

The Pearl of Great Price

by Thomas Reade

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking true wisdom and happiness in Christ, the Pearl of Great Price, and encourages listeners to surrender themselves to God through faith and prayer.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Matthew 13:46, Mark 8:36, John 14:6, 1 Corinthians 12:4, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 3:7, Colossians 3:23, James 1:5, Revelation 7:9

Topics: "Church Unity", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches about the universal language of true believers in Christ, emphasizing that despite geographical and cultural differences, all who love and follow Jesus are united by the same Spirit, Word, and inward experiences. He highlights the unity of the Church universal, where outward differences exist but the inward work of God remains the same. Reade stresses the importance of seeking true happiness and wisdom in Jesus Christ, the Pearl of great price, and the necessity of a heart transformed by faith, love, and surrender to God. He encourages a deep reflection on the essence of true religion, rooted in the heart and characterized by faith working through love, a vital union with Christ, and a new creation by the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

14. THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

"Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Matthew 13:46

The language of true believers in Christ, though they be separated by oceans, and are personally unknown to each other, is experimentally the same. The humble follower of Jesus, who loves the Savior amid the heats of Africa, or the frosts of Labrador; who looks to him by faith, surrounded by the worshipers of Buddha, or the devotees of Mahomet, will be actuated by the same Spirit, governed by the same word, have the same inward conflict, and enjoy the same strength and consolation which his brethren in Christ experience, who enjoy the advantages of intellectual light, and who live in a land of Bibles and churches. The delightful accounts which the Missionaries write of these converted Hottentots, Greenlanders, Hindus, and Mohammedans, prove the truth of the Gospel, and display the power and grace of God.

This verifies, also, Paul's declaration; "Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service in the church, but it is the

same Lord we are serving. There are different ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church." The poor converted Negro is not endowed with the same intellectual gifts as the learned but pious Professor of Theology; and yet, their spiritual graces are the same. Both are taught by the same Spirit to know themselves as sinners; both are led to Christ as their only Savior; both have grace given to them, to love and serve him; to confess him before men; to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life.

And, oh! wonderful revelation of the grace of God! their eternal glory and happiness shall be the same. "After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a mighty shout, 'Salvation comes from our God on the throne and from the Lamb!'"

The Church universal is spread over the face of the whole earth. Outward rites may differ, but the inward work is the same. There may be "differences of administration, but the same Lord." Oh! that we saw more of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," was the truly catholic prayer of Paul, whose heart was large enough to embrace all who bore the image of the Redeemer, and who worshiped him in spirit and in truth- while he commanded Timothy to turn away from such as had the form of godliness, but denied the power thereof; and to withdraw himself from men of corrupt minds, who supposed that gain was godliness.

No outward service can be acceptable to God, if destitute of faith and love. The religion of Christ is the religion of the heart. In such a world as this, and composed as we are of body and spirit, Forms are needful, to impress our minds, to fix our attention, and to enable Christians to unite in worship with each other. But, outward forms, however imposing, are but like a dead carcass, if unaccompanied by a spirit of love. "O, Lord, who have taught us that all our doings without charity are worth nothing, send your Holy Spirit, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you. Grant this, for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

There is in all men a natural thirst after happiness. Their tastes may vary, but their pursuit is the same. This search never fails to end in disappointment, because they do not seek for it where alone it can be found. Did we see men seeking for costly pearls among the pebbles of the British shore, we should smile at their folly. To the anxious pursuers after happiness, the Almighty speaks in mercy- "Ho! every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money; come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." The fruitless effort of these vain pursuers is forcibly described; "Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink--even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk--it's all free! Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen, and I will tell you where to get food that is good for the soul! Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, for the life of your soul is at stake. I am ready to make an everlasting covenant with you. I will give you all the mercies and unfailing love that I promised to David."

True happiness flows from true wisdom. But where is wisdom to be found? that wisdom which can enrich, ennoble, and bless the soul? "'It is not here,' says the ocean. 'Nor is it here,' says the sea. It cannot be bought for gold or silver. Its value is greater than all the gold of Ophir, greater than precious onyx stone or sapphires. Wisdom is far more valuable than gold and crystal. It cannot be purchased with jewels mounted

in fine gold. Coral and valuable rock crystal are worthless in trying to get it. The price of wisdom is far above pearls. Topaz from Ethiopia cannot be exchanged for it. Its value is greater than the purest gold. But do people know where to find wisdom? Where can they find understanding?"

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is the true Wisdom. He is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." He is made unto us- Wisdom. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." "Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things." "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man who hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me, finds life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord."

To find Christ is to find life. For "this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son, has life; and he that has not the Son of God, has not life." To find Christ is to find the Pearl of great price. The vast universe, with all its treasures, cannot purchase it. The Hierarchy of Heaven, with all their united excellencies, cannot procure it for us. Infinite Justice demands a price beyond the power of heavenly intelligences to pay. Before this treasure can be obtained through the merit of the creature, whether human or angelic, works must be performed more than God has commanded, and be wrought out by a power beyond what he has bestowed. All that is short of this, will avail nothing, for thus said our Lord; "When you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do." Where is boasting then? It is excluded. Fallen man, if left to himself, must sink into the depths of misery; and yet, what thousands toil to save themselves on the plank of their own righteousness!

O, you self-righteous professors, you, who seek to be justified by the works of the law; you who labor to obtain a righteousness of your own, and to claim heaven as the purchase of your doings, learn wisdom before it be too late. Your works, which, in your estimation, are like "goodly pearls," are beheld with abhorrence by a Holy God- those actions which you so much admire and value, are in His sight as "filthy rags."

Seek, then, by faith and prayer, through the Spirit of all grace, the Pearl of Great Price; the Lord Jesus Christ. Sell all that you have to obtain this treasure. So did Paul. "I once thought all these things were so very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I may have Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own goodness or my ability to obey God's law, but I trust Christ to save me. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith." So did the Apostles; "Lo, we have left all, and followed you." And so did the primitive believers, who, for the Gospel's sake, endured a great fight of affliction, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

Oh! what a mystery of grace is contained in these precious words- "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The Pearl of great price is freely given to enrich my soul.

To all who come this Pearl is free,

To Saul, to Magdalene, to me.

Yes! it is freely offered, without money and without price. And does Jesus thus give himself to my poor sinful soul? He does; and declares, by his Apostle, that to as many as receive Him, to them he gives the privilege to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name.

O! blessed Jesus- Savior of my soul, enable me now, even now, to make a full surrender of myself to you. Make me faithful, humble, and sincere. Preserve me from vain-glory and from self-dependence. Give me a single eye, and simplicity of heart. Guard me from the crafts of Satan, and the poison of my natural corruption. Alas! I have daily to mourn over the secret workings of spiritual pride. When I would speak a word for you, how soon does vanity spoil all. Oh! show me more of my emptiness and nothingness, of my guilt and misery. Teach me to prize you as my only treasure, to esteem you, as indeed You are- the Pearl of great price.

Oh! root out of my heart that evil leaven of unbelief, which mars every action; which so awfully dishonors you! Crucify this thief which robs you of your glory, and me of your consolation. Give me a deeper insight into the dark recesses of my heart. Let me descend into this sepulcher, loathsome as the sight may be. Oh! may this view of my pollution endear You to my heart, my Savior and my God. Wash me in the fountain of your precious blood; cover me with the mantle of your perfect Righteousness; purify my soul, through the cleansing influences of your Spirit. Adorn me with Yourself, O Pearl of great price, that I may appear before You as "a bride adorned for her husband."

The more I read the Sacred Scriptures, the more I find that true religion is seated in the heart. It does not consist in outward forms, however excellent; in orthodox notions, however correct; in frames and feelings, however ardent; in morality of conduct, however admired. It consists in that faith which works by love, which purifies the heart, which overcomes the world. It consists in a vital union to Christ by a living faith; in an entire renunciation of self; in an absolute surrender of the soul to God. It consists in having the understanding enlightened by the truth as it is in Jesus; in having the will swallowed up in the will of God; in having the affections supremely set on things above; in loving God above all created things, and our neighbor as ourselves.

This great work is the operation of the Holy Spirit, and is aptly termed, a new creation- regeneration- the conversion of the soul to God.

Oh! Almighty Savior! You who bled upon the Cross for me; who there poured out your soul unto death for me, how can I adore and praise you as I ought? Alas! in this world, never! All my thoughts, all my affections, all my desires, must ever fall infinitely short of all your praise! And yet, O compassionate Redeemer, you do not reject the sigh of penitence, nor the breathings of the contrite heart. Your ear is open to the softest prayer; to the inmost longings of a loving heart. How gracious are your words; "Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive. Ask, and receive, that your joy may be full." "The high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, the Holy One, says this: 'I live in that high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I refresh the humble and give new courage to those with repentant hearts.'" "This is what the Lord says: 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you ever build me a temple as good as that? Could you build a dwelling place for me? My hands have made both heaven and earth, and they are mine. I, the Lord, have spoken! I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word.'"

Rejoice, O my soul, at this revelation of love! The heaven of heavens cannot contain You, O my God, and yet You condescend to dwell in the contrite heart! Well may angels rejoice over one sinner that repents,

when You, who inhabit Eternity, make his heart your dwelling-place.
What anxious thoughts, what wearying care,
The bosom of the worldling tear!
From morning light, to evening gloom,
Until death consign him to the tomb,
He labors to increase his store,
And thirsts, and longs, and thirsts for more.
Vain man! and why this constant toil,
This digging in the earthly soil?
Your fondest hope, 'tis true succeeds,
But what's the harvest? useless weeds!
Your wealth, with all its glittering store,
You soon must leave- and see no more.
The hour will come when you must die;
With rapid speed your moments fly.
Oh! then what anguish and despair,
What wasted moments, years of care,
Like spectres, will your soul alarm,
And break, of earth, the fatal charm.
There is a Treasure to be found,
A treasure sought on Gospel ground;
He is the merchant truly wise
Who can this precious Jewel prize;
Who, for this Pearl of heavenly birth,
Can give the dearest things of earth.
Jesus, my Lord, this Treasure is,
The source of pure unfading bliss;

Possessing Him, I, all possess,
That can support, and cheer, and bless.
Oh! may this Pearl lie near my heart;
'Twas Mary's choice- her better part,
Which nothing from her could remove,
The gift of God's eternal love.

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