

The Pearl of Great Price

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 June 2018

Preacher: Mr Iain Macritchie

[0 : 00] Well, if we could turn back to the chapter that we read together in the Gospel of Matthew in chapter 13. Matthew 13, and I'd like us to take for our text this evening the words that we have in verses 45 and 46, the parable of the pearl of great value.

Matthew 13, verse 45. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

I'd like to begin this evening by asking you all a question. And that question is, what is it in life that you value most?

What is it in your life that, if you're being honest with yourself, you simply cannot live without? This might be one thing.

It might be a number of things. But what is it that you feel that if it wasn't in your life, somehow your life wouldn't be what it is?

[1 : 32] It's true to say that we all have legitimate things in our life, that we enjoy legitimate things in our life, that we even rely on day after day.

And tonight in the parable that we have before us, we see a man who comes to value something greater than anything else in his life.

Here we have the parable of the pearl of great value. Or as some of you might know it, the parable of the pearl of great price.

And as you'll probably know, parables were earthly stories that Jesus told in order to convey a deeper spiritual meaning.

These weren't stories that were always easy to understand. Sometimes we think that parables were nice little stories that Jesus told so that all his hearers could understand what he was saying.

[2 : 40] But not so. Because time and time again, we see those who are listening to the parables asking Jesus, What do you mean?

We saw that with the parable of the sower and the seed. As soon as the parable had been spoken, he goes on to explain what this parable meant.

Why was it then that Jesus chose to speak in parables? If it wasn't to make these spiritual truths easy as it were, what was the reason?

Well, we read in verse 34, And then we see Jesus quoting the words from Psalm 78, verse 2.

I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.

And so, yes, Jesus did speak in parables to convey these deep and meaningful spiritual truths, But he did so, so that ultimately scripture would be fulfilled.

[4 : 00] And the parable that we have before us tonight forms part of a few parables spoken in this chapter, Where Jesus is telling what the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven, When he's telling what that is like.

Within these parables, each parable we see different ways in which people come to secure, if you like, A place in that heavenly kingdom for themselves.

So for a short time this evening, I'd like us to look at this short parable, This parable of just two verses, the parable of the pearl of great price, And I'd like us to think about how it applies to us.

We're going to firstly consider the merchant that is spoken of here, And how this is a merchant who searches, a merchant who seeks. And then we'll think about this merchant who not only seeks, but he's a merchant who finds.

And then lastly we'll consider this merchant who, yes, seeks and finds, But also a merchant that finally surrenders all. Searching, finding, surrendering.

[5 : 19] We read in verse 45, Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. Here was a man who had a definitive objective in his life, A man whose desire was to find

these pearls.

Being a merchant, no doubt, he would have traveled far and wide, He would have attended many markets in search of pearls. He would have no doubt gone to any length in order to lay hold of these precious gems.

I don't know if anyone in here is wearing pearls tonight. I don't know an awful lot about pearls, But I'm led to believe that they vary hugely in price.

You can get pearl earrings that go from ten pounds right up to tens of thousands of pounds. Why is this? Why is there such a vast difference between pearls?

Well, again, I'm led to believe there are different kinds of pearls. There are freshwater pearls, And there are saltwater pearls. Freshwater pearls, They account for around 95% of the market.

[6 : 40] And I believe that the pearls, They grow in oysters or mussels or clams. And I believe that a freshwater mussel Can produce between 30 and 50 pearls at a time.

Needless to say, Because they are so abundant, These freshwater pearls, They don't command such a high price. Not so with saltwater pearls, Because they account for only 5% of the market. And they're, Not surprisingly, They're only found in one in every 10,000 wild oysters. And so, of course, Their scarcity reflects their price.

These are the pearls that would no doubt cost thousands and tens of thousands of pounds. Nowadays, of course, It's a lot easier for pearls to be accessed, With all the various diving equipment that's available.

But when this parable was spoken by Jesus, It would have been a very different story. Although it's dangerous even now, Back then, Accessing these pearls would have been perilous.

[7 : 49] It would have been life-threatening. And because of this, Their value went up. They were valued more than any stone, Any jewel, Any diamond.

It was said that Lolila Paulina, Who around about A.D. 37, Was the wife of the Roman Emperor Caligula, It said that she had pearls all around her head, All around her neck, And her ears, And on her fingers.

It said that she was wearing her inheritance. And so these pearls, They were reserved only for the rich. Throughout Scripture, We see other references to pearls, Which again highlight their value. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, He warns His disciples, Not to throw pearls before swine. In other words, Not to give holy things, To those who, Like pigs, Will do nothing, But trample them under foot.

While in Revelation, Pearls are used symbolically, In order to illustrate the beauty, Of the kingdom of heaven. We read there, That the twelve gates, Were twelve pearls.

[9 : 05] Each of the gates, Made of a single pearl. And so here in this parable, We see that this, This merchant, He's searching for something, Of the greatest, Of value.

But he's not just searching, Searching for pearls. We read that he's searching, For fine pearls. He's not searching, For fresh water pearls. He's searching, For salt water pearls.

For the greatest, The best pearls, Is available. It's true to say, That as a merchant, He would no doubt, Have seen and, And dealt with many types, Of pearls in his time.

But yet he wanted more. Although he had, Perhaps thought, He had seen, Every type of pearl there was, He wanted finer pearls.

He wanted, Greater pearls. And he, He simply wouldn't give up, Until he found them. You know, Friends, In this merchant, We have in a measure, A picture of, No doubt, Many people, Who are gathered, Here tonight.

[10 : 20] You too, Are like, This merchant, And you are found, Trading in the market square, Of life. Throughout your life, No doubt, You and me, With you, We have all, Accumulated many pearls.

We have, No doubt, Got a, A horde of pearls, In the form of, Of a variety, Of different experiences. The things, That happened in our life, That we were looking forward to.

Things in our life, That, That gave us pleasure. Things that gave us joy. Or perhaps, You have, Hoarded up a variety, Of pearls, In the form of, Of material possessions.

You've got that, That brand new house, That you always aspired to have. You've got, The finest car, That money can buy. You've got, Food in abundance, And clothes to wear.

Nothing, Are you lacking? And all these things, There is absolutely, Nothing wrong with them. They are all, Great, Blessings. Still, I wonder, As a merchant here tonight, Are you looking, For more?

[11 : 37] Do you find yourself, Strangely dissatisfied, With, With that heap of pearls, That you've, Accumulated in your life? Maybe, That, Your character displays, Many pearls, Many pearls, It may be, That, Your character, Display the, The pearls of honesty, And of kindness, And of love, Of loving, Even your neighbor, As yourself, But yet, Although you're, A possessor, Of all these pearls, You still feel, That something, Is missing, I wonder, If I'm speaking, To you tonight, You see, As well as, Salt water, And fresh water, Pearls, We have, Another type, Of pearl, And that is, The, The counterfeit pearl, The fake pearl, If you like, Basically, These are nothing more, Than, Than glass beads,

That are, That are dipped, Into a solution, That is made, From fish scales, And when this, Glass bead is dipped, In this solution, And it's taken out, It looks like, The real deal, It's beautiful, To look at, It's got that, Lovely colour, That a pearl has, That's what happens, When we hoard up, The pearls, In our life, At first, They're gleaming, At first, They're attractive, At first, We enjoy, Looking at them, We enjoy, Having them, But what happens, After a while, To these fake pearls, Well, After a while, That thin coating, It begins, To flake, It begins, To chip off, It begins, To fade away, Until after a while, It no longer, Looks like a pearl, After a while, It loses, All its beauty, And perceived value, Isn't that what happens, To the pearls, That we so often, Find ourselves, Trading in, In the market square, Of life, Before long, They fade, And when they fade, We're left looking, Just like this merchant, For finer pearls, Well, friends, I would love to think, That that's, Why you have come here, This evening, That you have come here, This evening, Looking for finer pearls, That you come, To that realization, That what you have, Really counts, For nothing, And that you are looking, For more, Wouldn't it be wonderful, If there was even, One soul in here tonight, Who like this merchant, Has come here, This evening, Searching, For these, Finer, Pearls, Well, If you are,

I urge you, Never, Ever, To give up, This merchant, Didn't give up, And Jesus, Tells us, In Matthew, Never to give up, He says, Ask, And it will be given to you, Seek, And you will find, Knock, And the door, And it will be opened, To you, You see, This merchant, He didn't set up a shop, And he didn't put up a sign, Saying that, He was willing, To buy pearls, For cash, He wasn't waiting, For people to come, By his shop, And to sell him, Pearls, No, He went out, Looking for these pearls, He made it his business, To go out, And not to return, Until, He found him, Jesus tells us, To ask, To seek, To knock, Dear friends, We're not to merely, Tap, On that door, Gently, We're to thump, On that door, Day, After day, After day, And not give up, Until it is opened, To us, Until we see, That finest, Of pearls, On the other, Side, I wonder, If you, Tonight, Are searching, For the pearl, Of great price, The merchant, Searched, And secondly, The merchant, Found, As I said, He'd been searching, Everywhere, For fine pearls, And, He knew, He just knew, That there was more, To what he already, Had, He knew, That he hadn't, Quite found, Previously, What he was looking for, Then we read, That he found, And you know, When he found, He, He found that, Although he was,

[16 : 43] Perhaps for a time, Content, With what he had, When he found, This pearl, We read, Again, The kingdom of heaven, Is like a merchant, In search, Of fine pearls, Who on finding, One pearl, Of great value, When he found, This one pearl, He knew, That he had, Something, That was greater, Than ever, Before, And boy, Was he, Right, You see, We read, That he was, Looking, For pearls, Plural, He was looking, For more, Than one pearl, And so it is, With you and I, In life, Often, We're looking, For things, In our life, To give our life, That direction, We're searching, After, But when this merchant, Found, He didn't find,

Lots of, Of pearls, That he perceived, To be of great value, No, He found, One, Pearl, Just one, And this one pearl, It was far, Far, Greater, Why?

Because this was a pearl, That was unlike, Any pearl, He had ever seen, In his life, A pearl, That was, Greater than all, The other pearls, Put together, A pearl, That was, More valuable, Than any other pearl, That he had ever, Ever seen, At this point, We need to remember, That this is, Indeed, A parable, This is a, An earthly story, With a spiritual meaning, We read in our text, That the, The kingdom of God, Is like a merchant, In search of fine pearls, Who found, One pearl, Of great price, The kingdom of God, Is like, We read, Now what is it, That makes the kingdom of God, The kingdom of God, What is it, That makes the kingdom of God, So desirable, Is it, Is it the physical beauty, Of the place, That was referred to, Earlier in Revelation, Symbolically,

When it spoke, Of the gates, Made of pearls, And so on, Or is it, The angels, That are there, Or is it, Even, Our loved ones, The saints, Who have gone before us, Is that what makes, Heaven, Heaven, For us, Well as, Precious as all, These things are, And as much as all, These things do, Contribute

to, To the kingdom of heaven, There is so, Much, More, What is it, That makes the kingdom of, God, The kingdom of God, Well surely, It's the king, Of that kingdom, King, Jesus, He is, The pearl, Of great price, Without him, Heaven, Wouldn't be heaven, The kingdom of God, Wouldn't be, The kingdom of God, It is only through, Him, And in him, That we can ever, Hope to, To get a place, In that kingdom, And so surely, The spiritual message, Here has to be, That in the same way, This merchant, Searched, And then found, We too, When we seek, After Christ, We, Will find him, And in finding him, We will secure, A place, In that kingdom, And when we do, He will, He will exceed, All of our expectations, He will, He will be greater, To us, Than anything else, In our life, You know, It's interesting, That the Lord, Chose to use pearls, In order to teach, This spiritual lesson, Of course, We mustn't read, Too much into, Two parables, They all have, One, Main point, But I can't help, But think, That the God, Who, Who spoke,

[21 : 04] This parable, Is the same God, Who created, These pearls, The same God, Who knew, How these pearls, Were formed, And he is the God, Who chose, To use, A pearl, In this parable, Why?

Well, It's interesting, To see how, How pearls, Are formed, Of course, Nowadays, We get farmed pearls, Pearls, That are produced, On mass, But when this parable, Was spoken, The pearls, Were formed, Naturally, And the way, They were formed, Was, Was, A little parasite, Some people say, It's sand, And perhaps, That's with, With farmed pearls, But a little parasite, In these natural pearls, Would get into the pearl, Into the oyster, Rather, And the oyster, Would, Would, Become distressed, And, As a form, Of defending itself, In a defense mechanism, The oyster, Or the clam, Or the mussel, Would produce, This fluid, And this fluid, Would go around, The parasite, And layers, Upon layer, Upon layer, Thousands of layers, Would go around, This parasite, Over several years, Until eventually, You would have, This beautiful, Pearl, And yet, I couldn't help, When I, When I read about that, Seeing a, A similarity, To the pearl, Of great price, The Lord Jesus Christ, Isn't it true, That it's because, This parasite, Of sin, Has entered, The world, In the heart of man, Isn't it true, That, That this, Pearl of great price, That he was conceived, And that, That he was, He was born, Into this world, Why?

So that, The parasite, Of death, Would be, Would be swallowed up, And covered, By layer, Upon layer, Of the love, Of the Lord, Jesus Christ, And you know, The pearl, Is of no worth, To anyone, In its shell, In the bottom, Of the sea, Or at the bottom, Of a loch, It's no use, There in the darkness, Where, No one can see, And appreciate it, And so it was, With, With the pearl, Of great price, We all know, That, That he died, That cursed death, On a cross, That he took upon himself, The punishment, That was due, To his people, That he had, That fellowship, That communion, With his father, Broken, So that you, And I, Who put our trust in him, Might have, Eternal life, But as he died, He was cast into a tomb,

He was cast into a grave, And he lay in that grave, Not forever, But for three days, He lay in that grave, And had he, Had he stayed in that grave, Had the pearl, Of great price, Stayed in the darkness, Of that tomb, He would have been, Of absolutely no value, To you, Or to me, For tonight, We worship, A living God, We praise God, That he didn't, Remain there, We praise God, That tonight, His grave, Is empty, And as it is empty, He is tonight, At the right hand, Of the father in heaven, He is, Interceding on behalf, Of all of his people, In all of his glory, And all of his splendor, Friends,

[25 : 03] That is why, He is the pearl, Of great price, That is why, He is of greater value, Than any of the counterfeit, Pearls of this world, This, These pearls, That are day by day, Conning you into thinking, That they are the most important, Thing in the world, We've all been there, Not so, With the pearl, Of great price, He is the altogether, Lovely one, He is the chiefest, Among ten thousand, He died, So that you, And I, Might live, Friends, Isn't it worth, Having that pearl, For ourselves, Don't you tonight, As you sit here, Want it, If you don't, Already, Have him, The merchant, Could see its value, We know that,

Because we read that, When he, When he found that, One pearl of great price, He, He went, And sold all, That he had, And bought it, The merchant's eyes, Had been opened, So that, So that he could, He could see the true value, Of this pearl, And under no circumstances, Did he want to, To lose it, His commitment, Was such that, We read, He sold every single thing, That he had, He sold every pearl, That he had accumulated, He sold all, His worldly possessions, So that he could have, This, One pearl, He surrenders, Which brings us, Briefly to our final point, It's important at this point, To make sure that, We understand, What this parable, Is not saying, We could so easily, Become

confused, By what we perceive, It to be saying, It is in no way, Saying that,
 That in order for you, And for I, To gain a place, In the kingdom of God, That first of all, We are to
 sell, All that we have, That first of all, We are to, To give up, All our worldly possessions, It's not
 saying that, That, That would fly, In the face of all, That scripture says, That would, That would fly,
 In the face of the whole, Of the gospel message, Isaiah 55, One tells us, Come, Everyone who
 thirsts, Come to the waters, And he who has no money, Come buy, And eat, Come buy, Wine and
 milk, Without money, And without price, Without price, And in Ephesians 2, 8 to 9, We read that, It
 is by grace, You have been saved, Through faith, It is not your own doing, It is the gift of God, And
 not a result of works, So that no one, May boast, This pearl,
 Friends, Is a gift, From God, God gave his son, Freely, As a ransom, For many, That is what
 makes, Christianity, So different, To every single, Other faith, In so many, Other faiths, To, To, To,
 To, Get, Right, With, With the God, Of that faith, If you like, You, You have to, Earn your way, You
 have to, Do good works, You have to, To keep the laws, Of that faith, And time, And time again,
 You find people, Who are oppressed, And who are unable, To meet that mark, Not so, With
 Christianity, Because salvation, Has already been bought, For us, It has been bought, By the one,
 Who has fulfilled, That law perfectly, A law that, That you and I, Could never keep, It has been
 secured, For us, By that, That currency,
 Of the sacrificial, Love of Jesus Christ, As he, As he shed his blood, On Calvary's hill, So what then,
 Is it referring to, When it, When it talks of the merchants, Selling all, That he has, Well as I said
 before, Parables are not always, Easy to interpret, And often, And often, They have one, Meaning,
 One, One purpose, In their telling, And so I feel, That the point here, Surely is, That after the
 merchant, Found this pearl, And he saw his, Saw its value, It was only after, He found it, He saw its
 value, That he decided, To go, And sell, All, That he had, He didn't sell, All that he had, And then go
 out, And search for the pearl, He found this pearl, He saw this pearl, He laid his eyes, Upon its
 beauty, And then, He saw,
 [30 : 05] It was worth, Selling everything for, And you know friends, When the Holy Spirit, Opens
 our eyes, So that we can see, The beauty of the pearl, Of great price, It's true to say, That we are
 willing, To do absolutely, Anything, To ensure, That we don't lose him, How often, Have you heard,
 In testimonies, People saying, That when they were converted, They were worried, That one day,
 They would wake up, And it was gone, Why?
 Because it's so precious, Christ, Is so precious, And when we have him, We never, Ever, Ever,
 Want to let, Him go, Again, We see, That he is, He's far more valuable, Than anything, That we,
 Have had, In, Our life, No doubt, This merchant's friends, And family, They would have perhaps,
 Thought that this man, Was completely out of his mind, To, To give up everything, For this one,
 Pearl, They would have thought, That he was making, A wrong life decision, That his life, Was
 going to be, Adversely affected, By, By selling his worldly, Possessions, For this one, Pearl, But he
 didn't, He didn't care, Why?
 Because it was worth it, And you know, You might be worried, Tonight, That if, You surrender all,
 By following Christ, You might be, Worrying that, If you come to see, Christ, As your own, Personal
 pearl, Of great price, That having to give up, Everything in your life, Your life, Will, Be, Over, Well
 friends, That couldn't, Be further, From, The truth, It's worth, It's worth giving up, And I can testify,
 To this, As can so many, People in here, Of course, There are many good things, In our lives, That
 we don't, Need to give up, Things that are not sinful, Things that are not, Getting in between us,
 And our savior, Blessings from God, That's not, What I'm saying, But there are those, Counterfeit
 pearls, These fake pearls, That, That have held us back, That when we, Come to see the value, Of
 Christ,
 We have no greater, Pleasure or joy, Than to cast them aside, Never, Hopefully to see them, Again,
 The 19th century, Preacher Charles Spurgeon, When preaching this parable, He, He called his
 sermon, A great, Bargain, And you know, Friends, You must never, Ever, Think, That you will be,
 Hard done by, If you come, To know Christ, For yourself, You must never, Ever, Think that
 somehow, You will be, Short changed, That somehow, You won't be living, Life, To the full, If you
 were to ask, Any Christian in here, Tonight, If, If they were willing, To trade, If they were willing, To
 trade, What they have, In Christ, And go back, To their old life, If you were to ask,
 Any Christian in here, Who is walking, In the right place, With the Lord, Do they desire, These fake
 pearls, Again, They would say, No, Absolutely, Not, Yes, They're attractive, From time to time, Yes,
 Yes, We saw beauty, In them, Yes, We had pleasure, In them at that time, There is no denying that,

But would we go back, No, Why would we go back, After tasting, Something, That is so, So sweet, Why would we go back, And taste something, That is, Yes, Sweet at first, But is so bitter, Afterwards, Of course, As Christians, It is possible, For us to, To lose sight, Of the preciousness, Of this pearl, It's possible,

[34 : 39] For us, Instead of, Wearing this pearl, For all around, To see, Wearing this pearl, So that, We can, Admire it, Ourselves, It's possible, That instead of, Of, Wearing Christ, Lovingly, On our sleeve, That, That we have, This pearl of great price, Locked, Away in a drawer, Friends, When Christ is not, Central to our lives, When he, He's not central, To who we are, And what we do, When we, When we lock him away, In a closed Bible, And instead of, Of having him, Open to admire, We soon forget, We soon forget, His beauty, We soon forget, How precious, He is, We soon forget, That indeed, He is worth, More than anything, This world, Can offer,

And yes, We can, Backslide, But friends, We can never, Ever, Lose him, Isn't that an encouragement, To us, Tonight, I know, This can be challenging, At times, I know, As we find ourselves, In a secular world, A world that is so opposed, To the truth of the gospel, It's so easy, To shrink, From, From standing up, On the side of Christ, That we should, Surely, Surely, Surely, Surely, Surely, He is worth it, Surely, We should see, In him, The love, That has redeemed us, And that in response, We should forget, What lies behind, That we should, Strain forward, As the apostle pauses, To what lies ahead, That we should press on,

Towards the goal, For the prize, Of the upward, Call of God, In Christ, Because what a prize, That is, And friends, If we have, Somehow, Lost our way, In the Christian walk, That pearl has grown, Strangely dim, In your experience, You seek him, Afresh, You seek him, Because he is to be found, You seek that prize, Because what a prize, It is, Yes, We are called to, To daily pick up our cross, And deny ourselves, But what we get in return, Is so much greater, He does for us, Far exceedingly, Above and beyond, What we can ask, Or ever think, And if you are not a Christian, Here tonight, Don't just take my word, For that, Don't just take the word,

Of every other Christian, You find out for yourself, While there is still time, Because, It is true, And so let me return, To the question I asked, At the beginning of the sermon, What, What, Do you value most, In life, Is it really, Worth, Valuing so much, Is it really worth, Forfeiting your soul for, Friends, Christ is not calling you tonight, To spiritual poverty, He is not calling you, To a life of want, Or spiritual destitution, But as a dear old elder said, Who is finding this out, In all fullness, For himself tonight, In glory, In Christ, We are truly, Multi-millionaires,

Isn't that a wonderful thought, And so my prayer is, That, You would find this pearl, Of great price, As it is to be found, Tonight, As he is to be found, Tonight, Here, In the gospel, And if you can't see him, If you can't yet see, The beauty in this pearl, If you're blinded, By the pearls of this world, You, You come and you pray, You fall before him tonight, And you say, Open, My eyes, Lord, Have mercy, On me, A sinner, And you know, The one, Who promises, To those who come to him, He will in no wise, Cast out, I guarantee you, In his time, He will fulfill, His promise, So that you too, Can say, That he is, The pearl, Of great price,

[39 : 46] May it be so, For your good, And above all else, For his glory, Amen. Well, We'll conclude our time of worship now, By singing to God's praise, From the Scottish Psalter, In Psalm 65, Psalm 65, On page 297, Praise waits for thee, In Zion, Lord, To thee, Vows paid shall be, O thou that hearer art of prayer, All flesh, Shall come to thee, We can sing down to the double, Verse marked four, To God's praise, Praise waits for thee, In Zion, Lord, To thee, Vows paid shall be, Praise waits for thee, In Zion, Yon, Lord, To thee, In thy speech, I'll be,

O thou that hearer art of prayer, All flesh shall come to thee, Iniquity, I must confess, We will against be, But as for our transgressions, Them part, Thou away shalt thou, Blessed is the Lord, Whom thou dost choose, And which approach to thee,

That he within thy courts, O Lord, Be still and well are thee, Which surely shall be satisfied, With thy abundant grace, And with the goodness of thy heart, Behold thy holy praise, Conclude with a word of prayer.

Lord God, As we part one from another, We pray that indeed thy word, Would not part with us, And that we would, Each and every one of us, Truly be satisfied, With thy abundant grace, Lead us and guide us now, And forgive us, For all our many sins, We pray in the precious name of Christ, Amen. Amen.