

Matthew 13:45-46: Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Intro: We continue to study the parables Jesus told about the kingdom of heaven. Today we come to another parable, like the parable of the treasure hidden in the field, about the value or worth of the kingdom of heaven: the parable of the pearl of great price. The kingdom is the most valuable reality in the universe!

1. The Kingdom Of Heaven Is Like A Searching Merchant

Matthew 13:45: Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls

a. This parable is about a searching merchant: Notice in this parable the merchant is searching whereas in the parable of the treasure hidden in the field, the man was not searching, he just “happened” to find the treasure when he wasn’t looking for it. This pearl merchant man is trying to find it!

John MacArthur: In case number one, the man just comes across the treasure. In case number two, the man knows exactly what he’s looking for. Now even if number one was a treasure hunter, he didn’t know what he was looking for. Number two did. Now, what does this tell us? Well, the man in the field, most likely, was not looking for treasure. He was going through whatever routine he went through, working, or plowing a field, or building something, or preparing some of the soil for whatever. And he was in the field and he was going along seeking sustenance for his life, doing what he did and he stumbled across a fortune. Now, there are people who enter the kingdom like that aren’t there? Sure there are. The apostle Paul, was he seeking to enter the kingdom? Not on your life. He thought he was in it. He was on his way to Damascus to kill Christians. The next thing he knew, God blasted him out of heaven, he landed in the dirt, & he was redeemed. He was just doing his thing. He was just plowing his field & he stumbled into a fortune. Well, how about the Samaritan woman? She was thirsty. She came down to a well to get a drink of water, went home redeemed. And then there was the man born blind, & all he really wanted out of life was to be able to see & he went away redeemed also. And, you know, there are some people who come to church to mock the preacher. & then they get saved. So you better be careful. There are people who aren’t particularly seeking that but they stumble into the treasure. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, when he was young, sort of resolutely attended church because it was the thing to do. But he didn’t know Christ, & he wasn’t seeking Christ. He was content with his religiosity. He was only 15 years old one morning . . . it was a New Year’s morning, & he decided it would be proper to go to church. His biographer said there was such a blizzard of snow that he was not able to reach the church he was in the habit of attending. “When I could go no farther,” he said, “I turned down a court and came to a little primitive Methodist church. The preacher who was to have conducted the service never got there because he was held up by the weather. And quickly one of the officers had to be brought forward to conduct the service with a congregation of perhaps 15 people. “The man,” said Spurgeon, “was really [uneducated/unlearned]. His text was, ‘Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.’ And he just kept repeating it because he didn’t have anything else to say.” And something about young Spurgeon caught the preacher’s eye. “Young man,” he said suddenly, “You look very miserable. Miserable in life and miserable in death, you will be if you don’t obey my text.” And suddenly he literally shouted, “Young man, look to Jesus, look, look, look.” And said Spurgeon, “I looked. And then and there the cloud was gone and the darkness rolled away & that moment I saw the Son.” He wasn’t searching for anything but it got him anyway. He stumbled into a fortune. Few people who have ever lived have affected so many souls as Charles Haddon Spurgeon. I don’t know who that [uneducated] guy was that just kept repeating the text, but it was of God.

b. The merchant was searching for fine pearls: Pearls were very valuable in Jesus’ day – more than gold! Pearls are still very valuable today!: 1) The Beauty of Ocean Pearl, found in Mongolia: 6 tons, 5 feet high, \$139 million
2) The Fisherman’s Pearl, found off the coast of the Philippines, a fisherman hid it under his bed. \$100 million

c. We are all searching for something fine: We are all born searching for something valuable: something that will make life better for us: riches; job; relationships; power; fame; meaning; success; pleasurable experiences. Ultimately, in all these things, we are searching for happiness. Everyone wants to be happy!

John Piper: Christian Hedonism is a philosophy of life built on the following five convictions:

1. The longing to be happy is a universal human experience, and it is good, not sinful.
2. We should never try to deny or resist our longing to be happy, as though it were a bad impulse. Instead, we should seek to intensify this longing & nourish it with whatever will provide the deepest & most enduring satisfaction.
3. The deepest and most enduring happiness is found only in God. Not from God, but in God.
4. The happiness we find in God reaches its consummation when it is shared with others in the manifold ways of love.
5. To the extent that we try to abandon the pursuit of our own pleasure, we fail to honor God and love people. Or, to put it positively: The pursuit of pleasure is a necessary part of all worship and virtue. That is: The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever. Or, God is most glorified in us, when we are most satisfied in Him.

d. Our problem is that we often search for happiness/something fine in sin: We are not the pearl of great price!

- **Romans 3:23:** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

- **Romans 3:10-18:** as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

- **Ephesians 2:1, 3:** you were dead in . . . trespasses & sins . . . by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind

J. Calvin: We are so captivated by the allurements of the world, that eternal life fades from our view; & because of our carnality, the spiritual graces of God are far from being held by us in the estimation which they deserve. GOSPEL

2. The Pearl Of Great Price

Matthew 13:45: Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

a. God and His Kingdom – Jesus and His Kingdom – this is the Pearl of greatest price: This Pearl is so valuable, it's worth selling everything else just to get it! Just to get Him!

- **Steven Lawson:** Once you find this pearl, no other pearls catch your attention; no other treasures matter to you!

- **Ignatius of Antioch:** Apart from Christ let nothing dazzle you!

- **Colossians 2:2-3:** Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Jesus is God; He's King of kings and LORD of Lords! He's the Alpha and the Omega! He's the First and the Last! He's the Beginning and the End! In Him you are chosen! In Him you are justified! In Him you are adopted! In Him you are sanctified! In Him you are being conformed into the image of Christ! In Him you will be glorified! In Him you are saved, safe, and satisfied! In Him is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore!

William Nicholson (Christ, the Pearl of Great Price!): 1) Pearls, as naturalists say, have a mysterious origin:

They are the wonderful production of a Shell Fish, found chiefly in the East Indies. The shell, at a certain time of the year, opens itself, and pearls form when a microscopic intruder settles inside the shell. The mollusk, being irritated by the intruder, secretes materials to cover the irritant. This secretion process is repeated many times, thus producing a pearl. So the origin and birth of Christ are wonderful and mysterious. God manifest in the flesh, is the admiration of angels. A virgin (the Mother of this Pearl, according to the flesh), being overshadowed with the Holy Spirit, travailed in birth, and brought forth Christ, the Pearl of great Price.

2) Those who would find Pearls, must search diligently for them, & encounter many dangers by diving into the sea: Those who would find Christ the Pearl of great Price, must search & seek after him diligently, as for hidden treasure. They must resolve to pass through all the troubles & difficulties connected with the profession of Christ.

3) It is not an easy thing to find Pearls: They are generally found on rocks submerged in deep water; and it requires considerable skill in those who dive for them, to discover them. Just so, it is no easy thing to find Christ, and obtain a real saving interest in him. This difficulty arises from the pride of the heart, which revolts at being stripped of all its [claims] to self-righteousness. The [demands] of the Gospel are too self-denying, too mortifying for the sinner. He will not stoop to them. Besides, he has never dived into his own heart, to perceive his wretchedness – nor into the Scriptures, to perceive Christ's glory.

4) Pearls are very valuable: "They are richest merchandise of all," says Pliny, "& the most sovereign commodity throughout the whole world." They have ever been highly valued, & men would part with all to possess them. Just so, Christ is of inestimable value, & may well be called the Pearl of great Price. The worth & excellency of Christ, far exceed the riches of both Indies. He is the rarest Jewel the Father has in Heaven & earth – more precious unto believers than rubies. All that can be desired, cannot be compared unto him. What Job says of the value of wisdom, is strictly applicable to Christ: "It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed in silver. It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx or sapphires. Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold. Coral & jasper are not worthy of mention; the price of wisdom is beyond rubies. The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it; it cannot be bought with pure gold!" (Job 28:15-19). Those who have Christ, have enough. They have the true riches – the greatest prize! They are rich for time, for death, & for eternity. This Pearl of great Price invests them with infinite and everlasting wealth, dignity, & glory!

5) Pearls possess a splendid brightness, shining in splendor. Their beauty is as much within, as without: Just so, Christ is beautiful, fair, and shining. His glorious beauties, his splendid brightness, surpass the glorious splendor and brightness of the sun shining in his strength. "He is the brightness of his Father's glory," (Hebrews 1:3). He is the light of the world the light and glory of Heaven!

Evangelist Sam Jones (THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST): More than 2000 years ago there was a man born contrary to the laws of nature. He laid aside his purple robe for a peasant's tunic. He was rich, yet for our sake he became poor. This man lived in poverty and was raised in obscurity. He received no formal education and never possessed wealth or widespread influence. He never traveled extensively. He seldom crossed the boundary of the country in which he lived. But this man's life has changed the course of history. In infancy he startled a king. In childhood he amazed religious scholars. In manhood he ruled the course of nature: walked on stormy waves and hushed the raging sea to sleep. He healed multitudes without medicine and made no charge for his services. He never practiced psychiatry. Yet he has healed more broken hearts than all the doctors far and near. He never wrote a book [while He lived in His humiliation on earth, but He inspired the Book of all books, the Bible!]. And his life has inspired more books than any other man. He never wrote a song [while He lived in His humiliation on earth]. Yet he has furnished the theme for more songs than all songwriters combined. He never founded a college, but all the schools put together cannot boast of having as many students. He never marshaled an army. He never drafted a soldier or fired a gun. Yet no leader ever had more rebels surrender to him without a shot fired. Herod could not kill him. Satan could not seduce him. His enemies could not destroy him. The grave could not hold him. After three days he rose from the dead, alive forevermore! He is the ever-perfect One. He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This man stands forth upon the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory, proclaimed by God, acknowledged by angels, adored by his people, and feared by demons as the risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

6) It is said that pearls possess medicinal value (Calcium); being an antidote to poison, and melancholy, and tending to preserve bodily strength: Just so, Christ possesses healing and strengthening power. There is no [comforting or pleasant tasting medicine] so rich and efficacious to the wounded soul, as Christ. The power of his sacrifice and Spirit revive immediately the contrite ones. We are strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man. By him, we destroy the poison and power of sin and Satan.

7) Pearls are so firm, strong, and compact, that fire cannot consume them, nor ordinary strength break them: Christ is called a Stone, a tried Stone, and sure Foundation. No fire can consume him – no atheistic, infidel, or Satanic power can break or injure him. The gates of Hell shall not prevail against him.

8) Pearls are a rich ornament, and those who bear them are accounted the honorable of mankind: Just so, Christ is the believer's richest ornament. Those who are adorned with this Pearl, are the most renowned and honorable ones in the world.

9) Notwithstanding the excellence and value of pearls – yet many are ignorant of them, and many esteem them no more than pebbles. Swine tread them under their feet: The Lord Jesus Christ, though so precious as to be adored by saints and angels, is despised and rejected by men of the world, who have their portion in this life. They see no beauty nor loveliness in him. The eyes of their understanding are darkened.

10) Pearls are found one by one, or one at a time: Just so, Christ is singular. There is but one Christ the Savior, one Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). It is the "one pearl of great price," and there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

But though the glory and excellency of Christ as the Savior are admirably set forth by the figure of the text – yet observe the following **DISPARITY: 1) Pearls have an earthly origin: Jesus Christ is the Lord from Heaven.**

2) Pearls are of a perishing nature – they may be defaced, broken, dissolved, and come to nothing: Christ is durable: This Pearl of great Price can never be spoiled or dissolved. Nothing can diminish his beauty or glory. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

3) Men may find a rich and precious pearl, and yet may remain miserable. Riches may prove a [cause of great distress] to them: He who finds this Pearl can never be miserable: Jesus supplies all the wants and necessities of believers. He makes them rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. "All things are yours!"

Application: 1) Bless God for bestowing his chief and best Pearl upon you!

2) Be willing to part with all, for the possession of this Pearl. Go and sell all that you have. Surrender the world, with all its fascinations and pleasures. Surrender your self-righteousness, your pride, your pleasures, your popularity, your possessions, etc. etc. – to possess this invaluable gem!

3) See the folly of those who prefer earthly vanities to Christ, the Pearl of great Price. Death will soon cause them to surrender all that they idolize on earth, and then they will lack the only substantial wealth – Christ, the Pearl of great Price!

b. Example from the Bible: John 12:3: Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, & anointed the feet of Jesus & wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. - **David Mathis:** Here, expensive is the same word used for the one great pearl in Matthew 13 (Greek *polutimos*, "exceedingly precious"). So manifestly, uncomformably valuable was the ointment that the disciples, and chiefly Judas, registered their concerns. "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" (John 12:5). A denarius was a laborer's daily wage. This ointment represented a whole year's earnings for a six-days-a-week worker. Likely this was Mary's nest egg for the future. And yet, as precious as it was, she saw Jesus as more precious. She saw him as surpassingly valuable. She poured her future on his feet, and in doing so, she demonstrated who was supremely precious to her.

c. Elisabeth and Jim Elliot as an example: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

Luke 14:26: If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

I loved the way he loved King Jesus. But our King Jesus is better than his love for our King!

I loved the way he knew and obeyed the Word of our King. But our King and His Word are better than Jim's knowledge of and obedience to the King's Word!

I loved the way he made sacrifices for our King. But our King is better than any sacrifice he ever made for our King!

I loved the way he got excited about our King. But our King is better than his excitement about our King!

I loved the way he wept over his sin against our King. But our King is better than his weeping over his sin against our King!

I loved the way he was committed to the church of our King. But our King is better than his commitment to the church of our King!

I loved the way he loved missions for our King. But our King is better than the way he loved missions for our King!

I loved the way he loved me because I belong to our King. But our King is better than his love for me because I belong to our King!

I love the way his life and time with him pointed me to our King and encouraged me to delight in Him and trust and obey Him. But our King is better than the way his life and time with him pointed me to our King and encouraged me to delight in Him and trust and obey Him!

Our King is better than any lover! Even the most God-exalting, Christ-centered, Bible-loving, Word-hearing, Word-doing, people serving lover!

The love of the creature for God and the good, religious activity of the creature for God cannot compare to or compete with God Himself or His love or His redemptive activity for us or His sovereign, good, and perfect will!

Mrs. McFarland: Keep your treasures in the open palm of your hand. If you hold your treasures tight-clenched in your fist, God may have to hurt you in order to open your fingers to take it from you. But if it is offered on an open palm of the hand, you will hardly know when it is gone.

Spurgeon: Happy is the man who feels that all he has, all he wants, and all he expects are to be found in his God.

Joni Eareckson Tada: . . . my father-in-law, Dad Tada, presented me with a family heirloom, a string of genuine pearls. He told me they had been harvested in Japan, not far from where he lived much of his life. I was captivated by the milky, soft glow of each perfect pearl. Ken draped the pearls around my neck, & I wheeled to a mirror. As I admired them, Dad Tada explained how a pearl is produced. A tiny bit of sand lodges in the flesh of an oyster and becomes an irritating intrusion. Unable to expel it, the oyster covers the particle with layer after layer of a milky secretion until the irritation has become smooth, round, and acceptable. It also inadvertently becomes a precious gem. A pastor once wrote, "Pearls, unlike other jewels, are drawn from the animate creation. (Other jewels are made from rocks and crystals and are mined out of the earth...) Pearls are produced by life – a life which has overcome the working of death." Jesus, the Pearl of great price, is unlike any other. He is the precious gem set apart from the rest. He lived in such a way that he overcame the working of death. He is superior because his love poured forth from a life wounded by pain. He has become our example. We experience irritants in our lives, but God gives layer after layer of grace until the irritation becomes smooth and acceptable. What was an intrusion becomes a precious gem for all to admire . . . and for which God receives glory.

- **Getty Hymn:** Within the night I know Your peace; The breath of God brings strength to me

And new each morning mercy flows; As treasures of the darkness grow; As treasures of the darkness grow

Christ Is The Pearl Of Greatest Price

No Other Lover Can Entice

In Each Desire He's All Suffice

He Took God's Wrath In Sacrifice

He Died And Rose For Every Vice

So We Are Cleansed If We're Born Twice

All Things For Good He Works Precise

Down To The Detail His Device

He Gives Commands Not Mere Advice

And Fills Your Life With Pleasure Spice

So Trust The Son Who Paid The Price

You'll Be With Christ Our Paradise!