

Unpacking the Parables

Part 8 - Hidden Treasure and Pearls

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.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. Matthew 13:44-46 (NIV)

Context

Buried Treasure?

People buried treasure to keep it safe. Sometimes they never came back to collect it. The treasure belonged to whomever owned the field.

Pearls of Great Value?

Pearls were the most valuable thing in the ancient world. A pearl of great price could cost the equivalent of 41,000 years of ordinary pay.

The kingdom of heaven is like a hidden treasure

The man was poor. He could never earn the treasure for himself. Selling everything he had was no real sacrifice because the value of the treasure was so much greater than what he had to give up.

He had to take action to get the treasure. The man represents us, and the treasure represents being in relationship with God.

Becoming a Christian is free

We can't earn a place in God's kingdom. It doesn't matter how hard we work, how hard we try, we can never become good enough to be part of it. We can't inherit our place there from our parents or achieve it by going to church. We can only receive it as a free gift from God.

Becoming a Christian changes everything

Even though we can never earn salvation, becoming a Christian means giving up our old life. It changes everything. In order to receive the treasure of a new life with God, we have to choose to give our life to Him.

The kingdom is like a merchant

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. Matthew 13:45-46 (NIV)

The merchant was an expert, who was searching for that special pearl. He was prepared to give all that he had to own it, because he thought it was worth it.

Are these the same parable?

At first glance, this seems to be the same parable. But when you look more closely, it is very different.

TREASURE	PEARL
Found by accident	Found after a search
Man is poor	Merchant is rich
He pays a fraction of the cost of the treasure	He pays the full cost of the pearl
There is no real sacrifice	There is great sacrifice

In this parable, the merchant represents God, and we are the pearl. God gives up that which is most precious to Him – His only Son – to win us back to Himself.

God says we are valuable

God is an expert in valuing things. He shows how valuable we are by what He was prepared to pay for us.

If you think that you are rubbish, you will treat yourself as rubbish, and you will allow other people to treat you as rubbish. We can choose to believe what God says about us.

God loves us as we are, but He is transforming us into His image. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

God sees all people as valuable

Every person you meet is a pearl of great price.

We want to help everyone to find this wonderful treasure. Jesus gave His life for each person – how tragic that He doesn't get all that He paid for!

Would you like to be part of God's kingdom?

If you want to make this decision today, you can pray a prayer like this:

Dear Lord Jesus. Thank you for dying to give me the treasure of a life lived forever with you. I give you my life, the good and the bad. Please forgive me for all my sin and make me new. Amen

Do you know how valuable you are to God?

Many of us believe lies about ourselves and about God.

Father God, I renounce the lie that I am rubbish, and that you don't love the real me. Thank you that you see me as a pearl of great price, and you rejoice over me with singing.

Questions

1. Have you ever given up something you valued to get something you wanted more? How did that feel?
2. What do you think these parables tell us about God? Does God show you anything else through them?
3. Do you believe that God sees you as a pearl of great price? Can you think of other verses that remind us of how much we are valued by God?
4. If you are a Christian, how has it changed your life? What did you have to let go of to get this treasure?
5. If you are not a Christian, what do you think of the idea that life with God is like a treasure? Does it make sense to you?
6. How do you feel about other people being pearls of great price? How does that change the way you behave towards people?