

**MATTHEW 13 – PART F**

This morning we want to continue to look at the three remaining parables. The first is the Parable of the Hidden Treasure in [Matthew 13:44](#) and the second concerns the Pearl of Great Price in [v45-46](#).

**Mt 13:44 (NKJV) "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.**

**Mt 13:45 (NKJV) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, <sup>46</sup> who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.**

These two parables are very straightforward, and should be no problem for us to understand. The last parable on the dragnet, however, is very penetrating and should leave all of us in wonder of God's goodness that we have even been saved. If you are not saved, it will challenge you deeply no matter how much you may choose to ignore it.

Now, obviously we have been talking about the "kingdom of heaven" in [Matthew 13](#), and specifically about those elements that characterize what we call the "church age", or the "present age". When we come to these two parables, we find that Jesus says that the "kingdom of heaven" is of great, great value. One man sells all that he has to purchase that which is of great value, and the other man does the same. Obviously, both of them thought that what they had found was of such a great worth that they were willing to sell all that they owned and then purchase what they had found. Obviously, from our perspective, there is nothing that can compare to the gift of salvation. There are no words that can adequately characterize the eternal value of what Christ has purchased for us personally. There is nothing that I could tell you that could even approximate the value of Christ's work or the value of the salvation that we possess.

In the first four parables, we have seen how the kingdom of heaven actually "operates", how it functions during the church age, but up to this point, we have not really seen how the kingdom of heaven is actually appropriated to us. I.e., how does someone actually "enter" into this kingdom, or how is salvation actually appropriated and applied to our lives? Some denominations, for instance, believe that it happens through infant baptism. Theologically, that would be called "baptismal regeneration". Some denominations believe that it is through good works and taking the sacraments. For the Jews at the time that Matthew was writing this gospel, they believed that they were simply born into the family of God. I.e., they believed that they were the covenant people of God by birth. To make this even more practical for us, there are many people who believe that someone is a Christian simply because they have been born into a Christian family and regularly attend a church somewhere.

Now, those to whom Jesus was speaking fully understood this first parable. It is important to appreciate that they did not have banks and safe deposit boxes and checking accounts. They did not have a stock market or bonds and securities to place their money into. Then, to make things worse, the land of Palestine was a land of war. All down through the history of the Old Testament, Palestine was constantly a battleground for warring armies, and so at times the land and the people would be devastated by those wars. Their lands would be taken, their homes burned, their goods removed. So one way of hiding what they considered to be the most valuable of their assets was to go and dig a hole in a field or in the woods somewhere and bury their treasure in that location. Often, however, the individual may be taken off into

captivity or be killed, and so the treasure that they buried remained in its buried location without anyone knowing where it was actually located. In the years that followed, based on where the treasure was buried, another individual might accidentally stumble on the treasure itself while they were farming or maybe while they were just digging in some area themselves. Once that person found this treasure, he put it back where he found it, and goes and sells everything that he has in order to buy that particular piece of ground and thus have the treasure for himself. This was very, very common, and everyone who heard this parable fully understood the example that Jesus was utilizing in the parable. If you remember what happened in the story of the talents, how the man with the one talent went and actually hid it in a field so that he could have it to give back to his master when he returned. This was very common.

The second parable is virtually the same in content, so we will not belabor the point. We have a man who is actually looking for pearls, finds one, and then sells all that he has so that he can purchase the pearl. Apparently, this man was a merchant whose occupation was buying and selling pearls. At the time of Jesus giving this parable, pearls were considered to be the most valuable of all of the precious gems. Listen to what John MacArthur wrote about pearls,

*It was incredible ... the extent to which people went in those days in pearl hunting. They would search in particular in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean and there were pearls to be found there, but they were to be found at great price and many people died gaining them. They actually were unable to use any of what we would know as modern paraphernalia to do the pearl diving, basically what they did was tie rocks to their body and then jump off the side of the little boat and go to the bottom amidst all the monsters of the deep that they would know little about, and the sharks and whatever else, and they would scour the bottom in the mud trying to come up with those oysters, holding one long deep-drawn breath and fearing lest they go too deep and burst and die. And they would come up with these treasures and when once discovered, a pearl that was of perfection and beauty would be worth literally an unnamed price ...incredibly valuable.*

When the Roman emperors wanted to demonstrate their incredible wealth and show how rich they were, they would dissolve pearls in vinegar and drank them in their wine.

So, we have one man who accidentally stumbles on a treasure, and the other man is searching for the treasure, but the end result for both is the same – they sell everything they have to purchase that which was of great price. The first man sells all that he has and buys the field, and the second man sells all that he has and buys the pearl. The point of the two parables is really very simple – **the men who found the treasures sold everything they had to gain their treasure.** In the final analysis, nothing is more valuable than salvation – nothing. Whatever it takes to be saved is the most important decision that someone can ever make. We have the story of the rich young ruler and how he kept everything of earthly value at the expense of losing everything which had eternal value. [Mark 8:36](#) expresses the truth this way,

Mk 8:36 (NKJV) **For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?**

The value of being a part of God's kingdom and the value of God's salvation cannot be measured. [1 Peter 1:4](#), speaking of this salvation, says that it is,

1Pe 1:4 (NKJV) **... an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,**

We know that this incredible value of God's kingdom is not something, however, that is readily apparent to most people. Just think for a moment of how the world perceives the Christian life, and how utterly worthless they perceive the idea of giving your life to Christ really is. They see no significant value in the kingdom of heaven or the things of God at all. [1 Corinthians 2:14](#) states that the natural man perceives it all to be “**foolishness**”, nonsense, folly, stupidity.

**1Co 2:14 (NKJV) But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

The way of God is narrow and unattractive to the lost man, and that is exactly why so few find it or even desire to find it. When Christ walked the earth, they said that He was possessed by a devil and that He was of Beelzebub. They mocked Him and spit on Him and finally nailed Him to a cross. The great tragedy in all of this is that God offers men what is really and truly valuable, and yet they spend their life to the extreme to have what is ultimately worthless and what will provide them absolutely nothing after they perish. [Hebrews 2:3](#) aptly speaks to this issue when it says,

**Heb 2:3 (NKJV) how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,**

We simply cannot measure the value of the kingdom of heaven and of this great salvation that has been provided for us.

The third parable is that of the dragnet in [Matthew 13:47-50](#),

**Mt 13:47 (NKJV) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, <sup>48</sup> which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. <sup>49</sup> So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, <sup>50</sup> and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."**

This final parable indicates that the church age will end in God's judgment on the world and all of the unsaved that are alive at that time will be excluded from the kingdom of God that will become visibly present in the Millennium. We are probably not too far from this event actually happening. It is at least seven years away, but that is not really that long. We often hear someone say something like “*Life is short, so you better enjoy it while you can.*” Now, that may seem reasonable for the moment, but in light of the Word of God, I think the more appropriate saying would be something like “*Eternity is beyond long, so you better prepare for it.*” Life as you currently know it is simply God's time of invitation for you to come to Him. If you choose otherwise, then there will never be another time when you can accept His offer for salvation and full forgiveness of sins. [Ephesians 1:7](#) declares,

**Eph 1:7 (NKJV) In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace**

As someone who may be lost and without Christ, you are living in **the only time of grace that there will ever be for your life**, and once death opens its ugly jaws and takes you away without you coming to Christ, the grace of God will vanish from your life forever – never again to be offered to you. For the lost man or woman, life is a one-time offer for salvation that is immediately rescinded at physical death.

If you are someone who would take this parable lightly, in my mind, chances are that you are not even saved. People seem to think that what they really are looking for is “*heaven on earth*”. I have no idea what that is or what someone is thinking. There is no heaven on earth. It is a figment of someone’s imagination, and 70-80 years may seem like a long time to enjoy the so-called “good life”, but in reality, it is simply a very, very short stepping stone into eternity – either with or without Christ. 70-80 years is not even a blip on the time line of eternity. If you are 74 like me, it is easy to realize that life is literally here today and gone tomorrow. My mother-in-law understood this when she said one day that she went to bed young and woke up one day and was old. So, the most critical decision that you will ever make is what it is that you are going to do with Jesus Christ. You can ignore Him now, but “now” is really very short lived, and once eternity opens its doors to your future, there is no reprieve if you decided that with your “*heaven on earth*” outlook that you could live without Jesus. There is no second chance, no pardon, and no exoneration that will be coming your way.

So, this specific event that Jesus is referring to occurs at the end of the Tribulation and just prior to the inauguration and beginning of the Millennium. The problem for many lost people is that because of the seven years of Tribulation and the Great Tribulation, plus the infusion of the mark of the beast at the midpoint of the Tribulation, most unbelievers will already have died and entered into judgment before Jesus returns at His Second Coming. The odds of someone living through the seven years of Tribulation and Great Tribulation are fairly slim, so putting off the inevitable is not really a smart choice at all.

Now, in the fishing communities of Palestine there were different kinds of nets that were used in the fishing industry. There were nets for individuals and there were nets that were much, much larger. A “**dragnet**” was the largest of all of the nets that were used in fishing. In fact, some of them were so enormous that one net could actually cover as much as 1/2 square mile. I have no idea how the fisherman managed to pull that large of net into the shore, but they figured out a way to do it. If you just think about that for a moment, the amount of strength and power needed to just pull the net around or to the shore was utterly enormous. Inside the net there would be every conceivable kind of fish that would be in the lake or the ocean. There would be weeds and objects and all manner of sea life, and Jesus says here that there would be “**some of every kind**” of fish. Once the time of fishing was complete, the net would be dragged in to the shore. It could take hours, maybe even a day, for a large number of men to be able to complete all of this. Once the net was on the shore, the men would go through the net and gather all of the good fish together and throw all of the bad fish away. That is the picture here. So, what Jesus says here in [v49-50](#) is this,

**Mt 13:49 (NKJV) So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, <sup>50</sup> and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**

Jesus is clearly talking about what will happen at the end of the church age. What we glean from at least two of the parables we have studied is that during the church age that the godly and the ungodly will exist side by side both in the world and in the church, but at the end of the age there will be a judgment that will separate the two. Listen to what Jesus stated in the parable of the wheat and the tares in [v39-42](#),

**Mt 13:39 (NKJV) The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. <sup>40</sup> Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, <sup>42</sup> and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**

This will not be good for many, many people – and especially people who have just been playing the religious game and have fooled both themselves and everyone else into thinking that they are saved when there is nothing in their life that even approximates that reality except their church attendance and a few dollars in an offering plate. There is coming a time when God’s patience and long-suffering will cease. It will simply end. We are still living in the age of grace, a period of time when the grace of God is constantly extended to all – both believers and unbelievers alike. However, at the end of the church age there will be this separation, and then one final separation at the end of the Millennium, and the need for grace will be gone.

It really is an amazing thing to me how men somehow have convinced themselves that they will miss the judgment of God. It is almost as if they seem oblivious to it, as if it will not be applicable to them. They think that they are good and will escape their refusal to come to Christ because they are a “good” person. That kind of person does not exist. [Romans 3:10](#) says,

**Ro 3:10 (NKJV) As it is written: "*There is none righteous, no, not one;***

The judgment of God on the lost person and on the wicked is utterly inescapable. The average person in the world today simply does not see or recognize the hand of God in their life or in the world. Their life and His creation mean nothing to them as long as they can live how they want to live. There are times when some of them may be moved to some extent by the Word of God and by the work of God in their life. Something may happen in their life that causes them to somewhat fear the judgment of God and for a brief time it is relevant to them and they are frightened by it. However, they slowly move away and drift away from that work of God within them, and they fall back to their ungodly lifestyle. What they fail to grasp is that they can be assured that the judgment of God will come, and it will fall on them.

What Jesus is describing here is just one event in a multitude of last days’ events. Repeatedly throughout the New Testament there are very severe warnings related to the final judgment and the indescribable horrors of the Lake of Fire and eternal torment. In the Scriptures, the pleas for people to come to Christ are so numerous, and the invitation so generous – “**whoever will may come**”. Whenever I contemplate the doctrine of hell and the reality and horror of it, it literally frightens me like no other doctrine. I cannot imagine what someone will suffer once they enter into that domain of torment and darkness. Our human minds cannot conceive of the awfulness, of the dreadfulness, of the utter horror and terror of this place of God’s final judgment. It is a place where there is no relief, no help, and no escape. Once there, you are there for eternity. There is no future hope where God is going to change His mind later and in His mercy give everyone a second chance. The only opportunity that anyone will ever have to come to Christ is during their earthly existence. That is it, and no more. Even at the end of the Millennium, [Revelation 20:7-10](#), speaking of Satan being released for a short while, says that there will be people who follow him “**as the sand of the sea**”.

Rev 20:7 (NKJV) **Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison<sup>8</sup> and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.<sup>9</sup> They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.<sup>10</sup> The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**

It is staggering to me how depraved and wicked the human heart actually is. It is able to twist the truth so bad that it takes the most important truth in someone's life and convinces them that it is just a waste of time. [Jeremiah 17:9](#) says,

Jer 17:9 (NKJV) **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?**

This lake of fire is a place that is characterized by the worst torment and pain and suffering and agony that could ever be imagined. There is constant and utter darkness, no one to talk to, nothing to see, nowhere to go, and no one to help you. There is no food, no water. There is nothing whatsoever to enjoy. There is no sleep, but only constant agony. There is never any relief. The lost man will be alone in darkness and suffering as cannot be described. [Mark 9:43](#) exclaims that the fires of hell will never be quenched, will never cease burning, will never provide a moment of relief. Jesus says over and over that there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The body will burn, but not be consumed. [Mark 9:44](#) says that **"the worm will not die"**, but will always be eating away at the body, yet never consuming it.

As I studied this parable, it reminded me of the awesome responsibility that we have to encourage the saved and to warn the lost. Your love for Christ and your witness for Christ, may cost you someone's friendship. They may choose to have nothing to do with you when you share the gospel of God's grace and salvation with them, but what other choice do we have. Too often we just seem casually indifferent and unconcerned about those who surround us, and especially those who we know are not saved and will be lost forever. Do we just keep silent in hopes that maybe one day they may come to their senses? That really is not a Holy Spirit driven approach at all, but it seems to be the more comfortable approach for most people – just say nothing, just do nothing. I have always taught you that God reaches people through people – people just like us. We can hide in our little spiritual cocoon, in our little holy huddle down at the church, but that is not what God wants at all. As we get closer and closer to the end, the truth of God's Word is that people will drift further and further from the truth and that evil men will wax worse and worse. So, to have this incredible gift of eternal life, but to never share it with others is the epitome of selfishness and complete spiritual apathy and indifference. May we find ways to graciously proclaim this precious gospel to those who surround us and to offer them God's indescribable gift of eternal life. It does not matter who you are and what you say you believe. [Acts 4:12](#) is dogmatically clear when it says,

Ac 4:12 (NKJV) **Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."**