

Matthew ch 13 vs 44-58

Satan has his counterfeits, that's the thrust of the message of the parable of the wheat and the tares. That even though there will be a majority rejection of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this world (which we see the results of a Christ rejecting world all around us i.e. somewhere to the tune of every 10-20 seconds every minute of everyday 24/7 statistically speaking there's an abortion. Murder, rape, thievery and suicide all common everyday occurrences that can be heard of on the evening news.) But that's not good enough for the enemy. He has to sow his counterfeit to the genuine article so as to wreak even more confusion and destroy more lives and so in the midst of the wheat, those true to Jesus, he sows the tares. Those that have an appearance of godliness, maybe go through the motions, but have something altogether different going on in their hearts. and These tares can be sown in the form of false religions, cults, "isms" and even people that claim to know Jesus but in works they deny Him.

Paul wrote to Titus 1:15-16 "*To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. (Listen to this) They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.*" In other words they may show up at church on Sunday and maybe even an occasional Wednesday and go through all the motions and talk all the right talk, but their lives outside these 4 walls is anything but godly. We've all known people like this at various times, that was me at one time, playing the role of the hypocrite, and I praise God for His long-suffering towards me in pulling me out of that deception and into a personal relationship with Himself. But these are the tares, the ones as Jesus would say, practice lawlessness, or offend which means to make other people stumble, they're the sons of the wicked one, their actions testifying of that fact.

You see you don't have to be a Satanist to be a son of the wicked one, all you have to do is not be a son of the kingdom, you're either for Jesus or against Him. Jesus said in John 8:42-44 "*If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.*" You see you either love Jesus and practice righteousness, or you don't love Jesus and practice lawlessness. and Again that doesn't mean that you're out there committing heinous crimes necessarily, it just means you don't serve Jesus. and Coming to church doesn't mean you serve Jesus, now is it mine to judge the position of your heart? No, you can fool me easy enough, but at the end of the age the Lord will deal with all that offend and practice lawlessness by having His angels gather them up and cast them into the fire and (read vs 43).

But again I want to emphasize that this parable has nothing to do with church discipline, if you're claiming to be a Christian and you're caught up in sin and refuse to repent, the bible is very clear that we are to have nothing to do with that person. Jesus said, *"let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector"* 2 Thess 3:14 Paul wrote *"And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed."*

Again in 1 Cor 5:11 we read *"I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person."* So the bible is very clear on how to deal with a sinning brother that refuses to repent, but it's not our job to go around probing people to see whether or not they're truly wheat or tares, their sin will find them out, God has ways of exposing that to. But the ultimate separation of the wheat and the tares in the kingdom will take place at the end of the age.

Jesus also instructed them as to the evil influences that would make their way into the kingdom, and that there would be false doctrines that would be infused into the kingdom that would corrupt the kingdom. But in spite of all of these things the kingdom is still with out measure as far as its worth and value goes, to the Lord. Why, because it involves you and He has a love for you that's with out measure; Jer 29:11 *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope"* Ps 139:17-18 *How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand."*

God loves you more than you could possibly ever comprehend, and if you were the only one in the history of the world that would've ever responded to His love and grace He would've gone through everything He did just for you. I'm convinced of that because I know the heart of God and the more I know of it, the more I want to know of it because it's filled with love and grace and mercy and the desire to forgive. God values you, and He values me and it blows my mind when I think of where I've been and what I've done to think that God loves me and wants to use my life for His glory. Let it be known that if God can use a jacked up life like mine, He can use any body, some of you may have a life that's been more messed up than mine ever was, but don't glory in it praise God for His grace. The most powerful testimony is a life lived for Jesus Christ, I envy that, I wish I could stand before you with that testimony, but I can't.

But I can say that it doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done, God loves you and if you'll only surrender to Him He'll blow your mind, He'll rock your world, call it what you want, but you'll never be the same again, ever. And such is the case anytime you have an encounter with Jesus Christ; He changes your life, you'll either leave His presence with a limp, as did Israel, having been broken by God. Or you'll be shining like Moses but one thing is for certain you'll never be the same because something about you will change. and That's my prayer for us this morning that we will walk out of this place changed, having spent time with Jesus.

Vs44

Now again there are many, commentators and scholarly individuals that will interpret this parable something like this. That Jesus is the treasure and the man in the parable represents sinful man who when he finds Christ, realizing the value of possessing Him and obtaining salvation, gives up all that he has that he might gain Christ. Because the kingdom of heaven is worth infinitely more than the cost of discipleship.

Those who know where the treasure lies joyfully abandon everything else to secure it Or that all this, (knowing Christ, and having Him rule over our hearts and our lives) is a treasure so immeasurably precious that the one who obtains it is willing to surrender for it anything that could possibly interfere with having it. And they point to Paul the Apostles conversion and how he was willing to give up everything in order that he might gain the invaluable riches of Christ. But even though they seemingly have scriptural support for their interpretation I have to respectfully disagree with that interpretation and application of scripture. Because I find several inconsistencies with that interpretation with what we read here and or the plan of salvation.

#1 Sinful man doesn't find Christ, He finds you, Luke 19:10 *"for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."* Jesus also said, you didn't choose Me I chose you, and as far as Paul's conversion goes, I would say that it's quite obvious that Paul didn't find Christ on the road to Damascus, Christ found Paul on the road to Damascus. Paul didn't choose to hook up with Jesus that day, but Jesus chose to hook up with Paul that day; Jesus chose him. Jesus said concerning Paul *"he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."* Acts 9:15-16 So Paul, (or actually Saul at the time) didn't just happen to stumble on to Christ, that was a divine appointment that Jesus had ordained in order to show Himself real to Saul, because He had a plan for his life.

Nor did you just happen to stumble onto Jesus, Jesus chose to make Himself real to you because He's got a plan for your life as well, and He wants to use every person here for His glory. #2 It says that the man goes and sells all that he has and buys the field. So is that to say that you can somehow buy your salvation, or that you can maybe merit it if you just give up enough stuff? That couldn't be more contrary to the work of the cross, if you could somehow merit your salvation by giving up this bad habit or that lifestyle. Or by selling all of your material possessions and giving all you own to the poor, then the work of the cross was in vain and Jesus was a fool to give His life for us. Because if all we has to do was clean up our act and be good upstanding moral citizens then His death was pointless.

What does the bible say, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*" Eph 2:8-9 You can't earn your salvation, there's nothing you can do to add to the work of the cross, it was a finished, or completed work. All we can do is humbly receive it, and be ever thankful to God for His vast love for us in being willing to lay down His life for the likes of you, and for the likes of me. And out of that heart of thanksgiving, we offer ourselves back over to God to be used of Him however He sees fit to use our lives. "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*" Rom 12:1-2 "God use my life however you please, I offer it up to You, and lay down my own will that You might prove out Your will through my life."

3rdly I want you to notice that the man didn't just purchase the treasure that was in the field, he purchased the whole field so that he might gain the treasure that was in the field. Now in our expositional constancy what is it that Jesus tells us quite plainly that the field represents in His parables? Look at Vs 38, what does it say (read 1st part of vs), so does the lost sinner have to purchase the whole world to gain Christ, and it doesn't make sense to have to give up all you have in order to gain the world that you might gain Christ. I'm quite certain that you won't find that principle taught in scripture, Jesus calls out of the world, we're never taught to pursue the world, but rather to depart from worldliness and not to put our hope into the things of this world.

So if we consider all of these things and then revert back to our little rule of thumb in understanding these parables we seem to get a much more balanced understanding of this parable. In all the other parables in which we've seen a man, who has that man stood to illustrate, (vs 37, read) the man is Jesus, the field is the world and the bible is very clear that it was Jesus who laid aside His glory, (not His deity, but His glory). Stepped out of all time and eternity giving everything He had, even His own life that He might redeem or purchase this world. *“Not with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”* 1 Peter 1:18-19

The 1st Adam forfeited the title deed to the earth back in the Garden when he fell prey to sin, thereby rendering it over to Satan. The last Adam, Jesus Christ redeemed the title deed, or purchased back the title deed to the earth through the shedding of His blood, never having fallen prey to sin. and Why did He purchase back the entire earth, (the whole field)? Because He wanted another planet to rule over, no; because He wanted the treasure that was in it, what was the treasure? No doubt it sits here this morning, notice it says that for the joy over it He gave or sold all that He had. Heb 12:2 Says, *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* You were the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross for the joy of knowing you and being in fellowship with you throughout all time and eternity.

Now if we use OT imagery we would say that this parable is specifically in regards to the nation Israel, God referred more than once to Israel as a treasure of His. Ex 19:5 *“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.”* Ps 135:4 *“For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure.”*

So if we go that route, which I'm at total peace with as well, we see that Jesus was saying in this parable that He was giving all that He had that He might redeem the nation of Israel. and The bible tells us in Zech 12 that one day they will realize that, Zech 12:10 *“Then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”* But the kingdom wouldn't be limited to the Jew alone as they had thought; you see the Jew thought that salvation was reserved exclusively for them. and That all that the gentiles were good for was to keep the fires of hell burning hot, but that was never God's plan in the 1st place, and here we find Jesus beginning to develop that thought with them in this next parable that's in many ways similar to this one.

Vs45-46

Again there are those who consider in this parable that Jesus is the pearl of great price and that sinful man is the merchant seeking salvation and when he finds it he forsakes all to obtain it. And it sounds so poetic and beautiful that way, but it holds water about as equivalent as bucket that's been blasted through with a shotgun. Because in this parable the merchant doesn't just happen to stumble upon this pearl, he's on a mission, he's seeking it out. And according to my bible (lets look at it together) leave Matt and turn quickly to the book of Romans ch3 vs 10-18. Now does that sound like an estimation whereby there are those who seek out salvation and seek after Christ, and even if they did (which they don't) they have nothing by which they might obtain it. According to this parable the merchantman sells all that he has to purchase it. But again according to my bible that would be impossible because according to Eph 2:1 prior to you receiving Christ you were dead. "*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*"

Now lets look at this practically for a minute, how many dead people have you ever seen seeking someone out? (Hollyweird doesn't count) and besides that neither do dead people have anything to sell, they're dead. And further more to drive the point home, once more the bible is very clear that salvation is not for sale, the price was paid at the cross, Christ paid that price so that He might to offer it to you freely. Rev 21:6 "*And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts."* Are you thirsty for more this morning, Jesus wants to quench that thirst. "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" You can't purchase the salvation that's offered by Jesus through money, good works, upright morals, lots of sacrifice, or anything else; it's a free gift that all you have to do is receive by faith. Rom 6:23 "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

So I don't see eye-to-eye with that interpretation either, but rather once again we see Jesus illustrated by the merchantman who left His heavenly home and came to this earth. Seeking you out, giving all that He had that He might purchase you, or redeem you to God by His precious blood. 2 Cor 8:9 "*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*" You've been reconciled and brought near to God by the blood of Jesus Christ "*you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*"

When they heard this parable it would've no doubt been a little bit harder for them to grasp because to the Jew in this culture, pearls were basically worthless. They didn't consider the pearl as something that was worth value, or liken it to a precious gem or anything else. But to the gentiles at that time the pearl was considered the most precious of all "treasures" much like what we would probably consider the diamond today. Because then pearls were very rare, they didn't cultivate them like we do today. So to the gentile they were very valuable and the disciples knew that, so even though it would've been hard for them to grasp, or hard for them to palate, they would've known that this parable carried with it gentile implications. And by that Jesus was telling them that this gospel message and the hope of salvation is going to spread far beyond Israel; this isn't just for the Jews. But that the message of Jesus Christ was for all the world, the gentile as well as the Jew, so in this parable Jesus purposefully picks out something that is precious, not to the Jews but to the gentiles, and by that He is saying, that God is going to gather in the gentiles.

Now when you consider the way that the pearl is formed it becomes even more fascinating, because as you know the oyster is a filter feeder. So occasionally a little speck of dirt or sand gets into the oyster shell and it irritates it, because the inside of an oyster is very soft, much like the texture of your eye. But the oyster has no way to wipe it out and you know how painful it can be to get a piece of sand or dirt in your eye. So God designed the oyster to secrete a substance called mother of pearl by which it coats that little piece of dirt, and it surrounds it and surrounds it and surrounds it until it's completely smooth and then the mother of pearl hardens into a pearl. The oyster takes of itself and takes of its own nature and completely envelops this irritant; and so the pearl is the oysters' answer to an inflicted wound from the outside. Did you catch that; the pearl is the oysters' answer to an inflicted wound from the outside. The bigger the wound, the bigger the pearl and as a gentile king of all the jewels you could possess the greatest would be a pearl. Because pearls had to be found naturally, and they were rare, and when you found one it didn't have to be cut like a diamond or a ruby to enhance its beauty; to the contrary the moment you cut into a pearl it's ruined.

So gentile kings would employ these merchantmen to search out these precious jewels and gems by which he might be adorned because the more jewelry you had and the more expensive it was, the more prestige you had because it indicated that you were powerful. and As I said of all the gems and precious jewels that there are, they valued the pearl the most. And so these merchantmen that were employed by these gentile kings would go around searching for jewels but the one jewel that he wanted more than any other was pearls and the bigger the pearl the better. And when he found a big pearl he would buy it, take it back to the king and the king would wear it on his chest, he would wear it around his neck in display. If it were a big pearl then that made him (in his own mind) the biggest, most powerful and prestigious of all the kings (ya see).

Here's this merchantman in Jesus' parable that finds this one pearl that's so big, that he knows that this has to be the biggest pearl that this world has to offer. No body has ever seen a pearl this big, I mean this pearl is so magnificent that he sells *everything* he's got in order to get this pearl. He sacrifices everything, maybe he's been on the road 2-3 even 5 yrs buying up gems in different ports traveling from city to city, but now he liquidates all of his assets so as to obtain this one pearl, this one precious gem that's so big that he knows that when he takes it back to his king it will adorn his chest, and he will in fact be the most prestigious and most honored of all kings.

Now lets look at this again, Jesus is the merchantman; the king (who is not mentioned but only implied by the essence of the text) is God the Father. God the Father sent His Son out, and Jesus is the merchantman who went seeking throughout the world in port after port after port until He found one pearl of exceeding Great price. Now remember how is a pearl formed? The pearl is the answer to an inflicted wound, and the bigger the pearl the bigger the wound, so this great big pearl means that there must have been a very large wound that was inflicted. Who is the pearl of great price, you are, at one time you were nothing more than an inflicted wound in the heart of God.

In all your sin and rebellion you did nothing but hurt God, but how did God respond to you when hurt Him? Did He cast you off, or in anger rid Himself of your presence? He would've been absolutely righteous in doing that, but He didn't did He? But rather like that oyster He took of His own nature, and even as that oyster secretes mother of pearl and takes that wound, and turns it into a precious gem, so God took of His nature, even though you through your sin had hurt His heart deeply and He took of His nature and He transformed you from an irritating piece of dirt, from a wound in His heart, to a pearl of exceedingly great price having robed you in His righteousness. 2 Cor 5:21 *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

Though you were once a great sinner, God has made a great pearl out of you, so great and precious in the eyes of God that Jesus Christ was willing to give absolutely everything to purchase you. When He went to the cross He gave up everything, and took your sin upon Himself and bore the judgment that you and I deserve as He was hanging there upon that tree, for you and for me He was purchasing by His divine blood that which God has decided to make into a pearl.

For what purpose, so that He might gather you home to Himself so that throughout all eternity you might adorn the heart of God, when people look at you they're going to say wow, look at the size of that pearl, look at the grace of God having taken a sinner like you and having formed you into such a precious gem. Paul said that he was the chief of sinners, and yet God transformed the chief of sinners into the chief of apostles.

That's God making out pearl out of dirt, we were nothing more than a wound to the heart of God, and yet God takes of His nature and transforms us into His image and His likeness. And one day we will be presented faultless before the Father, even as a precious pearl. When you get to revelation ch 21 vs 21 you see that all 12 individual gates of the new Jerusalem are all made of 1 big pearl. Don't think even for one second that, that's by coincidence. And every time we walk into the gates of the city in awe of its beauty, may it be a reminder to us of the unsearchable, unfathomable grace of God. I was nothing more than a wound and a hurt to your heart, and you forgave my sins and transformed my life, thank you Jesus.

Vs47-50

For lack of time we won't get into this one so much but its thrust is much like that of the wheat and the tares, the gospel makes us fishers of men but not every fish you reel in is a good one and Jesus sort of explains the meaning of this parable in vs 49,50. You may think that you're getting away with your sin now and fooling everyone but here Jesus makes it very clear that there will be a separation that takes place. and As we spoke about last week hell and the lake of fire is a very real place, and it's the Lords desire to spare you an eternity of suffering, but it's up to you. You can choose to accept Him as your Lord, or reject Him as your Lord, and either choice you make you will reap the rewards of it, I encourage you, choose Jesus.

Vs51-52

He's been enlightening them to things that pertain to the kingdom, something new for them, but that doesn't devalue the things of the OT, there's riches to be plumbed in both.

Vs 53-58

When people know you fairly well, maybe you've grown up together or around that person or people, many times they can be stumbled when God begins to use your life because they think who are you? I know you, or they think they know you, but God will use whomever He chooses, so I'd encourage you to be open to those people in your life who've come to know Jesus, even if you did know them before, they're not who they used to be. They're a new creation, and unbelief can be a radical hindering force in your life and can limit the work of God in your own life even as it did these people. Jesus wanted to do great things for these people but He couldn't because they didn't believe. If God's doing a work in someone's life, don't criticize them, rejoice with them, be open to them and see God doesn't just minister to your heart, through them.