

THE MERCHANT MAN'S MISSION, OR,

The Pearl of Great Price: Mat 13:45,46

With the rise of John the Baptist's ministry in the third chapter of Matthew, the Kingdom of heaven was given new focus. John preached it as a place under the rule of God. Consequently, all those whose hearts were not submitted to God's dominion in their lives were in need of repentance. And believe me, they came by the scores to receive baptism in Jordan's river. The initiatory act was a proof of wholehearted commitment to the Lord of Israel. Historically, we find examples of the initiate wading out into the river on his own, while the baptizer is along the banks, and immersing himself. Biblically, we read of people going down into the water with a minister, of one type or another, and being submerged.

In Matthew 4:17 Jesus begins to preach the Kingdom and in Matthew 10:7, his own disciples are sent to proclaim this same message around Israel. The newness of its announcement demanded its continual description. People knew so very little in the way of spiritual things that teaching was an important function in the communities of the Jews. Not that there were not rabbis by the plenty, but even they seemed foolish when asking and answering questions next to the God/man—Jesus.

So to illustrate the Kingdom of heaven in sensible terms, Jesus utilized 'things' that both, dignified and common people would understand. Today's parable is popular known to be a about a pearl. But, first allow me to ask the question "what is a parable?" From Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic, it is an illustrated story containing many intended truths; truths which may be heard on a variety of levels. In Matthew 13:12, 12 Jesus defines the recipients of these truth. He states plainly that the mysteries are not for unbelievers but for disciples, disciplined ones. Why attempt to explicate the book of Revelation to one who is unsaved? Why try and explain Old Testament shadows to persons who are not born again? Even Jesus, in John 3, proves the ignorance of a man named Nicodemus, and he possessed some of the best rabbinic knowledge of the day. Some things can only be understood in light of the Cross of Jesus

Under the Old Covenant, rubies, naturally, were valued as jewels and there are many scriptures to attest this: Prov 3:15; 8:11; 20:15. Yet, by the time of Christ pearls had become highly esteemed for their beauty, as well as, their price. It is amazing that something so small, could be

formed from accretions around a grain of sand. Oceans of water shroud the whole process of change as pearls are formed into precious objects. No less important is the hidden work which occurs as the Lord works deep within your soul to transform you more and more into the glorious image of Christ. This process takes time and it happens over a period of time to be determined by God.

The man in the parable found a pearl that he placed a high value upon. This value led him to seek to acquire the rights to this jewel. It is here that our intentions must be clear and wholly. Have we found something so precious that we would be willing to sell all for its procurement? Cleopatra had a costly pearl of about 10 million in Roman coinage. She boasted of its uniqueness, but, she had no relationship with the living God. He is the pearl of great price and he is to be esteemed above all others. As a rose of Sharon or a lily of the valley, the Lord exemplifies all those beauties and wonders which should occupy a person's mind.

Years ago, the Lord came to me in my gutter and then, in one moment, changed me into a new creature in Christ. The entire process of regeneration brought me from a state of guilt and shame to one of innocence and hope. His love as a banner over me became a shield to protect me during the long dark nights of Satan's accusations. So often reminded of what I once was, Jesus brought me over into the light to be able to see the significance of His blood and its power to redeem. If you are not counted among the number of the redeemed as of yet, then, call on Jesus and he is here make you a pearl of great price.

He gave up all for you purchase. He sold all that he had in order for you to be able to be free from sin. He mounted an old rugged cross to deliver you from infirmity and grief. So why not offer unto a real sacrifice in thanksgiving by surrendering your heart & life to Him?

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE. John3:16