

Short Stories By Jesus

Session 3: The Pearl of Great Price

1. Thinking about Pearls

When you hear the word treasure, what comes to mind?

What words do you associate with pearls?

Look over the handout, Pearls: True or False.

2. This week's parable: Read Matthew 13:45-46

To whom does this parable compare the kingdom of heaven? Do you think of the comparison as being to the man, to the pearl, or to both together?

How do you characterize the man's choice to sell "all that he had" in order to buy the "one pearl of great value"—something that, as Levine notes, is "a beautiful object, but one that cannot nourish, shelter, or clothe"?

Levine points out that the man "will stay a person, but he may not stay a merchant." Why is this so? How does the man's action at the end of the parable potentially affect his occupation and identity?

3. The Context of the Parable: Read Matthew 13:44 and 13:47-50.

How, if at all, do the parables on either side of the one in verses 45-46 shape or change the way you understand it?

How might the second and third parables (verses 45-46 and verses 47-50) work together, for Matthew, to say something about the future aspect of the kingdom of heaven?

4. Watch Video

The pearl of great price is what we consider to be the most important thing in life. What are some things that people consider to be the pearl of great price that are not truly important?

What should we consider to be the pearl or pearls of great price?

How does this parable teach us about evaluating our life and the choices which we make in this life?

5. Call to Action:

Are all personal definitions of ultimate value and ultimate treasure equally valid? Why or why not?

Based on your relationship with Jesus, as well as your knowledge of the Bible and Christian tradition, what “values” would you point to as the standards by which God defines the pearl of great price?

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what you consider to be of ultimate value. Ask: “What would you, like the man in Jesus’s parable, be willing to get rid of all you have in order to get—even at the risk of changing your identity in your own eyes and the eyes of others?”

Closing Prayer

Holy God, through Jesus Christ, your inexpressibly precious gift, you challenged us to give up earthly treasures and to store up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where thieves cannot steal and rust cannot destroy. Challenge us again, this day and every day, to seek what you would most have us find, to your glory and for the good of our neighbor; and may your Spirit keep us strong in answering that challenge, day by day. Amen.