

The Treasure and the Pearl (Matt. 13)

Part 1

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[00:00:01] My subject this afternoon is the treasure and the pearl.

The treasure and the pearl.

In Matthew 13, from which we have read, the Lord indicates, doesn't he, by seven parables the form that his kingdom would take in his absence following his rejection by the Jews.

For the Lord Jesus, the blessed Son of God, was indeed rejected. But it wasn't only as king that he was rejected, was it?

He was rejected as a prophet.

And indeed, if you look back to the previous chapter, chapter 12 and verse 24, he was even rejected as being a good man.

[00:01:01] How very, very solemn.

Do you remember that there they ascribed his words and his actions to Beelzebub, the prince of the demons, a most fearful blasphemy.

As the Lord Jesus, you remember, took up with the Pharisees having made such a terrible accusation against him. The unforgivable sin.

Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Now these two parables that we've read, about in verses 44 to 46, the treasure and the pearl, basically teach, I believe, the same truth.

That is, the great value and the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God.

I believe we have here the divine viewpoint, God's viewpoint, of the kingdom.

[00:02:03] Now if we only had four parables, the first four parables, we might be tempted to inquire, are God's purposes to end in failure?

Are God's purposes to end in failure? Far be the thought.

No, indeed.

The Lord Jesus here is teaching very, very clearly, I believe, that God has something in reserve. A very precious something.

Something very special and very distinctive.

The church or the assembly.

And when I say church, I mean the assembly. And when I say assembly, I mean the church. For both words, both names, are the translation of the same Greek word, ekklesia, meaning the called-out ones, as some of us were reminded quite recently.

[00:03:06] The first four parables, you will notice if you read through this chapter, are spoken to the multitude, to the crowd. And then, after explaining the wheat and the tares parable privately to his disciples, he adds, also privately, three more.

The treasure, the pearl, and the net, or the dragnet.

Now, the dragnet, which I didn't read, the dragnet deals largely with judgment. The final separation of the wicked and the just at the end of the age. But my subject this afternoon is not judgment. It is the precious truth, the precious truth of the assembly, of God's church, God's assembly, the called-out ones.

[00:04:02] The church and Christ's love for it and his joy in it.

Now, these are the things, dear friends, that you and I need to know about and to rejoice in. The church which he loved and in which he finds his joy and will eternally do so, causing him, as is very, very clear, to renounce all that was his, both as man and Messiah, upon this earth, in order that he might possess it. He gave, what? All that he had, that he might possess it.

Now, in Daniel, the prophecy, that wonderful prophecy of Daniel, and in chapter 9, we read that Messiah, the prince, shall be cut off and have nothing.

Daniel was a wonderful man. He lived very close to the Lord, and he prophesied in these terms of the coming one who would be crucified. [00:05:04] Shall be cut off and have nothing, and so it was. It was on the cross. Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ voluntarily gave his life to redeem us and to possess the world which contained the treasure, the people he so much loved.

Now, you notice just two things here. The treasure was discovered. The pearl was sought.

An important distinction, perhaps, it might be felt by some. The treasure was discovered. Now, there are some who teach and who believe, very profoundly, I believe, and very godly men who taught this, that in the treasure we have Israel. I'm not so sure. But let's look at an Old Testament scripture in the book of Exodus, in chapter 19, [00:06:01] where, you remember, Israel is found there, the people are found there at Mount Sinai, and we read the word of God to them in verse 5.

Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar

treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine.

Now, I think this verse clearly indicates Israel as being one of God's treasures. That's very clear, isn't it? But the Jew was nothing new to be discovered. What's he? Nothing hidden to be found, to be discovered by God. Indeed, you can go right back to the days of Abraham to see the beginnings of the people of Israel. Nothing new there. The man's objective, you see, was not the field, was it? [00:07:01] But the treasure that was hid in the field. He finds it and then hides it again. Now, is this Israel, hidden, dispersed throughout the world, until again she turns unto the Lord? Well, that sounds very plausible, but personally one is not convinced by this interpretation.

It's difficult, I find, very difficult to believe that the treasure can be Israel exclusively. There's so much, you see, in both these parables to suggest the church, the assembly of God, the called-out ones. Verse 38 says, the field is the world. The field is the world, yes, this present evil world.

We've heard a lot about that lately, haven't we, from brethren who ministered from this platform during this session, and quite rightly so too. [00:08:01] The world in which we live is evil indeed, increasingly evil, this present evil world. And how careful we who know the Lord ought to be because of that evil, and how we should seek to instruct those who are young in the faith because of the pitfalls that may be before them in this present evil world. Indeed that is so, this present evil world, where Satan, I believe, has laid his polluting hand on every aspect of human life, both secular and religious.

Is that not true? Indeed it is so.

Now, let us note four points in our subject this afternoon. First, the identity of the buyer, the identity of the buyer, the purchaser. Second, the growth of the pearl.

Thirdly, how the theme is developed by the Apostle Paul and through the Apostle Paul in the epistles, in Ephesians and Colossians. [00:09:09] I haven't read from Colossians, but you'll find it there as well. And lastly, the sanctifying and cleansing of the church, the assembly. So let us go back now to Matthew 13 and consider first of all the identity of the buyer, the identity of the purchaser.

Now, there are some, again, who suggest that the purchaser, the buyer, is the sinner, seeking and finding Christ. Well, now, is that a true interpretation according to Scripture? Well, I don't think it is.

I think to suggest that is to turn Scripture on its head. Now, I don't think that is so for a moment, but undoubtedly the truly converted man has found a treasure. [00:10:02] No one would dispute that for one moment. Anyone who is truly saved, really born again, brought into the family of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, such a one has gained a wonderful treasure, but not because of his seeking, but because the Lord sought him and then gave him the faith and the trust to repose that faith and trust in him as his savior. No, I don't believe that that is the thought here. Indeed, the very reverse is taught in Scripture, isn't it? There is none that seeketh after God.

That's a plain statement, isn't it? There is none that seeketh after God. There is none that understandeth. None that seeketh after God. Alas, that is true of us in our natural state. The seeking comes from the Lord. Thank God for that.

He sought us out and gave us the trust, the faith to believe in him. [00:11:04] But when we applied the

seeking to the Lord, oh, how different it is. Indeed, we have the Lord's own wonderful words, don't we? In that lovely little story in Luke 19, the story of Zacchaeus, the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Yes, the Lord Jesus is the seeker.

And also, of course, Christ cannot be purchased, can he? He cannot be bought.

Indeed, if we apply our thoughts to another parable told by the Lord, in Luke 7, I believe it is, the story of the two debtors. You remember the one who owed the 500 pence and the other who owed the 50 pence. What did the Lord say about them when they had nothing to pay? Nothing to pay, nothing wherewith to pay, that is, when they had nothing to pay. [00:12:02] He frankly forgave them both.

No, it seems to be very, very clearly from Scripture that Christ is the man. In the case of the treasure, he bought the field that he might possess the treasure. And he is also the merchantman. He is the buyer, the purchaser in each case. And the treasure, or the pearl, is the church, the assembly.

And isn't it a wonderful thought that in God's eyes, that church, that assembly, is something that is so very, very precious. And the price that was paid, the great price, surely that is Calvary's cross. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great price that he paid to secure his treasure, his pearl. Now this is borne out, of course, isn't it, in the Scripture that we read in Ephesians, Ephesians 5, Christ loved the church.

[00:13:04] Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, his treasure, his pearl.

Now let us notice one or two things about this pearl before we go any further. First please note one pearl, one pearl, one body of all believers.

Yes, one body.

May be in this company here in Wildfell Hall this afternoon. We may come, for all I know, from different fellowships, different companies of the Lord's people. But if each one of us is a true believer in the Lord Jesus, we're in the one body of all believers. Whatever company or sect or denomination we may belong to, for all I know, there is but one pearl, one body of all believers.

Many members, oh yes, many, many members, but one body. [00:14:05] Members making up that body of all believers. One habitation of God, as we read in the Scripture. One dwelling place of God through the Spirit. One building, that is. One habitation of God, one dwelling place of God. One building, many stones.

Many precious stones, living stones, spiritual stones, making up that one building, that wonderful habitation of God through the Spirit. Now this oneness is seen as the work of the Holy Spirit, isn't it? Very clearly in 1 Corinthians 12. By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.

Whether we be Jews or Gentiles, that is the baptism of the Spirit. As I see it from Scripture, that is indeed the baptism of the Spirit. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. [00:15:05] Whether we be Jews or Gentiles.

It isn't that the Jew is excluded, indeed the message is to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. So the identity of the buyer surely is our blessed Lord himself. Now secondly, the growth of the pearl.

The way that the pearl grows.

It's in secret, isn't it? It's in secret.

Only the eye of God, only the eye of God can see the wonderful transformation that takes place within the mollusc, the oyster, as a pearl is formed. Now I don't pretend to be any expert on this subject at all, but the sufficient knowledge that I have gleaned about it fills me with wonder. As I think of the way in which the Church of God is formed in like manner [00:16:02] to the way that the pearl is formed.

It is the product of a living organism.

And now that's true of the Church. A product of a living organism.

Now it's not true of any other precious stone, is it? Only of the pearl can that be said to be true. You may think of a diamond, you can think of any gem, a sapphire or a ruby or whatever you think of. Not one of them, of not one of them can it be said that they're a living organism as is true of the pearl.

It all begins apparently by a parasite intruder which comes into the shell of the oyster or mollusc. Not necessarily an oyster but usually so.

And this wonderful fluid called nacre or the more common expression mother of pearl is distilled or exuded from the oyster [00:17:03] which covers and eventually kills this parasite intruder completely enveloping it and then more and more of this lustrous fluid is added and sets upon the object until in the end a most wonderful, beautiful and valuable object is formed.

The pearl. The pearl.

And you know as well as I do that in the past centuries men have risked their lives to go down into the depths of the ocean to secure these precious pearls. Some indeed have lost their lives.

And in securing this pearl our blessed saviour gave his life.

He gave all that he had.

I ask you could he have given more? He gave all that he had.

Now this repeated process reminds us I think [00:18:04] this adding of this fluid it reminds us surely of Acts chapter 2 doesn't it where we read that the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

And that's still going on today. Thank God it is.

Thank God it is.

And doesn't it also remind us of Peter's confession of the Lord Jesus when he said remember how the Lord challenged Peter and said Whom do you say that I am?

And Peter said thou art the Christ. Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. And the Lord's reply that is the Lord's reply based on Peter's confession on this rock on this rock I will build my church.

The Lord Jesus is both the architect and the builder of his church, his assembly.

And dear friends let's make no mistake about it [00:19:03] his purpose will be achieved.

His purpose is being achieved. Souls are being saved.

Oh wouldn't we love to see more saved within our own assemblies, our own local assemblies. A matter of considerable exercise I'm sure to all of us it ought to be if it isn't. But souls are being saved.

And dear friends don't let's pour scorn or belittle the efforts of those evangelists whom God is using today for souls are being blessed. Souls are being saved.

Let us pray for these men whom God is using and let us further pray that some of those dear souls may find their place amongst us gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus according to New Testament teaching as is the way to gather.

The pearl is still growing.

[00:20:02] A living organism.

The Lord adding to the church daily such as should be saved.

Now thirdly how the truth of the treasure and the pearl is developed as it is of course in the epistles, in Ephesians and Colossians. Now let's turn then to the epistles of the Ephesians and let us see what we read there.

In Ephesians 5 the scripture we read Husbands in verse 25 of Ephesians 5 Husbands are exhorted to love their wives even as Christ loved the church.

When did Christ love the church? Do you think?

Oh it was before Calvary I'm sure of that. It was before Bethlehem. We've been thinking of that recently haven't we over the Christmas time. Before Calvary, before Bethlehem [00:21:02] before Isaiah and Micah prophesied of his coming as he did come to Bethlehem before these two great men of God before Moses who prophesied of the one to come a prophet like unto me when did Christ first love the church? I think we find the answer in the fourth verse of the first chapter of this epistle. When chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world that's when Christ loved the church way back in eternity in the counsels of the Godhead, the eternal Godhead he foresaw it seems to me in the field of the world his treasure, the one pearl of great price.

You know C.H. Spurgeon a man for whom I have great admiration from what I've read about him a very godly and much used man of God [00:22:01] C.H. Spurgeon couldn't accept that this description

was true of poor sinners and I find it difficult looking at it from that point of view yet it is true, it is true those redeemed by his precious blood are precious they are precious in his sight I came across something written by that dear man of God F.W. Faber recently he lived many, many, many years ago this is something he wrote that thou should so delight in me and be the God thou art it is darkness to my intellect but sunlight to my heart isn't that true? isn't that wonderfully true? it touches our hearts for we by his grace formed the church and he loved us and gave all that he had that he might possess us in his church and there's another little verse I've been trying to recall [00:23:03] who the author might be and I can't for the life of me find out who it was someone suggested when I asked him if he could tell me who the hymn writer was he said well maybe you composed it yourself I don't know I have heard the devil occasionally he loved the souls for whom he died not ours to question why but ours to fall before his feet who came to die yes indeed he loved us he loved the church and gave himself for it and then we read of the mystery the mystery thank God it's a mystery that's revealed no longer a mystery no longer a secret the mystery was of course the truth of the assembly the truth of the church hidden as we read in the scripture hidden in old testament times but now made known through the apostle Paul in the new testament [00:24:01] Paul says and oh Paul had every right to say it didn't he? for he was specially commissioned of God to reveal this mystery this secret Paul says in verse 32 this is a great mystery it is indeed a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the church Christ and the church oh dear friends what is the church apart from Christ? we might well ask the question it isn't just a mystery concerning the church it's concerning Christ and the church what is the church apart from Christ? such a church would have no beauty no value no form at all indeed apart from him as we learn from scripture the professing church degenerates into Babylon the apostate church but united to him it is the church which is his body of which he is the glorious head in heaven [00:25:03] hallelujah for such a saviour for such a God the mystery of the truth of the assembly unknown in Old Testament days but now revealed through the apostle Paul so wonderfully and so very very clearly that both Jews and Gentiles should know of the unsearchable riches of Christ and lastly the sanctifying and the cleansing of the church the pearl for which Christ gave all that he had he gave all that he had oh dear friends we think, don't we at times especially on Lord's Day morning of how much he gave how much he did give how much he gave before those awful three hours of darkness he gave his back to the smiters he gave so much [00:26:02] he gave his very life and in those three hours he bore the judgment of God against your sin and mine the pearl for which Christ gave all that he had now here in the sanctifying and cleansing of the church of which we read in verse 26 and then in verse 27 here we see his purpose, don't we his wonderful purpose to set apart from the world his treasured possession now I understand that any deformity or blemish as it's like might be described as a spot or wrinkle in a pearl can be removed by a skillful owner who can doubt and who can question the skill of the one who owns and possesses us who can doubt his skill as the one who is there now in heaven itself at the right hand of God carrying out this wonderful work [00:27:02] of sanctifying and is setting apart and cleansing his church this is the loving service that our blessed Lord is doing now he gave himself yes, that is true but that is past, that's the cross, isn't it and throughout eternity we shall praise him for the death of the cross will we not but now he sets us apart from the world to himself and cleanses us how? by the washing of water by the word the washing of water by the word oh, there's no question here of a fresh application of the blood oh dear friends, don't make that mistake no, no, it isn't that at all it's the moral cleansing in the believer's walk and ways by the washing of water by the word by the word that is the scriptures oh dear friends, it's a sad thing to me [00:28:03] that in so many of our assemblies the bible reading is so neglected we need the washing of water by the word we need to read it daily, privately regularly morning and evening and at any time the Lord gives us opportunity or leisure to do so let's be soaked in the word of God this is the means by which the Lord cleanses his set apart his sanctified people in John 13 the Lord does this doesn't he in a wonderful way in an individual way and so he taught his

disciples and ourselves a wonderful lesson, didn't he? you read that feet washing episode in John 13 and it touches your heart it does indeed but here it's not individual it's collective his church his assembly his body his pearl of great price [00:29:01] verse 29 reminds us no man hateth his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it even as the Lord the church we're members of his body and so he nourishes us so he cherishes us for we read we are members of his body of his flesh and of his bones now the reference here as I'm sure many of you know is really to Genesis 2 the story of our first parents as Eve was part of Adam you remember how Adam was caused to go into that deep sleep and the Lord took that rib from Adam and he formed Eve as Eve was part of Adam so the church is part of Christ his body and his bride for that thought comes in doesn't it with Adam and Eve what an incentive oh dear Christian friends what an incentive these things should be to us [00:30:02] to be subject to be subject to the washing of water by the word by our blessed Lord appreciating that this is the way in which he does this cleansing having set us apart to himself and remembering too that this touches our fellowship and you know fellowship is a very precious thing isn't it how we enjoy fellowship the one with the other and this touches upon it we read about it don't we in chapter 4 where we read that we are members one of another well of course we are if we are members of the body we are members one of another ah dear friends it means this we belong to each other because we belong to the Lord and that makes our fellowship precious indeed does it not we belong to each other because we belong to the Lord what a sacred bond exists [00:31:02] between the people of God would that we appreciated it more ah dear friends I believe that very soon maybe the Lord will come we so often say this don't we very soon the Lord may come I found myself wondering around Christmas time will the Lord come in this new year or will he come before the old year is out will the Lord come in 1986 he may well do he may well do the Lord is coming and soon the church which is his body and his bride will be caught up to meet him no more sad divisions and they are sad no more sad divisions no more spots no more wrinkles no more blemishes he shall present us to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle [00:32:01] or any such thing did you notice as we sang it that hymn how I love it that hymn of J.G. Dex with which we began our meeting and the last verse particularly soon soon shall come that glorious day when seated on thy throne thou wilt to wandering worlds display that we with thee are one we the members of the body he the glorious head in heaven then not I fear until then in a fullest sense of the word then truly we shall be to the praise of his glory may God bless his word for his name's sake Amen