

Matthew 13: 45 & 46; “A Merchant Seeking Pearls”, Session # 1 on the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price, Presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 12th, 2023, in the Adult Sunday School.

Matthew 13:45 & 46 – “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

The word “again” tells us that once again, here in this Parable, there are wonderful illustrations of truth given by our Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples, those to whom it has been given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God and heaven. What this kingdom is like is portrayed for us as a merchant seeking beautiful pearls. And so we want to ask certain questions about these two verses.

1st – Who is the Merchant Man, and What is he Seeking?

The Merchant Man is the person who is seeking the best and most beautiful things that life has to offer from all that God has made or given. This merchant man here in this Parable was seeking beautiful pearls, Jesus says. As to what this represents, we can say that in seeking for beautiful pearls he was seeking for things most precious. He is seeking for things of great and lasting beauty and value. He is seeking to have joy and delight in having all these pearls to himself. That is, he was seeking for the things of this world which God has made or that he could experience in relation to what God had made or given him in life. He was seeking to find long lasting joy in the experience of having them or owning them.

A merchant is a usually a person whose business it is to buy and resell merchandise. He would travel about the country, perhaps to many countries, looking for items to buy and then he sells them for a profit. In this way he becomes rich. This particular merchant, however, spent his time in seeking for fine pearls to own them. In this respect he appears to be a collector or gatherer, someone like Solomon was, when he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. He wanted to have or to accumulate everything which would be of great personal benefit to himself; all that which would be of great and lasting value to himself in his having them or owning them.

Ecclesiastes 2: 1-11 – “I said in my heart, Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure; but surely, this also was vanity. I said of laughter—“Madness!”; and of mirth, “What does it accomplish?” I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds. So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from

any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.”

So, if we were going to list all the things which Solomon sought which would be compared to the beautiful pearls which the merchant man of our Parable was looking for, what would they be?

Let's list them.

1. Mirth and Pleasure. Verse 1
2. Laughter (Madness) Being giddy about your enjoyment of life. Verse 2
3. Wine (Being wisely guided with wisdom when you used it) Verse 3
4. Making great works (houses, vineyards, orchards, and fruit trees, water pools) Verses 4-6
5. Having male and female servants. (In our day it would be owning the latest and best appliances, or automobiles) Verse 7
6. Gathering silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces (this no doubt would include pearls or valuable gems) Verse 8a
7. Male and female singers and musical instruments of all kinds. Verse 8b

Now, we see that Solomon did have joy and delight and pleasure in pursuing these things. They were things which brought satisfaction for a time. There was value in them for awhile. But he knew that ultimately that these things were vanity. And so he sought further to know things about God and the meaning of life.

Matthew Henry says: “All the children of men are busy, seeking goodly pearls: one would be rich, another would be honorable, another would be learned; but the most are imposed upon, and take up with counterfeits for pearls.”

2nd – The Merchant Man keeps Seeking for what has the Greatest Value.

Ecclesiastes 3: 9-15 – “What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end. I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God. I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him. That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past.”

So Solomon is thinking about the labor of men, and what they profit from their labors. He has seen that God gives men tasks with which he would have them occupied. And he has seen that God is so great that He will make everything beautiful in its time. He has put eternity in each man's heart because they are created in His own image and likeness. But Solomon has discovered that men will not be able to find out God's work in what He does, from beginning to end. That is, men will seek to understand God's great purposes in respect to their particular life, but it will be

something that they will not entirely understand without Divine revelation. God would have every man rejoice and do what is good in their lives. And He would have them to be satisfied with what He gives in terms of eating and drinking and enjoying all the good that comes to them from their labor. Solomon in his searching for what was true and most valuable in life, came to know that God gives all of these good things in life to them, so that they might fear before Him. Because every man will have to render an account to God of what they have done.