

Discovering Christ

by Peter Masters

This sermon focuses on the contrast between the kingdom of heaven and the doomed world, emphasizing the need to discover Christ and surrender all to find Him. Through two parables, the tenant farmer and the merchant seeking pearls, the message highlights the priceless value of knowing and following Jesus, urging listeners to sell their sin, self-righteousness, and worldly attachments to obtain the treasure of salvation in Christ.

Duration: 32:06

Scripture: Matthew 13:44, Matthew 13:45, Philippians 3:8, Mark 8:36, Matthew 6:19, Luke 14:33, 1 Peter 1:18, Colossians 2:3, John 14:6

Topics: "Value of Salvation", "Surrendering to Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Tonight our subject is discovering Christ and this 44th verse the words begin with the kingdom of heaven. This is going to be about the kingdom of heaven as opposed to the realm of earth. Why? According to the teaching of Christ this present world is a doomed world.

It will not last. It will be under judgment. The present age will be terminated.

That is the presence, the teaching of Christ when he comes. And it is a world that is doomed because it excludes the living God. Because it shuts him out and casts him aside.

Oh yes, it adopts him sometimes in order to adapt him to some sort of national religion or social religion. But it isn't true, it isn't genuine. The church of Jesus Christ, yes, flourishes throughout the world but so does so much which is false religion and lawless religion.

Well the kingdom of God is described here by contrast to this present world system. And it is composed of all who believe in Jesus Christ and come to him and find him and know him and live for him and love him. The kingdom of God.

Otherwise called here the kingdom of Christ. That's what we're talking about this evening. The kingdom of the Redeemer.

The kingdom of the second person of the Trinity who came into this world of time in order to be a representative for human beings. In order eventually to suffer and to die on a cross. In order to have mysteriously and amazingly put upon him an unseen, an invisible burden of guilt.

That is the guilt of all people who would ever be forgiven so that God the Father would punish him instead of us. He is the Redeemer of men and women. And here are two short parables which describe how people find him and how they come to him and seek him.

And first of all there's this remarkable short parable of the tenant farmer in verse 44 of Matthew 13. The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field the which when a man hath found he hideth and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field. Now most likely the person featured here in this parable if I may embellish it a little and extend it and I hope in accordance with the original intention of the briefly reported story.

The original person was a poor tenant farmer. He was scratching for himself a livelihood possibly from his small holding. All people had their patch of land in those times or most people did and they sought to raise enough crop, enough material to support their family.

We may guess that the soil was not particularly good and it was difficult. It was a worrying task. He could barely support his family and so he rented more land, perhaps just a modest field nearby, elsewhere and he set about tilling that also.

He couldn't afford to buy but he just rented. But then he makes this extraordinary discovery. He is ploughing perhaps or maybe doing something more radical than that.

Trenching quite deeply in order to get some irrigation going and in the deeper digging of the soil his spade or whatever hits a chest or container of some kind and he finds buried treasure. Coin probably but much of it in the story, a startling amount. Well people often buried things in those days.

By in time of war or when there was a lot of robbery, a lot of thieves in the district or somebody left his home to make a distant visit to relatives or something like that. If he were wealthy, well he might just find a place out of sight known only to him where he would dig very deeply and hide his riches, his reserves, his wealth. Perhaps the man who originally buried this chest had been dead a long time, who knows.

But anyway it's a former owner of the field, we assume. I think this is fair speculation and not undue stretching of the original story. But this tenant farmer finds it and he's astonished and he's overjoyed.

It's going to solve all his problems. It's going to buy peace from fears. It's going to buy for him security and health and proper feeding of his family and care and attention.

Perhaps buy for them some sort of an education which the poor didn't necessarily have or get. It was wealth on a scale he could never have dreamed of. And he promptly refills the hole in the ground, perfectly proper legal thing for him to do in those days.

And then he's so happy, so amazed, he sells everything. He sells his shack, whatever form it took at that. I don't know how he explained this to his wife.

I can't embellish the story to that extent. How he explained to her what he was doing. Perhaps she thought he was off his head, but he couldn't tell the soul.

Perhaps he even couldn't confide in his own wife, lest she would inadvertently let it slip and it would be around the entire village and a horde of people would descend upon that field before he ever recovered the chest. So he had to act, I'm sure, very peculiarly. Sold his animals.

He wouldn't need them again. Sold all his tools, I expect, with the exception of the vital spade that he would need to revisit the field with. And he had no doubts and he went forward into this irreversible act of surrendering and selling everything just to get that field.

And he bought it. Now he owned it. And the contents of that field were his as though they had always been his.

They were his by right. And this is how so often we find the kingdom of Christ. This man wasn't looking.

He wasn't searching. He never dreamed it, never imagined it, not for a moment. But he found something that would alter his entire life and that of his family.

He stumbled across this treasure. And that often is a description of us. We literally stumble across the gospel.

We didn't expect it. We hear it at some stage and we are amazed at it. Now it was certainly so for me.

As a youngster I went to the kind of school where in the old days you would have elaborate chapel every morning. We knew all about the Christian faith. We knew all about the thing, outwardly at any rate, the history of Christ and all this type of thing.

But I know as a later teenager when I first heard the message of the gospel properly explained, this amazing message of grace, that Christ is God, a member of the Godhead. And that he had come to purchase salvation for us because God is so holy and just. And we are alienated as lost sinners.

And if he is going to exercise his amazing love to lost sinners, he must on the basis of his holiness and justice deal with the punishment due to us. And he could only do that by bearing it himself. And so salvation is by grace unearned, undeserved entirely.

It must come to me as a free gift and I must understand that and repent of my sin and yield my life entirely. And when I first heard about grace I was astonished. Surely I'd heard of that before.

I must have done. But my mind was not programmed to understand it and receive it. I thought that if there is a God and he's going to be pleased with us and accept us, we must deserve it.

We must earn it. We must do something. So grace was a tremendous surprise and a shock to me.

And once I began to understand it and the Lord opened my eyes and my slow mind spiritually embraced these things, I was just like discovering treasure. There is forgiveness with God. There is eternal life.

There is a change of nature and character which God will perform in you. I had to have it. Oh, says the scripture, then you've got to give up certain things.

Not because giving up those things earns or deserves your salvation, but it's the terms which God imposes. You must part with things that is displeasing to him. Your own self-determination in all things.

Your sinful pleasures and all kinds of things. You must surrender them. Give them up.

Your proud opinions. Oh, when we're young we think we know everything. Oh, we've got that tendency.

And you must give up your speculations and ideas about God and about life and receive his teaching and what he has to say about these things. And it is like that tenant farmer who sold everything. He looked at his shack, his house, tumbled down possibly, forgive my embellishment of the story.

And he looked at it and he said, I'll part with this gladly to have that treasure. I'll part with my poor emaciated animals. Somebody can feed them better.

And my worn out tools and everything I have. And the broken down furniture in my house. I'll get what I can for it.

I'll sell everything to have this which is so much more valuable. And that's how it must be when we come to Christ. I'll sell as it were my sin, my selfish proud ambitions, my opinions and ideas.

Oh, to have Christ, to have salvation, to know him, to be truly in touch with God. This is everything. And so we do.

There was no wavering. He sold up instantly, at once. And that's how it must be for us when we discover Christ.

The gospel, what does it do? It solves all the problems we have. Our main problem is my guilt, my sin record before God. This world says there is no God.

All those things which the Bible calls sins, don't be fooled. It says most of them are no such thing. Have the liberty to do what you like.

But the problem is still there. I have a sin problem before God. I am rejected by him.

I am condemned by him. I have not fulfilled the ten commandments and all the commandments that flow out of them. I have not killed, but I have hated and done all those other things which are in the murder family.

And so it goes. I have breached the law of God. But Christ coming, dying on a cross to bear the punishment of my sin for me, freely handing out pardon and forgiveness, a new life, and restoring my relationship with God.

Why? That's the greatest problem of my life. Now I may have eternal life purchased for me by a saviour. I may have my bad nature replaced by a new nature.

I may have help and guidance. I may pray and have answers to my prayers. I can influence others and my family through my prayers and through my spreading this message of the scripture into their hearts.

Oh, this is the answer to all my problems. That tenant farmer would have peace and security. With the treasure of Christ, I have spiritual peace and security.

I know my soul is eternally safe. That tenant farmer, he would purchase happiness and pleasures so he thought on earth. But we gain in Christ everlasting, deeper, spiritual joys and pleasures and an education in the things of God.

Now, I could never buy that. This is where a parable, whether it's a long parable or a short parable, cannot do justice to every aspect of the gospel. Here in this short parable, the tenant farmer must buy the field.

And that stands for parting with all the worthless things he had in his life. I cannot buy salvation. Christ has bought it for me.

But I must get rid of all the unworthy things and the things that God doesn't want and turn my back on them when I come to him and surrender my life to him. He's bought it, the love of Christ shown supremely on Calvary's cross. He, by his power, will put spiritual life into me if I come to him.

And he'll change me and I'll have a new purpose and a new future and I'll know the Lord. So part with everything for Christ. Take that irreversible step of selling your self-rule and your self-worship and the worship of this present world and your sin and all your proud opinions.

Sell these things and your own righteousness, the quite wrong thought that you are good enough as you are. Sell all that and buy the treasure. Come to Christ and find him.

Look at this second parable which adds to this. Again, verse 45, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls who when he had found one pearl of great price went and sold all that he had and bought it. Well, the case here is quite different.

The tenant farmer wasn't looking for the treasure. This man is searching. He's searching for something and he's searching quality pearls.

He travels far. The tenant farmer was very poor. The dealer in pearls is quite well to do.

He's upgrading his business. Up to now he's sold mediocre pearls. He's handled them but he wants to go up the market and get much better ones and deal with better people and build his business more and get greater income from it.

And so he trades and he grows and he searches for better pearls. And suddenly he finds one that exceeds all his expectations who when he had found one pearl of great price. Now that phrase is so important in the story given by the Saviour.

One pearl of great price. I remember once talking about this and I spoke about the pearl of greatest price. Of course I was using the language of a hymn.

And somebody took me to task afterwards and said look I've heard this from other preachers. It isn't the pearl of greatest price. It's the pearl of great price.

You could get it right. But he didn't know his Greek and he didn't know the whole phrase. Who when he had found one pearl of great price and you take all those words together it is the pearl of greatest price.

There's only one pearl of such a price of such a high value as this one. That's the intention of the story originally. He found one pearl that he never thought existed.

It exceeded all his expectations. It was so flawless, so perfect, so wonderful. How could he ever lay his hands on this pearl only by selling everything? He scurried off back to the town where he came from.

Maybe he even had to cross an ocean, a sea to get there. And he returned home and he surveyed his stock. And all of a sudden the stock that he valued, the pearls and the boxes that he had an inventory of and he would examine frequently.

As he looked at one after the other, nothing came up to the mark now. He'd seen something so wonderful. All his stock, he was ready to get rid of it all.

He'd sell everything. He'd sell the shop, the business, the lots. The thing that he'd coveted so much and valued so highly, now it was really cut down to size because he'd seen something the likes of which he'd never seen before.

And he sold it all to obtain this pearl. One pearl of great price. He went and sold all that he had and bought it.

The pearl of greatest price. Now we're expert seekers. We switch now from the poor man who wasn't looking for his riches to the rich man who is a great searcher but he found something he didn't expect and he didn't know possibly even existed.

You seek all sorts of things. All of us do. In this world we're seeking possessions and we're brilliant seekers, brilliant shoppers.

So many people are. We've got pearls of our own that we're looking for. Yes, possessions, homes.

People naturally spend a lot of time looking for an ideal flat or place to live and they look first at one then at another. Then of course career posts and the searching people do. That's all very natural.

We're great seekers and some people are seeking entertainments. What kind of thing do I want to watch? Experimenting all the time. Seeking recreations.

Some people seeking studies. They want to satisfy the mind. Some people, yes, looking for religion or meaning or purpose in life.

Some people seeking friends and a particular friend, if possible, to marry and to settle down with. Life's quests and there are many of them. Seeking many things.

But now you stumble across something which is worth more than anything else you've ever consciously sought and you must be seeking many of these other things. Now you've stumbled across the gospel and you've understood it. That there is light from God, information from on high, that he has his word and it makes sense and it's the most amazing piece of literature and it has one message from cover to cover and it is divine.

And you hear that there is a creator of the world and that makes sense, the intricacy of creation. And you hear that the human race is special and unique and high above the animals. And you hear that we are a fallen human race and we have disobeyed God in the very beginning and we are now cut off from him.

And you hear that God in his mighty love has sent a saviour to redeem us and he's come in the person of Christ and I've been speaking of that and he's made an atonement, a substitutionary atonement for all who

turn to him. And you hear about conversion and new life and a new nature and spiritual faculties. And this is worth more than anything else you search for.

Of course you must search for a home, you need it. But oh, once you hear of this and God touches your heart, this is more valuable than anything else in your life and infinitely more important. And once you've seen it, you must have it.

And you hear the call to repent of your sin and the call to yield to Jesus Christ. But the call includes a call to sell, not your home of course, not your car, not your wife and your family or your husband. No, but to sell your sin and your lifestyle and your commitment to this world and your self-determination and your unbelief.

And you look at these things and like the merchantman looking at his past stock of pearls, you say, I valued these things so much. I valued my esteem and fame and fortune, whatever it might be. And this is nothing, nothing by comparison with having Christ and having salvation.

And I'm ready to part with all that, the clutter of a lifetime and have a new life and come to Christ and know him. These things, dear friends, are wonderful. And then you can have an instant transaction.

He bought the pearl of greatest price and it became his. And we assume that in so many ways he was able to transform his life. And that's what we do.

We come to Christ, we repent of our sin, we believe with all our hearts what he did on Calvary's cross for lost sinners. We ask him for salvation, we trust our souls to him and we give up the old sinful life and instantly we're his. We have obtained the pearl of greatest price.

Now his searching days are over, life's exhausting quest may cease, for a pearl beyond all others signals life and joy and peace. The discovery of the pearl of greatest price to have Christ is far, far greater than the greatest possible earthly possession. To have such a friend in heaven, to have such a Lord, he came to earth not only to suffer and to die on Calvary, but to demonstrate and to show his virtues and his wonders.

And we see him in the records of the Gospels. He was infallible. Oh, to have an infallible Lord and friend.

He is everlasting. He showed on earth such affection for those who believed in him and his disciples. To have eternal, infinite affection from the creator of heaven and earth.

He's seen there as being amazingly kind and it's the greatest kindness ever in the history of the world to go to Calvary's cross. He's seen as utterly faithful. He never forsakes his people.

And oh, what amazing patience with his disciples. I'm so glad to see that. What patience to us because we continue fallible and foolish and we swerve from the pathway and let him down.

But the patience of my friend in heaven is seemingly inexhaustible. And his great kindness and he ever listens to our cries and to our prayers. And he will train us.

He has a plan for us. He will guide us and he will protect us all the way through life so that our salvation will not be lost until that final moment when death comes and he will carry us through into eternal life. Sell your sin, dear friend, and your guilt.

Sell your worship of this earth and your self-righteousness. Sell all those things so that you may have Jesus Christ. To have him is wonderful.

Let me read some verses from an old hymn from a clergyman poet in the 17th century. You may know it. I've found the pearl of greatest price.

My heart now sings for joy and praise I must for Christ is mine. Christ shall my song employ. He is my prophet, priest, and king.

My prophet full of light. My great high priest before the throne. My king of heavenly might.

Christ is my peace. He died for me. For me he gave his blood as my atoning sacrifice offered himself to God.

Christ Jesus is my all in all. My comfort and my love. My life below and he shall be my glory crown above all to have Christ.

What or who in this world explains the meaning of the world, the meaning of our existence and eternal things apart from the word of God and Christ. He is the key to everything. He is the core of everything.

It's on his account that the world exists. Do you know why God did not destroy this world centuries ago with the sin of man and the ugliness and the unpleasantness of human cruelty and oppression and torture with all the derision aimed at the living God? Do you know why God did not destroy this world? For Christ's sake because he is still gathering a people. A people who will be saved.

A people who repent. A people who sell all and come to him so that they can be gathered in to his eternal kingdom and he can bless them forever for him. For the sake of his kingdom.

He is the core of everything. He is the reason for the continuing existence of time. Ultimately he'll come again and bring it all to a close.

He is the explanation. He gives life. He gives character.

He gives pardon and eternity and joy and there is no one like Jesus Christ the saviour of the world and his two short parables point to how he is to be discovered and even sought and how you come to him and surrender all to find him and to know him. Let's pray. Oh gracious God our heavenly father work in our hearts this night.

Look upon us. Bring us to see our great spiritual need. Our condemnation.

The hopelessness of life without thee and bring us to see the riches of knowing Christ the saviour and walking with him. Come Lord convict us of sin. Work in our hearts and draw us to him.

We ask it in his name for his sake. Amen.

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