

The Pearl of Great Price

Text: Matthew 13:45, 46

This very short parable told by Jesus is found only in Matthew. It has been observed by Bible teachers that Jesus is portrayed in Mark as the Servant of God, in Luke as the Son of Man, in John as the Son of God and Matthew as the King of Kings. So, Matthew, true to His theme as a King over a kingdom, depicts our Lord as the Merchant very familiar with pearls and their worth. When He found one pearl of great price, He sold all he had and purchased it. Some have interpreted the pearl of great price as Jesus and we pay all we have for Christ and His salvation. First of all, we do not have the wherewithal or funding to buy our redemption. Secondly, we are not Christians because of what we have done or what we do - we are Christians because of what Christ has done and does in the heart and life of the believer.

1. GOD SEES SOMETHING IN US THAT WE DO NOT SEE IN OURSELVES.

Deuteronomy 7:7: "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people."

There is a unique store in Gloucester, MA. The sign outside had two readings. On one side it read, "We buy old junk." On the other side it read, "We sell antiques." This reminds me of the saying, "One person's trash is another's treasure." Imagine someone immensely interested in old furniture, especially furniture that has become obsolete or distinct to a by-gone era. Imagine a lady of this ilk finds an old gray trunk. She opens the squeaky lid. Though it was rather rough looking on the outside, due to the infrequent opening of this old trunk through the years, the inside was flawless. It was lined with beautiful red velvet, soft to the touch and preserved stainless. As the antique connoisseur rubs her hands over the bottom of the trunk, she feels a slight rise beneath the velvet. Upon examination, she discovers a lever. She pulls the lever and a compartment in the bottom of the trunk opens up. She finds in the compartment a collection of letters, bound neatly by a feminine red ribbon. The curiosity gets the better of her and she finds an old chair nearby and asks the proprietor if she could have permission to sit for a while and examine the find. After graciously consenting, she sits down and carefully pulls the ribbon and begins to read letters dated from the mid-nineteenth century. She presupposes that these are letters from a young man to his wife or fiancé. The writer is telling how he had left New England to go south where he was engaged in fighting. He speaks remorsefully of friends who had been killed. His words are tainted with fear as he contemplates another engagement yet to come. He speaks of the Potomac River that branched into a tributary named the Occoquan River which led into a 32 mile tributary known as Bull Run near the town of Manassas. He writes of Antietam, Charlottesville and Gettysburg. Imagine if you will, the antique collector reading these letters has read nothing of the American Civil War. She has no idea why a student of history would not only treasure these letters, but even submit them to a museum. She hands the letters to the proprietor and makes an offer on the trunk. The old trunk was her interest, not the letters, which, in fact, would dwarf the trunk in value.

In 1989 a Philadelphia financial analyst found a painting for sale in a flea market in Adamstown, PA for four dollars. He purchased the painting, not because he liked it, but because he liked the art-gilded frame around the painting. After making the purchase, the new owner removed the painting and then discovered the frame was crudely made and unsalvageable. So he threw the painting and the frame away, but found a document, folded up, about the size of a business envelope between the painting and the backing. He thought it might be an early 19th-century painting and worth keeping as a curiosity. Come to find out, it was an original copy of the first printing of the Declaration of Independence. It was folded and saved immediately after the printing, because the ink was not yet dry when folded as evidenced from the very first line, "In Congress, July 4, 1776" which shows up in the bottom margin in reverse, as a faint offsetting or shadow printing. It was estimated by Sotheby's that it could be auctioned for between \$800,000 and \$1.2 million. In fact, it was sold in auction on June 4, 1991 for \$2.42 million. In June of 2000, it was purchased by Norman Lear for 8.14 million dollars. The flea market owner of the painting had no idea what was behind the painting.

II Samuel 9:8: "And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" Mephibosheth had nothing to offer the king. He was a fallen, disinherited prince. He was crippled, unable to be conscripted to do battle for the kingdom or work to pay his way in life. He looked at himself as less than a dog, but rather a dead dog. But King David, in keeping his covenant with Jonathan, Mephibosheth's father, set his love on the fallen prince and restored him all that he needed, not only to survive, but thrive! Ephesians 1:6: "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

2. THE KING SURRENDERED HIS CROWN TO GIVE US HIS COURT.

Psalm 24:8: "Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle." Psalm 24:10: "Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah."

II Corinthians 8:9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

When King David was willing to go out to battle, his subjects insisted that he not go lest he perish in the battle. They emphasized his value in II Samuel 18:3b: "...but now thou art worth ten thousand of us...." If this is true of an earthly king, how much more would it be said of the King of Kings? Song of Solomon 5:10: "My beloved is white and ruddy, the Chiefest Among Ten Thousand."

Our Lord was sold for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. Matthew 27:9 says, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value." We see that Judas tried to get rid of the money he took in exchange for identifying Jesus. Matthew 27:5a: "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple...." The Bible informs us in Matthew 27:7, "And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury

strangers in.” This was taken from prophecy almost 500 years before Christ died. Zechariah 11:12, 13: “And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”

Think of it - the price of Christ’s betrayal was used to purchase a field to bury poor people in. Philippians 2:7, 8: “But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” “...Made Himself of no reputation...” is from the Greek expression *heautou keno* meaning, “Christ emptied Himself.” This is called by theologians the doctrine of kenosis. J. J. Müller in his commentary says, “The kenosis is the act of Christ taking on a human nature with all of its limitations, except with no sin. As one Bible scholar wrote, “At His incarnation He remained ‘in the form of God’ and as such He is Lord and Ruler over all, but He also accepted the nature of a servant as part of His humanity.”

3. WE MUST NEVER FORGET THE SACRIFICE THAT IT TOOK TO SAVE US.

Revelation 21:21: “And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”

I believe the Lord shows us the gates of pearl which surround the City of God are there to remind us of the price it took to allow us in Heaven with Him. To form a pearl within the oyster or mollusk requires an irritant to invade the protective shell. Many see it only as sand that has made its way into the soft tissue. But it is much more than that, otherwise the ocean, which is layered with sand beneath and throughout the great bodies of water, would be filled with creatures bearing pearls. The trigger that births the pearl is a grimy sandy-like biological intruder, i.e., a parasitic organism. Then the coating process begins to cover the intruders with nacre. The mantle is a very unique secretory organ and adds many layers of protection and eventually turns the grimy parasites into shimmering pearls. The formation of pearls comes from wounding and healing. So also we, as sinners like parasites, have in mercy and grace been forgiven and covered by Christ’s precious blood. I Peter 1:18, 19: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

-Pastor Pope-