Tonight as we continue with our sermon series on “The Parables of Jesus” we are going to be looking at two brief parables together, “THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE and THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL” (The Parable of The Pearl of Great Price in some translations)

Please turn with me once again to the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

Matthew 13:44-46

v. 44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, He hid it again, and then in His joy went and sold all He had and bought that field.

v. 45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.

v. 46 When He found one of great value, He went away and sold everything He had and bought it.”

PRAYER

Just as Christ told “The Parables of The Mustard Seed and Yeast” as a pair, He told “The Parables of The Hidden Treasure and The Pearl
of Great Price” as a pair.

While “The Parables of The Mustard Seed and Yeast” focused on the GROWTH and DEVELOPMENT of the Kingdom of heaven, “The Parables of The Hidden Treasure and The Pearl of Great Price” focuses on the precious VALUE of the Kingdom of Heaven.

You remember Jesus told the previous parables from a boat to a large crowd that had gathered along the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

After sending the crowd away, Jesus and His disciples went back inside a nearby house in Capernaum. There Jesus gave them the meaning of “The Parable of The Weeds” He had told them earlier. Then Jesus told them these two brief parables we are looking at tonight.

Before we get into the interpretations of these two parables, let me give you some background information on both parables to help you see them against the backdrop of Jesus’ day and time.

**Background on “The Parable of The Hidden Treasure”**
(Matthew 13:44)

v. 44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

To find treasure hid in a filed in the first century was not as unusual as it would be in our day and time. We must remember in Jesus’ day the whole world, including the Jewish people, were under the rule of the Roman government.

This meant the Jewish people were in danger of losing their valuables in one of two ways. One, they could be taken by the hated TAX COLLECTORS who worked for the Roman government. These tax collectors were notorious for padding their own pockets by taking more from the people than they were supposed to.

The other group the Jewish people had to be concerned
about were the Roman SOLDIERS. It was not unusual for these soldiers to barge into a Jewish home and take their TREASURES away from them.

How did the Jewish people protect their treasures from the TAX COLLECTORS and ROMAN SOLDIERS? They BURIED their treasures in FIELDS. The Rabbi’s of Jesus’ time even had a saying that went like this: “The safest place for your money is in the earth.”

The only problem with that was the person who buried the treasure would eventually die and the rest of his family wouldn’t know where the hidden treasure had been buried. If someone later bought that field from the family and found the treasure, they were under no obligation to return the valuables to the family. The Jewish law basically stated, “Finder’s keepers, losers weepers.”

Background to “The Parable of The Pearl of Great Price”  
(Matthew 13:45, 46)

v. 45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.

v. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

In biblical times pearls were said to be worth three times more than pure GOLD. There were no “cultured” pearls, and there was no easy way to harvest natural pearls from oysters.

In those days the only way to get pearls was for a man to tie a big rock around his waist, take several deep breaths, dive out of boat and swim down to the oyster bed and quickly gather as many oysters as he could before untying himself from the rock and swimming back to the surface.
Most of the time the “oyster divers” would come up empty. But on very rare occasions they might open an oyster to find a beautiful pearl inside.

Merchants would travel from one coastal village to another looking to buy these pearls from the “oyster divers” with the hope they would discover a “pearl of great price” that would pay huge dividends for their investment.

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Well now that I have given some background information on these two parables let’s consider their interpretation.

I. The Common Interpretation of These Parables

1. The most common interpretation of these two parables is probably not the correct interpretation and I’ll explain why in a moment.

2. According to this interpretation “the man” in verse 44 and “the merchant” in verse 45 is YOU and ME.

   The “hidden treasure” in verse 45 and “the pearl” in verse 46 is our SALVATION.

   The “hiding of the treasure” in verse 44 refers to hiding or protecting salvation in our HEARTS.

   And “going and selling all the he had” in verse 44 and 46 is talking about us forsaking the WORLD by “taking up our CROSS and following after Jesus.

3. While this may sound like a good and reasonable interpretation, there is a key point that cannot be overlooked.

   Both parables talk about “going and selling everything to buy” the valued object.

4. The scriptures are very clear that nobody can enter “the Kingdom of heaven” by SELLING anything. We cannot BUY our salvation.
SALVATION is a “free GIFT” that has been provided for us by the GRACE of God.

Galatians 2:8,9 “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith---and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God----not by works, so that no one can boast.”

5. Do you and I value our salvation like a treasure or a pearl of great price? Of course we do, and even more so.

6. But to interpret these two parables in this way is to miss the greater meaning.

So let’s consider…………..

II. The Correct Interpretation of These Parables

1. When you interpret “the man” in verse 44 and “the merchant” in verse 45, to be JESUS CHRIST, it gives these two parables a whole different meaning.

2. When you look at these two parables you have to ask, “What are the two things in this world Christ values so much He would give His all to have them?” The answer would be ISRAEL, God’s “Chosen people” and the CHURCH, also God’s “chosen people.” We see both in the two brief parables.

3. Let me break the interpretation of these two parables down individually so we can understand their connection
to each other collectively.

INTERPRETATION OF “THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE”

In “The Parable of The Hidden Treasure” ISRAEL is the “treasure.”

In Exodus 19, when Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, God said to Moses,

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. (Exodus 19:5 NKJV)

In Psalm 135:4 we read, “For the LORD has chosen Jacob to be His own, ISRAEL to be His TREASURED possession.

When you think about what Jesus is saying in verse 44 it makes sense.

When the man discovered the “treasure” it was hidden. When He went to purchase the field, He “hid” the treasure once again.

Now what does that mean? At the time Christ came to earth, Israel’s faith was “hidden,” it was BURIED. They rejected Christ as the Messiah. They rejected His offer of eternal life. None-the-less, Christ went to the cross and gave His all so that He might purchase the SALVATION of God’s “treasured” people.

On the day of Pentecost, God turned His focus toward the GENTILE nations, and Israel, “the treasure” was hidden once again.

Spiritually speaking, Israel has remained BURIED for the last 2,000 years. But the good news is Israel will not remain buried forever. When the LORD comes to take His Church out of the world, God will “dig up” Israel once again and she will shine like a valuable TREASURE during the days of the Great Tribulation.

INTERPRETATION OF “THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL”

In “The Parable of The Pearl” the Merchant is JESUS
CHRIST. The “pearl” is the CHURCH. And the “great price” paid for the pearl is CALVARY.

Now why did Jesus choose a pearl to symbolize the Church? Why not a diamond or a ruby or some other precious jewel?

The reason is because the pearl is the only jewel that is the product of LIVING matter. When you think about how a pearl is formed you see a very vivid picture of the Church.

A pearl grows out of HURT. A little particle of sand or some other irritating substance gets inside the oyster shell and its like “cracker crumbs in bed”----constantly irritating the oyster. Well the oyster doesn’t have any hands to brush the irritant out, no means of defense except to TRANSFORM that thing that is irritating it.

Over the last 2,000 years the Church has been enduring a lot of IRRITATION in the form of PERSECUTION. But all the while, the Church is being “transformed” into a thing of great BEAUTY, a “PEARL” of great price.

4. Do you see the connection between the two parables? The LORD values “the treasure” (ISRAEL) and “the pearl” (THE CHURCH ), so much that He was willing to give everything He had to purchase them.

A BRIEF NOTE OF APPLICATION

What do these two brief parables mean to us today? They remind us how PRECIOUS and PRICELESS we are to the LORD.

I find it very interesting that in John’s description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:21 he says, “The twelve gates were twelve PEARLS, each gate made of a single PEARL.”

Perhaps those giant pearls will serve as a reminder to you and me for all eternity of the great price Jesus Christ, the Merchant, paid for our salvation.