

RECOGNISING SOMETHING VALUABLE WHEN YOU SEE IT

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Matthew 13: 44-52. (vv45-46)

This is a very short parable which is only found in Matthew's gospel. As so often, The Lord uses something from the everyday to make a serious point about the kingdom of heaven. This is a simple illustration, but it tells us a lot about what it means to live under the reign of God. Here we see what it is like to discover and enter that kingdom.

1. We are not at rest.

The picture is of a restless merchant looking for the perfect pearl. He has a considerable collection already but none of those he has are perfect.

We are like the merchant. We feel incomplete, not at peace, with something important unresolved. Somewhere inside people know that the answer is not to be found in materialism. We dream of a moment when we will be content. But in the meantime, we feel anxious, depressed, and discontented.

2. Some people can't recognize something of value.

Sometimes we hear of people who were in possession of an immensely valuable antique but were not aware of it. A lot of people spend their money and time on things which are of no value at all. They spend their money and time drinking too much. Or life revolves around holidays or home improvements. There is always dissatisfaction and the need for more.

Yet such people will often see no value in the Bible. They will say it is an old book, full of errors, which has now been disproved by science. It is so sad that we have our Bible texts at the front of the church but little evidence that anyone reads them. We preach in the Open Air but rarely do people stop to listen and ask good questions. Will people begin to see through all these things when the times of greater economic hardship, that we are promised, impact us?

3. The 'stand out' pearl.

Some things claim to offer something valuable beyond this world. Religion does this, trying to give us a sense of something more, a 'tingle factor', yet all it often does is

simply paper over the cracks in our lives. We are still a society showing the effects of Christianization. We are usually well mannered and caring as a society. Yet these things do not do enough to satisfy the needs of the soul.

When seen rightly, everything loses its value compared to the Lord Jesus Christ. We see Him portrayed in the gospels, displaying remarkable courage, kindness, gentleness and self sacrifice. He is so selfless, and we are gripped by what we read in the Bible about Him. Everything else seems small and worthless beside Him. Once we might have discarded Him, but not any longer. What have we discovered that has made us change our minds?

We see Him as a glorious Person. We see that He is God Himself. We see that the kingdom has at its centre the Person who is both God and man. We also see Him doing a glorious work for us, surrendering His majesty in order to perform a very unbeautiful and unattractive work in dying for the sin of His people. There is no splendour in this but instead it is a path of suffering and humiliation. We see Him enduring the spite of people, but, more than this, we see Him bearing the weight of God's anger against sin. There we behold the value of Him bringing us peace with God. Our deepest needs are met, and we are secure for eternity. Christ's life rebukes us, His death comforts us. God is pleased with His Son and, through His Son, is pleased with us too. Christ is like a pearl to His Father and we, in Him, become like a pearl of value in His eyes too.

4. Do not be satisfied with anything less.

The welfare of our soul in eternity hinges on whether we will see some beauty in Him. Anything, or anyone, other than Him will not save and will not satisfy. We have to repent of the false pearls we have accumulated or which we look to. We must come to the Lord willingly and embrace Him, not hold Him off or doubt Him. We must immerse ourselves in the glory and the mystery of His being. This is the true Christ who holds us and answers for us. He is able to change us so that we have a beauty about us in the eyes of God, for He beholds in us the work of His Son.