

Parables of the Treasure / Pearl

Mat 13:44-46 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. (45) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, (46) who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Questions On The Text

What are these parables about?

Verse 44: These two parables are about the kingdom of God. Bear in mind again that the kingdom is where God rules and is not limited to a physical place.

What did the man find in the field?

Verse 44: The man found a treasure in a field. He obviously was not the owner of the field since, after he found the treasure, he then hid it back in the field. It was not unusual for people to hide their valuables by burying them in a field. This afforded protection from their enemies and thieves who would otherwise locate their victims' possessions with relative ease.

The reason the man hid the treasure back in the field is due to the law of the rabbis of the time. It is clear that the current owner was unaware of the treasure in his field otherwise he would not have sold it. But the finder of the treasure would have been aware of the rabbinic law which stated that once out of the ground, whatever was found in the field belonged to the owner of the field.

His plan, then, was to purchase the field first then pretend that, as the new owner, he had just discovered the treasure there.

How did the man afford the field?

Verse 44: Either the man was not very well off, or the field was very expensive. Either way, he had to sell all that he had to afford it.

What did the merchant find?

Verse 45-46: The merchant was seeking beautiful pearls and found one of great price. It may be asked how valuable one pearl could possibly be. Discovered in 1934, the Pearl of Lao Tzu has been valued between \$42 million and \$93 million!

How did the merchant respond when he discovered the pearl?

Verse 46: Like the man who discovered treasure hidden in the field, the pearl merchant sold all that he had so that he could possess the pearl.

What do the treasure and the pearl represent?

These parables both illustrate the same truth. In both cases, the person found something of surpassing value. Since both parables are about the kingdom of heaven, then it is reasonable to expect that it is the kingdom of God that is of supreme value, and represented in these parables by the treasure and the pearl.

How should we respond to the kingdom of God?

Both men were willing to sacrifice all to obtain what they saw was something of supreme value. God's kingdom is of far more value than anything on earth and therefore warrants a supreme sacrifice so that it can be obtained. Jesus indicated as much when He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." In this statement, He made clear the fact that God's kingdom is of far more value than the things of this life.

That being the case, no sacrifice is too great in order to obtain it. Since we have already seen that God's kingdom is the place where He rules, then this parable is all about sacrificing whatever is necessary to allow God to rule in our hearts.

This principle is also stated in Luke 14:26-27, 33.

Further Questions For Discussion:

How much are you willing to sacrifice to obtain the kingdom of God?

Do you really see God's kingdom of more value than anything on this earth?

Why do you think people are often unwilling to sacrifice material things to obtain spiritual things?

What sorts of things do people pursue instead of God's kingdom? Do Christians often pursue these things too?

What do you think it means to be entangled with the affairs of this life? (2 Timothy 2:4)