

Entering the Kingdom

Scripture: Matthew 13:44–46

Code: 2303

INTRODUCTION

The topic of the two parables our Lord gave in Matthew 13:44-46 could be entitled, "The Incomparable Value of the Kingdom." The great saint Thomas Guthrie, writing about the value of salvation, said this: "In the blood of Christ to wash out sin's darkest stains, in the grace of God to purify the foulest heart, in peace to calm life's roughest storms, in hopes to cheer guilt's darkest hour, in a courage that defies death and descends calmly into the tomb, in that which makes the poorest rich and without which the richest are poor indeed, the Gospel has treasure greater far than east or west unfold, and its rewards more precious are than all the stores of gold!" (The Parables [London: Alexander Strahan, 1866]). Our Lord said basically the same thing in Matthew 13:44-46: There is nothing in all the universe to match the priceless value of the Kingdom.

Let's look now at the parables, and then we'll look at the principles they teach.

I. THE PARABLES

A. The Parable of the Treasure (v. 44)

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy of it goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

1. The Practice

Burying one's valuables was a very common practice of the people in our Lord's time. Today, we put our money in a savings and loan, bank, stocks, bonds, securities, or real estate. But in those days, there were no banks for the common people (Only wealthy people had access to banks, but in those days banks were not very safe places to keep valuables in.). It was typical for people to bury anything they had that was of great value. That was especially true of Palestine because it was a place of war. Its history has been filled with battles. In order to keep conquerors from taking their valuables, the people would take them to a field or marked place and bury them, with the intention of recovering them later. The earth was a veritable storage house.

2. The Practice

According to the parable, a man was in a field, and he found a treasure there. The parable does not explain why he was in the field; he may have been employed by the owner of the field to work there. He probably came across the treasure while plowing the field. When he found the treasure, he buried it again, and sold everything he possessed so he could buy the field, and gain the treasure in it.

In those days, it was not unusual for someone to find something of value in a field. In Matthew 25:14-30, our Lord tells a story about a man who gave talents (money) to his servants. The first servant was given five talents, and the second was given two talents. They invested those amounts and multiplied their master's money. The third servant, however, buried the one talent given to him in the ground. The master said he should have invested it and received interest on it. The story shows that there were some people who didn't want to invest their money; rather, they preferred to bury it.

Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, speaks of "the gold and the silver and the rest of that most precious furniture which the Jews had, and which the owners treasured up underground against the uncertain fortunes of war" (William Barclay, The Gospel of Matthew, vol. 2 [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958], pp. 93-94). It wasn't uncommon at that time for a person who was plowing

or digging in a field to inadvertently come across a treasure.

3. The Principle

There is a question people frequently ask about this parable: How could Jesus tell a story about a man who did something that was wrong? People think that the man behaved unethically by hiding the treasure again and buying the field without telling the owner about the treasure. Let's look at the answer to that question before we get to the main point of the parable.

First, Jewish rabbinic law said that "if a man finds scattered fruit, scattered money...these belong to the finder" (William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 2 [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958], pp. 94-95). Because the man who found the treasure was within the bounds of the Jewish rabbinic law, the people listening to the parable would not have perceived the man's actions as unethical.

Second, the treasure that was hidden in the field did not belong to the man who owned the field. If he had owned it, he wouldn't have sold the field without digging up the treasure. He didn't know it was there. Apparently it had belonged to a previous owner of the field, who had probably died in battle or by accident, which prevented him from recovering it. Because the owner of the field didn't own the treasure, the finder of the treasure had prior right to it. Jewish law said that he had the right to claim it.

Third, the man was very fair. If he was not an honest man, he would have taken the treasure and left. He would not have gone through all the trouble of buying the field. You say, "Maybe his conscience bothered him, or his father-in-law or another relative told him what he should do."

I thought about something that shows us how honest this man was: He could have taken the treasure, liquidated a portion of it, and used that money to buy the field. But he didn't do that. Even though he knew that Jewish law gave him a right to claim the treasure, he didn't use any of it to purchase the field. Instead, he liquidated everything he owned to buy the field. He knew that was the right way to get the treasure. The man did not do anything unethical--he defrauded no one.

The point of the parable is this: a man found something so valuable, that he sold everything he had to get it. He was so ecstatic about finding the treasure that he was willing to do whatever he needed to purchase it.

Let's look at the second parable in Matthew 13:44-46:

B. The Parable of the Pearl (vv. 45-46)

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man, seeking fine pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

1. The Pursuit for Pearls

The "merchant man" (Gk. *emporos*) was a man who would buy things wholesale and then sell them to a retailer. In the parable, he is seeking fine pearls. That was common for entrepreneurs to do in that day--they would be wholesaling pearls and looking for high quality pearls for themselves. In those days, people who wanted to diversify their investments would invest in pearls. Pearls were the equivalent of what diamonds are today. They were the most valuable gem in the world at that time. If you owned pearls, you owned a fortune.

It is incredible what was involved in pearl hunting. Pearls were found in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. The price to pay in obtaining them was great--many people died from pearl hunting. They did not have the equipment that is available today for pearl diving. Rather, a pearl diver would tie rocks to his body, jump over the side of a little boat, go down into the dangerous waters infested with sharks and other creatures, and scour the mud below for oysters. A pearl diver had to hold his breath during the whole dive, and hope that he wouldn't burst and die.

2. The Perspective of Pearls

a. In the World A pearl that was perfect and beautiful was priceless. The Talmud said that "pearls are beyond price." The Egyptians actually worshiped the pearl, and the Romans copied that practice. When women wanted to show their wealth, they put pearls in their hair (1 Tim. 2:9). The wife of the

Roman emperor Caligula, Lollia Paulina, once went to a dinner party with pearls on her hair, ears, neck, and fingers that would be worth \$36 million today. The historian Pliny said that Cleopatra had two pearls that were each worth half a million dollars at that time (and money had twenty times more buying power then than it does now!). When Roman emperors wanted to show how rich they were, they dissolved pearls in vinegar and drank them in their wine.^b In the Word Our Lord said in Matthew 7:6 that we are not to cast our pearls before swine. In other words, "Don't give something valuable to a pig; that is a foolish thing to do!" The book of Revelation describes pearls as objects of value and beauty (Rev. 17:4; 18:12, 16), and says that there will be pearls in heaven (Rev. 21:21). Pearls were perceived in those days the same way we perceive diamonds today--they were of great value. The parable describes a man who went around seeking fine pearls and marketing them to retailers because he could sell them at a profit. They were also a good way of diversifying one's investments. One thing a smart investor didn't do (and still doesn't) was to invest all that he had into one thing. But that is exactly what the two men did in the parables: The first man sold everything he had to buy the field with the treasure, and the second man sold everything he had to buy one pearl. Now that we've had a chance to learn a little bit about the parables, let's look at...

II. THE PRINCIPLES

There are six principles to be learned from the parables. The first principle is that...

A. The Kingdom Is Priceless

Both parables teach us the incomparable value of the Lord's Kingdom. A person is brought into the Kingdom by Christ's gift of salvation. When a person is saved, he will have the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. He can experience the preciousness of being in the Kingdom and the fellowship of the King as a subject of the Sovereign. The blessedness of the Kingdom is so valuable that a person would have to be a fool to not be willing to sell everything he has to gain it. Nothing comes close in value. Christ and His Kingdom are a treasure that is rich beyond comparison: it is incorruptible, undefiled, and eternal. That treasure is lying in the field of this poverty-stricken, accursed world, and is sufficient to eternally enrich every one of the earth's poor, miserable, blind, and naked inhabitants. Salvation, forgiveness, love, joy, peace, virtue, goodness, glory, heaven, and eternal life are all in that treasure. Both the treasure and the pearl express the value of salvation. In his hymn "I've Discovered the Way of Gladness," Floyd W. Hawkins said,

I've found the pearl of greatest price
Eternal life so fair,
'Twas through the Savior's sacrifice
I found that jewel rare.

The eternal value of salvation outstrips the value of all the fine pearls in the world or things that might be found in a field. How little does the world know the gem that salvation is! How the world involves itself in the things that are valueless!

The second principle in the parables is that...

B. The Kingdom Is Not Superficially Visible

1. The Worth of the Kingdom Unrealized

The treasure in Matthew 13:44 was hidden; it wasn't lying on the surface of the ground. The merchant had to search for the pearl. In the same way, the value of salvation is not apparent to men. The world looks at Christians and doesn't understand why they worship God. They don't understand why a person would want to give his life to Christ and live by a code of ethics that goes against the grain of man's lusts. They don't understand why Christians value that so highly. First Corinthians 2:14 says, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him...." Second Corinthians 4:4 says that "the god of this age hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." The Kingdom and the Word are not that apparent to men.

In the parable of the pearl, the merchant had to search for the pearl. In the parable of the treasure, the man discovered the treasure, and pursued to obtain it. But some people never bother to look beyond the surface of things. They are so busy fooling around with the superficial things in life that they never look for hidden treasure. One writer said, "Under the form of man--under the privacy and poverty of a Nazarene, was the fullness of the Godhead hid that day from the wise and prudent of the world. The light was near them, and yet they did not see; the riches of divine grace were brought to their door, and yet they continued poor and miserable." That is true: There have been many times when a Christian would give a description of the treasure or the pearl to a person, only to have that person reject it. Nonbelievers do not understand the inestimable value of salvation. That is why the Lord said in Matthew 7:14, "...narrow is the gate, and hard is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." That is why Jesus said in Matthew 11:12 that the Kingdom must be taken by force. It must be pursued.

2. The Way to the Kingdom Unsearched

The Kingdom is valuable, but it is also hidden from the people who do not want to look hard for the truth that is hidden in the Word of God. The Lord said in Luke 13:24 that men must "strive to enter in at the narrow gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." That was true of the pearl that the merchant found: Although he didn't have to dig the pearl out of the mud from the bottom of the ocean, a pearl diver had to go through incredible circumstances before he found the pearl. In the two parables we see that, in a sense, the message of salvation is hidden. The world doesn't readily see it.

Jesus said in John 5:40 that some people would not come to Him that they might have life. He told them to "search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me" (Jn. 5:39). John said of Jesus, "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (Jn. 1:10-11). Those who have a superficial outlook on life and do not think of searching for something that is deep and of true value will not find the truth. The truth is not found superficially. There has to be a desire to search for it. The man who found the treasure in the field had to be willing to pursue the ownership of what he found.

The third principle of the Kingdom is that...

C. The Kingdom Is Personally Appropriated

That is the crux of the parables. Each of the two men in the separate parables finds something that he personally appropriates. That shows us that you can be under the dominion of God and not be a member of the Kingdom. Everyone in the universe is under God's rule, because He is the Sovereign of the universe. Those who are on the earth are, in a sense, in the Kingdom; but many of those on earth are not subjects of the King. In the same way, there are many people in the church who are not Christians.

Although the world is under the rule of Jesus Christ, not all of the people in it are a part of His true Kingdom. That's why in Matthew 8:12 Jesus said to the Jewish people, "...the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." In other words, there are some Jewish people that, despite being under God's covenant with Israel, are never going to personally come to know God. Paul said in Romans 2 that circumcision is not of the flesh, but of the heart (vv. 25-29). In Romans 9:6 Paul said, "...For they are not all Israel, who are of Israel." A person could be Jewish and under the rule of God, yet not be a true member of the Kingdom.

That is still true of people today. There are people that are in the Kingdom on earth, but have never appropriated the Kingdom in their lives. The two parables in Matthew 13:44-46, then, are focusing on the personal appropriation of the Kingdom. Before a person can personally appropriate the Kingdom, he must come to the point where he sees the value of the Kingdom. God has offered something of true value to men, yet it's incredible the extremes people go to find things that are worthless.

The fourth principle to be learned from the parables is that...

D. The Kingdom Is the Source of Joy

In verse 44, we find that the man's response to finding the treasure was one of joy. With joy he sold everything he had to be able to buy the field with the treasure. The basic desire of all human beings is to be happy. You say, "I know some people who love misery." It's true there are some people who are happy when they're miserable. But realize that if being miserable is what makes them happy, they are still seeking happiness. The world is seeking for happiness. People want to feel good. The Lord knows that. He said to His disciples in John 15:11, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." In 1 John 1:4, John said, "...these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." Our Lord said in John 16:24, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Paul said in Romans 14, "For the kingdom of God is...righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (v. 17). In the benediction in Romans 15:13, Paul said to the Romans, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy...." People want to experience joy. You can find true joy by discovering the Kingdom of heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Kingdom is precious and hidden. The person who personally appropriates the Kingdom will find the source of true joy. The man who found the treasure sold everything he had to be able to purchase the treasure that gave him joy. There's nothing wrong with that; the Lord wants us to rejoice. The Bible says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). Christians should rejoice more than other people, for they have found treasure.

Let's look at the fifth principle:

E. The Kingdom Is Entered Under Different Circumstances

There are some similarities between the two parables in Matthew 13:44-46: Each parable has a man; both men found something of great value; in both cases they recognized that great value and were willing to pay any price to obtain what they found. There is one big difference between the two parables: In the parable of the treasure, the man made his find by accident. In the parable of the pearl, the man was searching for pearls when he found the one of great value. The first man didn't know what he was looking for; the second man did. What does that tell us?

1. The Stumbling

The man in the field was not looking for treasure. He was working in the field, possibly plowing it or building something. By working, he was seeking sustenance for his life. In the routine of doing that, he stumbled across a fortune.

There are people who enter the Kingdom like that. The Apostle Paul was not seeking to enter the Kingdom—he thought he was in it. He was on his way to Damascus to kill Christians when God spoke from heaven and redeemed Paul (Ac. 9:1-6). A thirsty Samaritan woman who went to a well to get a drink of water went home redeemed (Jn. 4:7-29, 42). A man who had been born blind and just wanted to be able to see was not only healed, but also redeemed (Jn. 9:1-38). There are some people who go to church to mock the preacher, but then get saved. There are people who aren't looking for the treasure, yet they stumble upon it.

Charles Hadden Spurgeon, when he was young, attended church only because he thought it was the right thing to do. He didn't know Christ, and he wasn't seeking Christ. He was content with his religiosity. When he was fifteen years old, he decided he should go to church on New Year's day. There was a bad blizzard that day, and he could not make it to the church he usually attended. Instead, he turned down a court and went to a small Methodist church. The preacher who was supposed to speak that day never made it because of the weather. One of the church officers went forward and conducted the service before the congregation of about fifteen people. According to Spurgeon, the man was very stupid. He kept reading the same text throughout the service because he had nothing else to say: "Look unto Me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." Then something about young Spurgeon caught the preacher's eye. He said, "Young man, you look very miserable. You will always be miserable in life and miserable in death, unless you obey my text."

Then he shouted, "Young man, look to Jesus!" Spurgeon said he looked, and the darkness rolled away and he saw the Son. He hadn't been searching for anything, but it got him anyway. He stumbled upon a fortune. Few people have ever lived and affected as many souls as Charles Hadden Spurgeon. Whoever that stupid man was who kept repeating the text to the church had God working through him.

2. The Searching

The merchant man knew what he was looking for. He wasn't content with superficiality--he was seeking something of genuine value. He was like the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-38, Cornelius in Acts 10:1-8, 30-33, Lydia in Acts 16:14, the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:27-34, and the Bereans in Acts 17:10-12). The merchant man was the kind of person who was seeking God--seeking for something of true value. During his search he didn't know that he would find what he was looking for all in one pearl. He was looking for things that were valuable. He was looking for goodness, honesty, virtue, forgiveness, peace, joy, heaven, salvation, and God. He may have thought he could find them all over the place--in a multitude of pearls. But everything he needed was in one pearl.

So, there are people that stumble into the Kingdom (from God's viewpoint, the stumbling wasn't accidental), and there are people that search for the Kingdom. The Kingdom is entered under different circumstances.

Let's look at the last principle:

F. The Kingdom Is Made Personal by a Transaction

In the first parable, the word "buyeth" is used, and in the second parable, the word "bought" is used. Some people get nervous about that and say, "Wait a minute, are those parables saying that a person must buy his salvation?" In a sense, the parables say the men did buy their salvation, but you have to understand what is meant by that. Both the treasure and the pearl were bought with money, according to the parables. But those were only stories. The Bible says you can't buy your salvation with money. Matthew 19:24 says that a rich man can no more buy his way into the Kingdom than a camel can go through the eye of a needle. Romans 3:21-26 tells us that salvation is a free gift from God. Ephesians 2:9 says that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast."

1. The Character of the Transaction

Isaiah 55:1 is a great Old Testament passage that talks about salvation by grace. It says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money; come, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." There is a transaction made to purchase salvation, but it's not with money or good works. The transaction is this: You give up all you have for all He has. Let me explain that using Scriptures, because I don't want that to be misunderstood.

a. Luke 9:57-62 Luke 9:57 says, "And it came to pass that, as they went on the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow Thee wherever Thou goest." The man who came up to Jesus was saying that He wanted to be a follower of Jesus. The Lord said to Him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (v. 58). In other words, "Here's the price for following Me: You give Me your comfort and I'll give you My Kingdom." The man didn't like those terms, and didn't make the transaction. In verse 59, Jesus asked another man to follow Him. The man said, "...Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father" (v. 59). What's interesting there is that the man's father wasn't even dead yet. The man wanted to wait for his inheritance. Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (v. 60). That man didn't want to give up his inheritance, so he didn't make the transaction. Another man, in verse 61, said, "Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, who are at home at my house." Jesus said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (v. 62). In other words, "You can't plow a straight furrow while looking in the opposite direction." That man was not willing to give up his family. b. Matthew 10:37-39 The issue is whether a person is willing to give up everything he has to receive Jesus. The Lord said in Matthew 10:37, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or

daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me." If you are not willing to give up something that needs to be given up, such as your family, then you're not going to enter the Kingdom. Continuing on, Jesus said, "And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it" (vv. 38-39). That's the transaction: You give up all that you are and receive all that He is. That's how one receives salvation.c. Matthew 16:24In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said to His disciples, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." The basic principle in salvation is that a person gives himself up to make Christ the ruler of his life.d. Matthew 19:16, 21In Matthew 19, a rich young ruler came to Jesus and said, "...what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (v. 16). Jesus said, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me" (v. 21). Jesus was saying, "If you want My treasure, then give away all of yours." He wasn't saying that if the rich man gave all his money to the poor, he would be saved. A person becomes saved when he is willing to abandon everything he has to affirm that Christ is the Lord of his life. A person must exchange his sin and self-will for Christ's leadership.

2. The Comprehension of the Transaction

I don't think everyone understands that completely at the moment of their salvation, but true salvation is marked by a willingness to give up one's self. A person doesn't become saved by stopping his sinning, cursing, drinking, wife beating, arguing, fighting, and lusting before coming to Christ. A person can't get rid of all of those things by himself. A person becomes saved when he exchanges all of his own will, strength, and resources for Christ's strength and power. That's the transaction: A willingness to abandon everything for Christ's lordship.

There is an illustration of that in Philippians 3. Paul lists here the things that had once given him confidence in his flesh--the things he felt gave him the right to be saved: "[I was] circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (vv. 5-6). Paul had been proud that he was Jewish and self-righteous. But when he was confronted by Christ, he said, "...what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (v. 7). Paul literally said, "I consider all the works of my flesh to be dung (manure), that I may gain Christ." That was like the man buying the treasure and the merchant buying the pearl. Paul liquidated all of his self-righteousness, resources, and self-will for the lordship of Jesus Christ. Paul may not have understood all of the implications of what he said, but the willingness was there to give up himself for Christ. Paul said that any price was worth sacrificing just to be found in Christ (v. 9), to know Him (v. 10), and to attain the resurrection of the dead (v. 11).

I think that when people present the gospel, they don't stress the cost of following Christ enough. We are to call for sinners to make a transaction. Jesus said in Luke 14:28, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it?" He added in verse 31, "Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" A person must realize there is a cost to following Christ. It's worth it, though. In the same way that the treasure and the pearl were both worth everything their purchasers owned, following Christ is worth any cost.

CONCLUSION

I once read a story to my daughter about a caterpillar named Stripe. He became bored with just crawling around in a field. One day, when he was looking off in the distance, he saw a pillar going up into the sky. He thought, "I wonder what that is." He crawled toward the pillar, and saw that it was a pillar of caterpillars climbing upward. He couldn't see the top of the pillar because it went up into a cloud. He thought, "Maybe that's what caterpillars are supposed to do--climb caterpillar pillars." He got on the caterpillar pillar and started to climb up. The only way to do that was to step on other

caterpillars' heads, so he kept pushing his way up. Every once in a while, he would ask another caterpillar, "What is at the top of the pillar?" They all said, "We don't know, but everyone is going up there, so it must be something important."

On his way up, he stepped on the head of a little yellow caterpillar that was very pretty. He felt bad about that, and did something someone isn't supposed to do when he is stepping on others' heads--he looked her in the eye. He thought, "She's a lovely little caterpillar." He said to her, "Maybe it would be better not to climb this caterpillar pillar, but to go back to the field and just hug a lot." The two of them worked their way down the caterpillar pillar into the field, and hugged a lot. After a while, hugging got a little boring, and Stripe said, "I'm going to go back up the caterpillar pillar and see what's up there." She said, "I can't go back up that," so Stripe left her.

Lonely, the pretty yellow caterpillar was crawling around in a field when she saw something funny hanging from a branch. It was half of a little case and half of a caterpillar. She said to the caterpillar, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm spinning a cocoon." She asked, "Why are you doing that?" The caterpillar said, "Because I'm going to die." She said, "Why do you want to die?" He said, "Because if I die, I will be born again as a butterfly." She said, "Are you sure? Suppose you aren't born as a butterfly?" He said, "I will become born again as a butterfly, because that's what caterpillars are made to be. But they have to die first."

She thought about that for a long time, because doing that was a big decision. Finally, she decided she'd be willing to die and be born as a butterfly. She realized that if she did that, she wouldn't have to climb the caterpillar pillar; she could fly over the top and look down to see what was up there. She spun a cocoon and died, and became born as a butterfly. So she flew over to the caterpillar pillar and found Stripe, very close to the top of the pillar, almost about to find out what was at the top. Do you know what happened when a caterpillar got to the top? A caterpillar underneath him would push him off, making him fall all the way to the bottom of the pillar and die. But before that happened to Stripe, she rescued him. Later on, Stripe spun a cocoon and became a butterfly too.

What does that story say? It says that if you're willing to die, you can be born again as a Christian.

That is the message of the parables of the treasure and the pearl. Studdert Kennedy wrote,

He was a gambler too, my Christ,

He took His life and threw

It for a world redeemed.

And ere His agony was done, Before the westering sun went down,

Crowning that day with its crimson crown,

He knew that He had won.

The Kingdom is precious, hidden, personally appropriated, joyous, and entered from different circumstances. But always the price is to abandon one's self to receive the supreme sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What could the topic of the two parables in Matthew 13:44-46 be entitled?
2. What is the question people frequently ask about the parable of the treasure? Give three reasons why the man who found the treasure was not behaving unethically by doing what he did.
3. What could the man who found the treasure have done to buy the field? What did he do instead?
4. Describe what the merchant man (Gk. *emporos*) of Matthew 13:45 did for a living. Why did he seek pearls?
5. What did Jesus mean by saying that we are not to cast our pearls before swine (Mt. 7:6)? What does the book of Revelation say about pearls?
6. What is the first principle we can learn from the parables of the treasure and the pearl? What are some things the text mentions that are a part of the treasure of the Kingdom?
7. What is the second principle we can learn from the parables of the treasure and the pearl?

- According to 1 Corinthians 2:14, what does the natural man not understand? Why? According to 2 Corinthians 4:4, what has Satan done to nonbelievers?
8. Why do some people never bother to look beyond the surface of things?
 9. The truth is not found _____. What attitude must a person have to find the truth?
 10. What is the third principle we can learn from the parables of the treasure and the pearl? Explain the truth Jesus taught to the Jewish people in Matthew 8:12. Is the principle taught in Matthew 8:12 only applicable to Jewish people? Explain.
 11. What must a person do before he can personally appropriate the Kingdom?
 12. What is the basic desire of all human beings? How can that desire be fulfilled?
 13. What are the similarities between the two parables in Matthew 13:44- 46? What is the difference between them?
 14. Mention some of the people in the Bible who came across the Kingdom the same way that the man who discovered the treasure did.
 15. Mention some of the people in the Bible who came across the Kingdom the same way that the merchant who found the pearl of great price did.
 16. What can the Kingdom of heaven and salvation not be bought with? In what sense can we say that the Kingdom of God is bought?
 17. What was the man in Luke 9:57-58 not willing to give up to follow Jesus? Why did the man in Luke 9:59-60 not want to follow Jesus immediately? What was the man in Luke 9:61-62 not willing to give up?
 18. What must a person be willing to do with everything in his life before he can become a Christian? What kind of exchange must that person make?
 19. List the things that Paul thought would get him to heaven before he was saved (Phil. 3:5-6). What did he consider those things after he became a Christian?
 20. What do some Christians not emphasize enough when they present the gospel?
 21. What is the message of the story about Stripe the caterpillar?

Pondering the Principles

1. The parables of the treasure and the pearl teach that the Lord's Kingdom is priceless. When you became a Christian, you received a treasure beyond price that included salvation, forgiveness, love, joy, peace, virtue, goodness, glory, heaven, and eternal life. How often do you think about the riches that you have in Christ? Do you live your life in such a way that you treasure all that Christ has given you? Read Psalm 119:162. What attitude did the psalmist have toward God's Word? What did he say God's Word was like? How precious is God's Word to you? How precious to you is your prayer time with God and your fellowship time with other believers? The things that God gave you when you became a Christian are the most valuable possessions you have. If there are worldly things that are robbing you of time to pray, study God's Word, fellowship, and enjoy the things God has given you, then ask the Lord to help you get your priorities straight.
2. In the parable of the treasure, the man who found the treasure reacted with joy to his find. Read Psalm 35:9; 43:4; Isaiah 61:10; Romans 5:11; and Philippians 4:4. Who is the object of the joy expressed in all of those passages? For what reasons did Isaiah rejoice, according to Isaiah 61:10? Think of other reasons why you should rejoice in the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord now in prayer for all of the reasons you have to rejoice in Him.
3. Read Matthew 16:24. What must a person do before he can follow Christ? When you share about Christ with nonbelievers, do you tell them about the cost of following Christ? What could happen if a nonbeliever wasn't aware that he needed to surrender his self-will and sin before he could follow Christ? So that you may be prepared to share about the cost of following Christ with those you witness to, memorize Matthew 16:24: "if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

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