

**Bible Study of the Parables in Matthew's Gospel**  
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**Parables of Jesus. Treasure and Pearl - Matthew 13 vv44-52**

**No.3**

In this study we will consider the last 3 Parables in Matthew ch 13.

- i. Parable of Hidden Treasure
- ii. Parable of the Priceless Pearl
- iii. Parable of the Dragnet.

The Parables of the "Treasure" and the "Pearl" speak of the finding of precious things for which the finder is willing to give everything they have to purchase and possess them.

There are 2 interpretations given by the commentators for these 2 Parables.

1. The MAN is human and finds a treasure that he is willing to give all for to possess it - that treasure being Jesus
2. The MAN is Jesus seeking for the something precious to him and for which he gives all. ie the Church is represented by the treasure or pearl that is found, and for which he is willing to pay the greatest price to possess it.

So - in the Parable of the Treasure the man is human and the treasure is Jesus - whilst in the Parable of the Pearl the MAN is the Son of Man, and the pearl is the church for which he died.

In these 2 parables the man in the parable is not identified, but there is something found that is precious, and worth having at great cost.

This has usually been taken to mean that a man (representing you and me) accidentally finds some treasure while digging in a field that is not his, and immediately goes and buys the field to make what he has found his own.

In the Parable of the Pearl it is again assumed that the man knows and appreciates valuable things and has a collection of such things, but when he sees one pearl of more beauty and value than them all put together he sells the lot to buy this one thing of beauty.

The traditional interpretation of this parable is that the pearl is Jesus which a man will sell all that he has to obtain.

A more recent understanding of this parable is that Jesus is the MAN and the church is the pearl.

We shall look at these parables in this both these ways

**1.The Treasure hidden in a field. Read v44**

Hidden treasure is always exciting - and such children's books as Treasure Island remind us of how often this was the way treasure was kept safe by hiding it in the ground.

This was in the days before people hid their money in Banks and the like.

We still see some who like looking for hidden treasure, and out come their metal detectors to help in the search for something lost, but valuable.

This parable is about finding hidden treasure. This might be after a long search like a gold prospector might be engaged in by searching for years to find the vein of gold that will make him rich. So often he searched in vain.

Or it could be that the man found the treasure by accident as he was doing some digging whilst clearing a field ready for planting.

### **What of the Parable and its meaning to us.**

The treasure is the Kingdom represented by the Jesus as the king.

A man finds this Treasure when he was least expecting it - it was as if by accident as he did some job of work which included digging in a field.. At once he recognised its value.

Now what did he do when he unearthed the treasure? He hid it again. Why?

So that no-one else would come and claim it. For him, it was as we used to say as children when we found something and someone else claimed it as their own - "Finders are keepers".

That is what this man said to himself.

Assuming the field did not belong to him - if it had belonged to an employer whatever he dug up rightfully belonged to the owner and would have had to be turned over to him.

(When I worked in the Atomic Energy Authority we were employed by the Government but anything we discovered in the course of our work did not belong to us but to them)

So the man kept quiet about his discovery, and then set about trying to purchase it for himself - then the treasure would be his.

What did the man find that caused him to act so swiftly and secretly? He found TREASURE

We are not told what kind of treasure, but it was extremely valuable.

Imagine the look on his face when his spade hit something solid. - another rock?

To his surprise it wasn't a stone, but precious metal. He was so surprised, as well as delighted, at his discovery. Then he realised that it was not his yet.

No-one else must see it - so he buried it again.

One thing I am sure he did was to carefully mark the spot so that he could retrieve it in due time.

You can find Jesus as easily as that. Some gold-miners spent a life time searching and finding nothing, whilst others found the richest of veins by accident.

Here Jesus is the Treasure - He is the Saviour -The King who brings his Kingdom in.

When we find the king and crown him we become part of his Kingdom.

Systematic searching is often the only way to find something that is lost.

eg. the woman who lost a piece of silver in the house- She swept it clean until she found it.

But treasure is often found by accident.

A man can find Jesus in the most unlikely places and when he is not looking for him.

I went to church one day and found him - Why didn't I find him on all those other days I went to church? He was there - but it was me that was lost and not him.

Some find him at home - on holiday -but many find him in church.

Whatever the reason people have for going to church finding Jesus should be one of them.

Whatever the reason -or wherever we are- we can find Jesus in places where we least expect to meet him. When we do he becomes precious to us.

Coll.2 v3 "In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"

2Cor. 4 v7 "We have this treasure in earthen vessels"

### **What treasure is this ?**

No less than Jesus himself -and the glorious Gospel of Salvation through him.

Jesus is still hidden to so many, but that means that whether by accident, or intent, he can be found by those who are digging. I cannot describe fully the elation I felt when, without expecting to find him, I did - and in that moment he became precious to me. He was what I wanted more than anything else.

Some things don't at first seem valuable - it may be a Roman coin covered by the dirt of centuries - but when it is cleaned up its true worth can be seen.

Jesus is sometimes like that - He isn't really hidden, but rather he isn't recognised.

He was the king of glory, but that value was obscured by his humanity.

To many he is just ordinary, instead of as to some he is extra-ordinary

Consider the Tabernacle in the O.T. which is a representation of the person of Jesus.

Looking from the outside all you can see is a covering of badger skins. But if you come through the one, and only door, and past the altar of sacrifice- and having been washed in the laver of the Holy Spirit you enter the Holy Place and there you see something altogether different.

From the outside just badgers skins, but from the inside you see the covering of white, blue, red and purple with the gold cherubim embroidered on the covering.

You see the veil made of the same material, and the beauty of it is breath-taking.

Jesus is very ordinary to the casual spectator - but so very beautiful to the diligent seeker.

**He is the treasure** - and when we find him he can belong to us, and in him we have all the riches we will ever need.

cp Eph 1v7 "the riches of his grace"; 1v18 "the riches of his glory";  
2v7 "The exceeding riches of his grace"; 3v8 "the unsearchable riches".

These riches are for those who find the treasure, which is Jesus. the Saviour.

These riches are not earned by working harder, but by digging deeper.

Finding the Saviour and finding the treasure is the same thing.

cp 2 Cor. 8v9 "He who was rich for our sakes became poor so that we who were poor might become rich"

**b) What did this man do next?** He hid what he had found in the field.

It is not clear from the parable who owned the field - This man was perhaps no more than a tenant farmer. From the previous parables in this chapter the "field is the world" and the owner of the field is God. We are the tenants - the occupiers, but not the owners.

Jesus was in the world, but the world did not know him. They knew a carpenter, but not a king.

This man knew what he must do . He must have the treasure at all costs.

He worked out the cost of the field - set that against his total assets in all he owned - and then when he realised that the treasure was bigger than his assets he sold all he had to buy the field and become richer in the process. "I'll buy it no matter how much it costs".

Paul had the same idea -

"I count everything as a loss to gain the knowledge of Christ as my Lord."

This man couldn't beg borrow or steal enough, but he could sell all that he had.

His camel(car), his Hi-fi and TV; the furniture and even the house. -He sold ALL that he had - and then he had enough to buy the field.

When I first realised who Jesus was and the price he had paid for me, I was going to have him as

my Saviour no matter how much it cost. He didn't ask me to sell everything, because whatever I had was never going to be enough.

(Consider when you move house -everything you own goes into on removal van.)

Jesus didn't ask for what I had, but he did expect me to give all of ME for him, as he had given all of himself for me.

Jesus isn't talking here about earthly treasure - he is talking about the kingdom.

Earthly things are likely to get lost, stolen or eaten by rust and moths.

Our treasure is to be laid up in heaven - not buried down here on earth.

When we find the treasure in Christ we are to be ready to give up everything to have that treasure in our lives. That means giving up ourselves and having Jesus rule over us.

Any earthly treasure I have will be left here on earth when I leave it - but anything I deposit in the Bank of Heaven will be there waiting for me when I arrive. Earthly treasure gets less the more you spend - heavenly treasure grows bigger the more you spend it in the king's service.

Is there anything that doesn't get less valuable because of inflation - Only Jesus.

This man in the parable put everything in 2nd place to put having the treasure first.

**c) How much did it cost him** - everything he had.

Peter said to Jesus - "We have left all to follow you - what will our reward be?" Mark 10v28 -

Jesus answered vv 29-30 "No-one who has given up all to follow me will fail to receive a hundred times more in this life- and then eternal life in the age to come"

This is the Paradox in the Parable - When we give everything to have Jesus we never lose, but in him have a treasure without measure.

Paul's testimony was 2Cor 6 vv2-10 "Having nothing yet possessing all things in Jesus".

What we give to have Jesus is never lost.

**d) What was the result ? JOY** With Jesus we have joy in our hearts .

It is not the joy of possessing things, but rather it is his joy in us having Him.

In possessing the "Treasure" we have the Joy of Salvation.

We have never seen Jesus as the disciples did . For us he is like hidden treasure - but we can find him and we can say what Peter later said -

1 Peter 1 v8 - "Though you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls".

Jesus said "Where your treasure is your heart will be also"

Certainly it was joy, real joy for the man who found the treasure and stopped at nothing to make it his own.

We are to do the same with regard to our Treasure, who is Jesus.

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## **2. The Parable of the Pearl - Read v45-46**

As I explained earlier the standard interpretation is similar to that of the Treasure - a man can find the pearl of great price, who is Jesus, and sell all that he has to make this pearl his own".

Indeed the Hymn writer catches this in the line of the hymn -

"I've found the Pearl of greatest price, my heart doth sing for joy"

However, I do not think we should let sentiment precede scripture.

Look at the Parable -

- i. The MAN is singular
- ii. Sinners do not go searching for a Saviour - rather it is He that seeks the lost.
- iii. Sinners could never raise enough to buy Him or what he offers, because he is God's gift to us along with every blessing he brings.

So the alternate meaning I take here to be is that the church is the Pearl for which Christ gave his life to purchase it for himself.

**a) The Preciousness of the Pearl.** Pearls were not precious to the Jews

(Cp Job 28v18 "No mention shall be made of coral or pearls AV ).

Incidentally, pearls are fashioned in the sea rather than in the earth, as other gem stones are.

The disciples may have been surprised by the mention of pearls being precious, but Jesus, as the Creator, knew the origin of pearls.

Pearls are produced by the action of a living organism. ie the oyster is penetrated by a particle of sand which irritates it, and which it covers with layer upon layer of mother of pearl.

So the pearl is formed by the oyster giving up its life by covering what caused it pain..

The church is not an organisation - it is a living organism.

Just a grain of sand wounds the oyster, which gives up its life by covering the offending sand with layer upon layer of mother-of-pearl, in the same way the irritant of sin wounded the heart of Jesus and produced the church.

The Church is the precious pearl.

1 Peter 2 vv4-7 AV says- "To you who believe he is precious" - but a literal translation would say "To you who believe he is the preciousness". We are precious because of him.

**b) The Price of the Pearl** - it was "of great price" - of great value.

Other gems are produced by heat and pressure, but the pearl is produced by a living thing giving up its life to cover the sand that wounds it. The church is the result of the sin wounding the Saviour, and his blood covering that sin up and out of death bringing new life.

This was a pearl of great value - and the value of anything is what is paid for it, as well as the cost of producing it. It cost the life of Jesus to produce something so pleasing to his Father.

**v46** He went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Jesus saw the possibility of the pearl, so he left heaven and came to earth to pay the price to make it his own. What he produced he also purchased.

That means we owe our life to him and he owns us body, soul and spirit.

Our sin wounded him, but his blood was shed as the price of the atonement - which means a covering up of sin. He went - to a cross and by his death produced life by giving his life.

**c) The Purity of the Pearl.** Pearl - pure = Margaret.

The pearl is pure because of the process by which it was formed. The church is pure through the blood of Jesus. The guilt and the grime of the sand of sin have been covered over so it can do no more harm.

We should always remember the great privilege it is to be part of the Church of Jesus Christ. We are His church. - we have been bought by the blood he shed - we are cleansed by that same blood.  
1 John 1v7

**d) The Purpose of the Pearl -**

Other gems have many uses eg Diamonds, being the hardest form of carbon, are used to cut and shape the hardest of metals. Pearls have no such function - pearls are for adornment only.

Jesus is seeking the Pearl of Great price - not to hide or hoard it - but to present it to his Father, for his pleasure and adornment.

cp. Eph 5 v27 "Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her to make her holy by the washing of water through the word -and to present her as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

The world has never seen the true beauty of the church. It has seen many church organisations and denominations - it has seen the church at war with others and sometimes with itself. The world has seen the scaffolding and missed the building behind it.

When the scaffolding is removed then the church will be seen more clearly.

Colossians speaks about the glory of Christ –

Ephesians about the glory of the church - and the church is the glorious inheritance of Christ.  
cp 1v18 "The church is his glorious inheritance in the saints".

God's glory is enhanced when he receives the church produced by the sacrifice of His Son.  
Eph. 5 v32 described the church and Christ as a great mystery. - and so it is.

Indeed it is a mystery how the sinner, whose sin wounded the Saviour, is transformed into the pearl which is pure and precious - and which is presented to the Father by the Son.

There is a big difference between pearls and other precious gem stones.

When a person has diamonds and rubies of great value the first thing they do is to insure them.

The 2nd thing is that they are put in a safe, never to be worn in case anyone steals them.

In fact, a copy of them is made which the owner wears just to let everyone knows that the real thing is in the safe.

What would happen to pearls if you put them in a dark safe?

They would disintegrate and die, because they are the product of a living thing.

Pearls are meant to be worn. Women do not buy pearls - they wear pearls bought for them by their husbands . Husbands buy pearls to give to their wives as an expression of their love and to show their wives off to the world.

The church is like that pearl - it was paid for by Christ- it was meant to be seen by the world and not locked away in some dark corner. The church is to be on display for Jesus.

Here is another fact about pearls - they take up the temperature of the person who is wearing them - So we as the church are to be the same temperature as the one who wants to wear us as an adornment.

So we must look for the kingdom - pray for it - work for its coming. But also remember that the kingdom is already with you because Jesus the Saviour lives in you by His Spirit. He is not only Saviour - he is also Lord and King.

In the ages to come the church, as God's priceless precious pearl, will be the means through which his Grace and glory shines.

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### **3. The Parable of the Dragnet - Read vv47-50**

This parable teaches the same truth as that of the "Tares and wheat". Both lead us to the final Judgement Day and the separation of good and evil

The Gospel net is cast into the deepest water - it is dragged along the sea bottom and in the process of catching fish it also drags up all kinds of rubbish

What happened next? - The good was collected and stored for use - the bad was cast away as useless to anyone.

The teaching contains a warning to each individual to be sure to be part of the "Good", and not be cast away as part of the "Bad".

vv51-52 concluded the Parables in ch.13 - **Have you understood all these things?**  
Would you answer YES as quickly as they did - YES!!!

Then be a true scribe and bring out some of the good things you have understood so that others may understand as well.

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