMMUTER--THE CITY THAT IS DEVoured BY LOCUSTS EACH DAY AND SPAT OUT EACH NIGHT. THIRD, THERE IS NEW YORK OF THE PERSON WHO WAS BORN SOMEWHERE ELSE AND CAME TO NEW YORK IN QUEST OF SOMETHING. OF THESE TREMBLING CITIES THE GREATEST IS THE LAST--THE CITY OF FINAL DESTINATION, THE CITY THAT IS A GOAL.

IT IS THIS THIRD CITY THAT ACCOUNTS FOR NEW YORK'S HIGH STRUNG
DISPOSITION, ITS POETICAL DEPARTMENT, ITS DEDICATION TO THE
ARTS, AND ITS INCOMPARABLE ACHIEVEMENTS. COMMUTERS GIVE THE
CITY ITS TIDAL RESTLESSNESS, NATIVES GIVE IT SOLIDITY AND
CONTINUITY. BUT THE SETTLERS GIVE IT PASSION, AND WHETHER IT IS
A FARMER ARRIVING FROM A SMALL TOWN IN MISSISSIPPI TO ESCAPE
THE INDIGNITY OF BEING OBSERVED BY HER NEIGHBORS, OR A BOY
ARRIVING FROM THE CORN BELT WITH A MANUSCRIPT IN HIS SUITCASE
AND A PAIN IN HIS HEART, IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE; EACH EMBRACES
NEW YORK WITH THE INTENSE EXCITEMENT OF FIRST LOVE, EACH
ABSORBS NEW YORK WITH THE FRESH YES OF AN ADVENTURER, EACH
GENERATES HEAT AND LIGHT TO DWARF THE CONSOLIDATED EDISON
COMPANY.
E.B. WHITE

A KINGDOM
CALLED
DESIRE

IT IS NO EASY TASK TO WALK THIS EARTH AND FIND PEACE. INSIDE OF US, IT WOULD SEEM, SOMETHING IS AT ODDS WITH THE VERY RHYTHM OF THINGS AND WE ARE FOREVER RESTLESS, DISSATISFIED, FRUSTRATED, AND ACHING. WE ARE OVERCHARGED WITH DESIRE THAT IT IS HARD TO COME TO SIMPLE REST. DESIRE IS ALWAYS STRONGER THAN SATISFACTION. PUT MORE SIMPLY, THERE IS WITHIN US A FUNDAMENTAL DIS-EASE, AN UNQUENCHABLE FIRE THAT RENDERS US INCAPABLE, IN THIS LIFE, OF EVER COMING TO FULL PEACE. THIS DESIRE LIES AT THE CENTER OF OUR LIVES, IN THE MARROW OF OUR BONES, AND IN THE DEEP RECESSES OF THE SOUL. WE ARE NOT EASEFUL HUMAN BEINGS, WHO OCCASIONALLY GET RESTLESS, SERENE PERSONS WHO ONCE IN A WHILE ARE OBSESSED BY DESIRE.

THE REVERSE IS TRUE. WE ARE DRIVEN PERSONS, FOREVER
OBSESSED, CONGENITALLY DIS-EASED, LIVING LIVES, AS
THOREAU ONCE SUGGESTED, OF QUITE DESPERATION, ONLY
OCCASIONALLY EXPERIENCING PEACE. DESIRE IS THE STRAW
THAT STIRS THE DRINK. AT THE HEART OF ALL GREAT
LITERATURE, POETRY, ART, PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY AND
RELIGION LIES THE NAMING AND ANALYZING OF THIS DESIRE. WE
LOVE STORIES ABOUT DESIRE—TALES OF LOVE, SEX,
WANDERLUST, HAUNTING NOSTALGIA, BOUNDLESS AMBITION,
AND TRAGIC LOSS. MANY OF THE GREAT SECULAR THINKERS OF
OUR TIME HAVE MADE THIS FIRE, THIS FORCE THAT SO HAUNTS
US, THE CENTERPIECE OF THEIR THINKING.

WHATEVER THE EXPRESSION, EVERYONE IS ULTIMATELY
TALKING ABOUT THE SAME THING—AN UNQUENCHABLE FIRE, A
RESTLESSNESS, A LONGING, A DISQUIET, A HUNGER, A
LONELINESS, A GNAWING NOSTALGIA, A WILDNESS THAT
CANNOT BE TAMED, A CONGENITAL ALL-EMBRACING ACHE THAT
LIES AT THE CENTER OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND IS THE
ULTIMATE FORCE THAT DRIVES EVERYTHING ELSE. THIS DIS-
EASE IS UNIVERSAL. DESIRE GIVES NO EXEMPTIONS. IT DOES
HOWEVER ADMIT OF DIFFERENT MOODS AND FACES.
SOMETIMES IT HITS US AS PAIN-DISSATISFACTION,
FRUSTRATION, AND ACHING. AT OTHER TIMES ITS GRIP IS NOT
FELT AS PAINFUL AT ALL, BUT AS A DEEP ENERGY, AS
SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL, AS AN INEXORABLE PULL, MORE
IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING ELSE INSIDE US, TOWARD, LOVE,

BEAUTY, CREATIVITY, AND A FUTURE BEYOND OUR LIMITED
PRESENT. DESIRE CAN SHOW ITSELF AS ACHING PAIN OR
DELICIOUS HOPE.

SPIRITUALITY IS ULTIMATELY, ABOUT WHAT WE DO WITH THAT
DESIRE. WHAT WE DO WITH OUR LONGINGS, BOTH IN TERMS OF
HANDLING THE PAIN AND THE HOPE THEY BRING US, THAT IS
OUR SPIRITUALITY. SPIRITUALITY IS NOT SOMETHING ON THE
FRINGES, AN OPTION FOR THOSE WITH A PARTICULAR BENT.
NONE OF US HAS A CHOICE. EVERYONE HAS TO HAVE A
SPIRITUALITY EVERYONE DOES HAVE ONE, EITHER A LIFE-
GIVING ONE OR A DESTRUCTIVE ONE
RONALD ROLHEISER

MERCHANTS
OF OUR OWN
SOULS

THE THING WORTH
LEVERAGING
EVERYTHING
ELSE FOR

RELATIONSHIPS?

SEX CANNOT DELIVER THE GOODS; IT ALLEVIATES OUR
LONELINESS TOO LITTLE, ESPECIALLY OUR MORAL
LONELINESS. SEX THAT ISN'T SUBLIME DOESN'T BRING US A
SOUL MATE. WHAT IT BRINGS IS A FIX, A HIT, A DRUG, THAT
HELPS US THROUGH A LONELY NIGHT OR LONELY SEASON,
BUT THAT, DEEP DOWN, WE KNOW CANNOT GIVE US WHAT WE
NEED, AND SEX CANNOT BE SUBLIME WITHOUT FIRST LIVING A
REAL CHASTITY. THE PERSON WHO SLEEPS WITH SOMEBODY HE
OR SHE HARDLY KNOWS, HAS NO REAL COMMITMENT TO, AND
HAS NEVER LIVED A CHASTE TENSION WITH, WILL NOT HAVE A
SUBLIME OR PROFOUND EXPERIENCE. SHORT-CIRCUITING
CHASTITY IS LIKE TRYING TO WRITE A MASTERPIECE OVER
NIGHT. GOOD LUCK, BUT IT ISN'T GOING TO HAPPEN! GREAT
LOVE, LIKE GREAT ART, TAKES GREAT EFFORT, SUSTAINED
COMMITMENT, AND LOTS OF TIME.
RONALD ROLHEISER

MORE DEEPLY THAN WE LONG FOR A SEXUAL PARTNER, WE
LONG FOR MORAL AFFINITY, FOR SOMEONE TO VISIT US IN
THAT DEEPEST PART OF US WHERE ALL THAT IS MOST
PRECIOUS TO US IS CHERISHED AND GUARDED. OUR DEEPEST
LONGING IS FOR A PARTNER TO SLEEP WITH MORALLY, A
KINDRED SPIRIT, A SOUL MATE IN THE TRUEST
SENSE OF THE WORD.
AGAINST AN INFINITE HORIZON

MONEY?

THEN HE SAID TO THEM, "WATCH OUT! BE ON YOUR GUARD
AGAINST ALL KINDS OF GREED; LIFE DOES NOT CONSIST IN AN
ABUNDANCE OF POSSESSIONS.
LUKE 12 VS. 15

IDENTITY?

YOU ARE A
TREASURE TO GOD

AS FOR YOU, YOU WERE DEAD IN YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS
AND SINS, IN WHICH YOU USED TO LIVE WHEN YOU FOLLOWED
THE WAYS OF THIS WORLD AND OF THE RULER OF THE
KINGDOM OF THE AIR, THE SPIRIT WHO IS NOW AT WORK IN
THOSE WHO ARE DISOBEDIENT. ALL OF US ALSO LIVED
AMONG THEM AT ONE TIME, GRATIFYING THE CRAVINGS OF
OUR FLESH AND FOLLOWING ITS DESIRES AND THOUGHTS. LIKE
THE REST, WE WERE BY NATURE DESERVING OF WRATH. BUT
BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE FOR US, GOD, WHO IS RICH IN
MERCY, MADE US ALIVE WITH CHRIST EVEN WHEN WE WERE
DEAD IN TRANSGRESSIONS—IT IS BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN
SAVED.

AND GOD RAISED US UP WITH CHRIST AND SEATED US WITH HIM
IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS IN CHRIST JESUS, IN ORDER THAT IN
THE COMING AGES HE MIGHT SHOW THE INCOMPARABLE RICHES
OF HIS GRACE, EXPRESSED IN HIS KINDNESS TO US IN CHRIST
JESUS. FOR IT IS BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED, THROUGH
FAITH—AND THIS IS NOT FROM YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT
OF GOD— NOT BY WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE CAN BOAST.
FOR WE ARE GOD'S HANDIWORK, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS TO
DO GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD PREPARED IN ADVANCE FOR US
TO DO.

EPHESIANS 2 VS. 1-10

FOR YOU KNOW THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,
THAT THOUGH HE WAS RICH, YET FOR YOUR SAKE HE BECAME
POOR, SO THAT YOU THROUGH HIS POVERTY MIGHT BECOME
RICH.
2 CORINTHIANS 8 VS. 9

THEREFORE, SINCE WE ARE SURROUNDED BY SUCH A GREAT
CLOUD OF WITNESSES, LET US THROW OFF EVERYTHING THAT
HINDERS AND THE SIN THAT SO EASILY ENTANGLES. AND LET
US RUN WITH PERSEVERANCE THE RACE MARKED OUT FOR US,
FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE PIONEER AND PERFECTER OF
FAITH. FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM HE ENDURED THE CROSS,
SCORNING ITS SHAME, AND SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF
THE THRONE OF GOD.
HEBREWS 12 VS. 1-3

FOR YOU KNOW THAT IT WAS NOT WITH PERISHABLE THINGS
SUCH AS SILVER OR GOLD THAT YOU WERE REDEEMED FROM
THE EMPTY WAY OF LIFE HANDED DOWN TO YOU FROM YOUR
ANCESTORS, BUT WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST, A
LAMB WITHOUT BLEMISH OR DEFECT.
1 PETER 1 VS. 18

OUR RESPONSE IS
UNCONDITIONAL
SURRENDER

WE RECEIVE MUCH
MORE THAN WE
GIVE