

Story of I'd Rather Have Jesus

Born into a pastor's home in Canada, Bev Shea (1909-2013) learned how to play the violin, and later taught himself piano. But his greatest strength was singing. After vocal training in New York City, Shea was given an audition at the NBC radio station, and was offered a contract.

He asked that he might sing Gospel songs. He was told that he might use one occasionally, but he would have to use the songs on the Hit Parade.

What would he do? His mother was praying. She placed a poem by Rhea Miller on his piano. In the morning he composed a tune for it. One verse was: "I'd rather have Jesus than silver and gold: I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame; I'd rather be true to His holy Name!"

Bev turned down the contract. A short time later he was offered a position with Moody Bible Institute's radio station WMBI, where he might sing the Gospel songs he loved. While there he met Billy Graham who would then ask him to join in his evangelistic work.

To follow after Jesus is costly. Matthew 16:24-26 says: "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?'" Philippians 3:8 says, What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ." I'd rather have Jesus than world-wide fame, I'd rather be true to His holy name.. Praise God for the words of Rhea Miller and the caring of Bev Shea. Because of them, Bev followed after Jesus and we are blessed with the fruit. In his 83 year ministry, he sang before over 200,000,000 people, more than all the great 20th century soloists combined. He gave up worldwide fame, and was given by the Lord ...worldwide fame.

When King George VI and the queen visited Washington, DC, a state dinner was given in their honor. Chief Whitefeather, an Indian, began the program by singing the British anthem. After the applause the chief sang, to the surprise of those present, the hymn whose opening words are, I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold!

Later in the evening, the chief sat near the king and queen. Tactfully he asked the queen, Do you believe on Jesus? The queen replied graciously, He is the Possessor of my heart, and of my husband's also! The king, smiling, added, I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold!