

# Pt 7 the Pearl of Great Price

by Alan Redpath

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*Alan Redpath's sermon explores the parable of the pearl of great price, illustrating God's immense love for His people and the transformative power of Christ's sacrifice.*

**Duration:** 37:46

**Scripture:** Proverbs 8:11, Proverbs 31:10, 1 Peter 2:7

**Topics:** "Pearl Of Great Price"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of being hurt by someone's negative comment about the church attendance. He contrasts the reactions of two individuals, one who criticizes and one who encourages. The speaker emphasizes that the only good thing about anyone is Jesus and that through the wounds of Jesus, his grace and beauty are made available to us. The sermon also highlights the purpose of the Church as a precious jewel that is gathered and presented to God, symbolizing the triumph of purity over impurity. The merchant seeking pearls represents Jesus, who seeks and purchases the Church at any cost to present it to the King.

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## Transcript

Verse 44, again the kingdom of heaven is like to a treasure hid in a field, in which, for which when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Now, this is the second of two parables which tell us, first and foremost, of what we mean to Jesus, and how much he loves us.

We've looked at this first parable, where the treasure hid in the field, and now we come to consider the pearl of great price. I hope we've really got hold in our hearts of the fact that God's concern for the whole world is the display of his government, as it was originally intended. And this is to be revealed through people he has redeemed at Calvary, won back from the enemy, who have revolted against him in favor of Jesus.

And that could only be accomplished by the cross. I don't know, I haven't time to go into the detail of it, but sometimes, in support of the kingdom being restored, read Matthew chapter 4, where you have the account of a personal encounter between the greatest rebel in the universe, the devil, and Jesus, the Lord, the Savior. You remember something, perhaps, of it.

Just to remind you of one thing, it took place, you remember, after 40 days and 40 nights, and Jesus was hungry. And the devil came up to him and confronted him, and said, if you're the son of God, as much as to say, I was listening in when heaven opened a little time ago, and when the father said, this is my beloved son, hear him. If you are then what you are, the son of God, command these stones to be made bread, satisfy your hunger.

If you're the son of God, act like God. You remember what Jesus said in reply, it is written, man shall not live thy bread alone, but for every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. I'm not here to deal with you as God, I'm here to deal with you as man.

I'm not here as God, one day, I'll deal with you as God. One day, I'll throw you into the bottomless pit. My, I hope I'm here at that time to see it.

I won't be here, but I mean, I hope I see it happen. What a tremendous thing, when the devil is really cast into a bottomless pit, that's the end of him. But no, no, I'm here to deal with you as man, because it was only by resisting the enemy as a man, and victorious as a man in everything, that Jesus was able to impart that human nature, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

Do you think Jesus could have sinned? He sure could. If he'd exercised any of his divine attributes of character, acted as God, he'd have failed. As a man, he could sin, but he was able not to sin.

And I believe that for 40 days and 40 nights, heaven held its breath on that issue. Or else, where was the temptation? And as man, in order that, as man in a perfect human nature, you take that nature up to heaven, and receive the Holy Spirit, that that same nature might come and dwell in you and me. That God's perfect man, who exhibited the government of God in every minute of his life, should repeat that in Christian people.

The kingdom on earth, seen today by people who are born again. I hope that you get that. It's wonderful to live a kingdom life.

That's what the world expects to see. To demonstrate that life in each one of us, by the power of his Spirit. Now, let me just turn with you then, with that in mind, to the parable of the pearl.

Frankly, I find this one of the most amazing instances of God's love for me, and his love, Jesus' love for me. I find it very difficult this morning to speak about it. It's so moving.

And here's a man who, well, we've heard of the treasure in the field, but he goes on to speak of this merchant man, seeking fine pearls, who found one of great value, and went and sold all he had, and bought it. Only the Holy Spirit can really bring home the truth of that. But I need hardly stop and say that I don't accept a popular interpretation.

I'm afraid I'll be most unpopular with some of you. You must come and tell me, I don't mind, I can take it. You should not be able to hurt a crucified man.

Just think into that. If I get easily hurt with people, if you do something wrong with me, you shouldn't be able to hurt. So don't mind coming and telling me if you think it's nonsense, if you don't agree.

I told you, be free, absolutely free. I have to hurry, because I'm going away tomorrow, so get a move on. But what is the interpretation that's popular of this? The interpretation regards the pearl of great price as

Jesus, that he is the pearl of great price.

But that's contrary to all the teaching of Scripture. Here's a verse of a hymn, it may be a hymn of a generation ago, perhaps you don't know it, but have you heard of this hymn? I found the pearl of greatest price. My heart does sing for joy, and sing I must, for Christ is mine.

Christ shall my song imply. That's lovely sentiment. But if it implies that I can purchase salvation, that's unscriptural.

And how often we sing hymns without thinking what the message is. We are redeemed not with corruptible things, 2 Peter 1 18, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. He it is who paid the price.

He it is who's taken the initiative. He sought me, I didn't seek him. I owe everything to him.

We'll see as we look at this verse, who is this, and what is this pearl? Let's handle it in three sections. First, the meaning of the pearl. Notice, and put down in your notes, that the pearl is a New Testament word, and not an Old Testament one.

In the Old Testament, there are some wonderful descriptions of precious stones, stones which were on, for instance, on the breastplate of the priest. Exodus 28, don't bother to look it up, but just jot it down, then sometime you can look it through. You'll find emeralds, and sapphire, and diamonds, and jasper, precious stones, contrasting them with wisdom, which is far above, wisdom which is far above rubies.

Interesting verse, perhaps it's rather naughty of me. It says, Proverbs 8 11, and then Proverbs 31 10, a good wife is far more precious than jewels. Especially mentioned for the sake of some fellows here, to whom I would say, come on.

You know what I mean? I shall say no more, although I'm tempted to. Oh, I thank the Lord for our wives. They halve our sorrows, double our joys, and treble our expenses.

That's why they're so dear to us. Forgive me that bit of stupidity. I'm keeping believing for you.

Now, you never find in the Old Testament a pearl mentioned, because the Jew did never count the pearl of least value, of any value. And I can imagine the surprise with which the disciples heard this parable, for they knew not only that the pearl was not valued by the Jew, but it was highly valued by the Gentile. The jewelry of eastern kings contained pearls, and pearls had an increasing value.

Until now, of course, it's the most precious stone in the east. But it's always been regarded as something of Gentile value. And so our Lord takes this pearl, the thing of Gentile value, as the symbol of the most precious thing in this parable.

That's the meaning of the pearl, but how, what about the making of it? Now, we need to go slow here. I want to give you time to get this down. As far as I know, the pearl is the only precious stone which is the product of a living organism.

The pearl is the direct result of an injury done to the life which produces it. The pearl, I repeat, is the direct result of an injury done to the life which produces it. You all know the story of the, of how the pearl is found in the shell of an oyster.

Amazing, really. Perhaps a grain of sand or some other foreign substance has got, metaphorically speaking, under its skin. And you know, when that happens with you and me, something gets under our skin.

Well, this pearl, this thing, this something, foreign substance, has intruded and something that harms and injures and hurts. And what's the reaction of the oyster? Well, it covers that thing that hurts it with layer after layer of something which is called mother of pearl. The most precious part of its being, it uses to cover this intruded thing with mother of pearl until the thing which has caused injury and harm is changed and becomes a precious jewel.

So, word for word, please, it might help you. The pearl has become the answer of the life which was injured to the thing that injured it. Just keep that sentence before you.

The pearl has become the answer of the life which was hurt or injured to what injured it. The pearl began by creating hurt, injury, but the answer of the life it injured is to transform it into a thing of beauty and value. Got that? Do I repeat? Okay.

Repeat? Last bit. Okay. Okay.

Reverse again. Ready? Pearl has become the answer of the life which was injured to that which injured it. The pearl began by creating hurt, injury, but the answer of the life it injured is to transform it into a thing of tremendous beauty and priceless value.

Now, you'll see that and understand the wonder of it in a few minutes if you don't see it already. That's the making of a pearl, but look. What about its purpose? What about the mission of it? What's its use? What value is it? Well, to most people, it's a thing of beauty, but in Eastern thought, it's a picture of innocence or purity.

I wonder if anyone here has the name of Margaret. How many of you are called Margaret? Well, did you know that that word is a Greek word, Margretis, and it means purity. Purity.

And so, the pearl is not only the answer of an injured life to what injured it, it's that, but it's a picture of purity. Oh, my. Something that has originally been the cause of pain and hurt has been dealt with.

By the very life it hurt, it injured, till it's changed into a thing of priceless beauty and purity. A picture of the triumph of purity over impurity. Just look at one other thing here.

The merchant man is seeking pearls, not for himself. He's a merchant man, not for other people. In those days, Eastern lands, the best and most precious was only worthy of a king to wear.

So, here's the picture, a merchant man seeking, finding a pearl worthy only of a king, and he determines to purchase it at any cost that he may present it to a king. Perhaps you begin to see something of the truth here. I don't know that I can find words to express it.

But our Lord seems clearly to be teaching that in this age, today, there's to be gathered out of it, bought out of it, and presented to God, the most glorious jewel that'll flash forever. Not only here, but in heaven. Out of all the mystery of sin and evil and confusion and chaos in the world today, there's to be found something very wonderful for the possession of God, the Father.

And among all the treasures of this day and age, it is the Church of Jesus Christ, which is supreme. That's the secret, hidden from all previous times, now revealed to the disciples, Colossians 1, 26 and 27. The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, I'm reading, that now is made manifest to his saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Now, you see a master in this parable, discovering the pearl, going away and selling everything and buying it. Not going away from earth to heaven, but going away from heaven and to earth. For the Lord has seen this jewel from all eternity, and for love and desire, surrenders position, possessions, all he has, that he may purchase it and take it back with himself.

The thing that was held in contempt by the Jew is to him a pearl of great price. There's a difference, of course, between the kingdom and the Church. A lot of people who've been in heaven have been in the kingdom, but not in the Church.

Old Testament believers, for instance. But here's the pearl of great price. Got that so far? Ready? We read in 1 Peter 2, 7, 1 Peter 2, 7, to you which believe he is precious, or to you which believe is the preciousness.

All that is precious in him is imparted to his people. All that is precious in Jesus is imparted to us. That's the secret of Christian character.

Never do we need to make anything of ourselves to boast of. Heard of this verse of a hymn? Every virtue we possess, and every victory won, every thought of holiness are his alone. Anything good in you and me is the product of his life realized in me.

We came to him, to Jesus, worthless, and are transformed into something precious because he's passed over to each one of us all the values which are himself. That's the story of the pearl. I believe I may have told you, I'm not ashamed to tell you again, that Major Thomas was one of my first Christian friends, and long ago before any of you were thought of, I met him.

He was a medical student at the time in London, and he was speaking at a very small meeting to which I'd invited him. I was un-Christian, but making a mess of it. Maybe some of you feel you understand what I mean by that.

I'd been converted perhaps about two or three years, but I wasn't getting on at all, making no progress. In the course of his address, he said, what do you think Christ expects of you? I just curled up. I wanted to disappear, hide under my seat, because I thought to myself, I know he's going to tell me he expects some wonderful person, somebody with a halo, and somebody, you know, tremendous.

And the next words he used, I'll tell you, he said, nothing but failure. Nothing but failure. I pricked up my ears.

I thought, Lord, I'm a candidate, but that's me to a T. Okay, nothing but failure. Okay, here I am. And then he said, but God has given you the Holy Spirit that you need not fail.

And then I realized for the first time in my life what the Christian life really meant. You get it? The only good thing about you is Jesus. And I've been a Christian now for, well, I'll leave it at that, between 50 and 60 years.

And there is no sin that I'm incapable of committing. Five minutes after this lecture is over, but for the grace of God. The only good thing about Alan Redfarth is Jesus.

The only good thing about you is Christ. And that's the story of the making of the pearl. First of all, that pearl is worthless.

The cause of harm, it's changed into a thing of beauty by the very person it hurt, bruised, harmed. Yet his answer, his answer, the injured one, the one who was hurt, to those who harmed him, is to make over to them all the beauty and the character. By the very wounding of Jesus, there comes to us his grace, his glory, his beauty.

It's not self-improvement, but Christ's replacement, replacing you with himself. But what's the purpose of the pearl? He hasn't bought it for himself. He's bought it to present it to his father.

And out of all the chaos in the world, he is lifting his people to be those who will be with him forever in heaven, and who, until they get there, will be his channel through whom he will reveal himself. May I read to you just two verses from Ephesians chapter three, verse eight. And to me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now, under the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known by the church the wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

So, oh, this really takes some believing. Not merely am I made rich in God with all his grace and all his strength and power, but he's gained something of priceless value to himself in each one of us. He's gained something.

We talk about our inheritance in Jesus, but we don't talk much about his inheritance in us. He's gained something very precious in his people, because through the whole of not only this life, but glory, the wisdom of God, the grace of God, is to be made known to principalities and powers, the pearl of great price, gathered out of human sin and human failure. He loved me and gave himself for me.

The pearl of that mission today, we've said before in other parables, that the Lord wants to reveal his kingdom life through each one of us. The question is, am I doing that? Because this involves very practical reactions. Let me give you just two and ask you to apply them.

First, how do you react when you get hurt? How do you react when you're hurt? I remember one at Moody Church in Chicago. Every Sunday morning, about two minutes to 11, just before the service, one of the trustees, one of the big shots in the place, used to put his head through the door and look at me and say, hopeless pastor, church half empty today, and he went out. Well, that didn't help very much.

One minute later, another man came in, walked right across the door, across the floor, and put his arm around me and hugged me and said, wonderful pastor, the church is half full today. Both of those men saying the same thing. One with a view to raking me through, the other with a view to encouraging me.

Which do you think it would be easier to love of those two? Well, I don't need to answer the question. I reacted to man number one in exactly the reverse direction to which I had preached, and I didn't like him, and I couldn't stand him. So I thought the only thing to do is to get rid of him, and I wrote a letter.

Oh, it really blew up that letter. I said to him, it's no use me ministering here with people like you around. Go to some other fundamental church in Chicago, do your thing there, but we can never see blessing if you stay here.

Off you go, and lots more. And I left that letter on my desk. My wife saw it, and she said to me, don't you think we'd better pray together before you send that letter? Oh, I said, yes, sure.

I've read a lot about it, but I'd like to pray with you too. Come on, let's kneel down and pray now. So I said, you pray first, and I've never forgotten the next 10 minutes.

She never prayed for the man at all. She prayed for her husband, and that did something. It broke my heart.

I had to go to that man and apologize, and to speak to my church board and tell them I was sorry. And something happened that day, not to the man, but to the minister. How do you react when you're hurt? The strange thing was that just a week later, we were having a Keswick convention, so-called, at Moody Church, and among our speakers was Dr. Maxwell, president of Prairie Bible Institute.

And he was speaking at a minister's meeting, at which I was taking the chair. And he began, about 400 ministers, saying, how do you behave when somebody needles you? And I began to feel very uncomfortable in the light of what had just happened, and wished I could disappear from the platform, but there's no hope for it. And he said, when will you men realize that the people who you don't like, the people who you can't get on with, are the nails that Jesus is using to drive you to calvary? That's it.

That's it. People today are talking a lot about Pentecost, a lot about Holy Spirit power. You can't have Holy Spirit power without a personal calvary.

And that means not only going there to visit it, but it means staying there all your life. How do I react when I get hurt? Try 1 Corinthians 13, and let a little love loose in the situation, and watch God work a miracle. And one other thing, how do I react when other people hurt Jesus? How do I react when other people hurt Jesus? When I see people and meet people who hate him and despise him, how do I react then? Do I find myself just possessed with a tremendous desire that that hurt to him causes in my heart to be like a burning fire that makes me long to see such people transformed into his likeness? The message of the pearl of great price, and wonderful, wonderful thing, that the one who was so badly hurt is now in you the person who hurt him.

And the reaction of a real Christian is to shed abroad in your heart the love of Jesus. I trust that that's exactly what you and I wish to do today. Let's pray together.

Now we have just a moment or two. Perhaps we could spend it in quiet prayer. Now, maybe you need to ask the Lord's forgiveness for your reaction to somebody who's hurt you.

And to ask him to give you grace to have the reaction that produces the pearl, the reaction of love. Love one another, say Jesus, as I have loved you. Lord, as we go out into a world that despises you, help us to go out as people who've learned to love and to care, and to have the love of God in our hearts shed abroad by your Holy Spirit.

And people may see a miracle has taken place. As we reflect something of the loveliness of Christ, make it possible so that your sacrifice on Calvary for us was not worthless, but infinitely worthwhile. We ask it in

Jesus' name.

Amen.

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