A GREAT BARGAIN

NO. 1424

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"Again, 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."
Matthew 13:45-46

A MERCHANT man endeavors to trade so as to make a profit. Whether he deals in pearls or in grain, he does not hope to obtain riches by labor. He leaves that to those who eat their bread in the sweat of their face. He tries to get his by the sweat of his brain. He is dependent not so much upon labor as upon knowledge, upon skill, upon the advantage which superior acquaintance with the article which he deals in gives him.

Now, this merchant man is, at the very commencement, in some measure a picture of the seeker after Christ. Christ and His salvation are not to be earned, they are not to be procured as the result of labor. But Christ is to be had by knowledge. What saith the Scripture? "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many," that is, through their knowing Christ they become justified.

This is, indeed, another way of putting the system of salvation which is stated thus, "How shall I hear without a preacher?" The work begins with hearing the preacher. Then it goes on to believing what they hear, and through believing they are saved. This is virtually knowledge—the knowledge communicated by God's messenger or by God's Word—the knowledge heard, the knowledge believed.

So men come to the knowledge of Him whom to know is life eternal, for when a man knows Christ and understands Him, so that he gives his heart to Him, then is he saved. Inasmuch, then, as the merchant man seeks his advantage by superior knowledge, he becomes a type of the man who gets saved through obtaining the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

I shall not, however, enlarge upon this analogy, but proceed at once to speak of the merchant man in this parable. For here we have a fit emblem of many who lay hold on Christ and find Him to be their all in all. Let us watch this merchant man while he is doing four things. First, *seeking*. Then, *finding*. Then *selling* out. And fourthly, *buying again*.

I. First, then, we shall WATCH HIM WHILE HE IS SEEKING.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls." It is different from the man we read of just now who, by accident, discovered a treasure while he was in the field. He was looking for something else, and came upon the treasure. That is the man whom God, in infinite sovereignty, saves, though He was heretofore indifferent and careless.

This is a person of a nobler sort. He is of a higher grade of mind—of altogether different mental constitution. He is seeking goodly pearls—something good, not exactly seeking the one pearl of great price, for at first he does not know about it. But still, he is seeking pearls and he comes upon one pearl in consequence of his seeking.

Now, notice about him, as a seeker, that *he has his mind aroused and engaged*. He is thinking about something—thinking about pearls. His heart is occupied with his business. His energies are thrown into it. All his thoughts are in the direction of precious stones. Oh that we could wake men up to exercise the faculty of thinking, and then to direct, to regulate, and to control their thoughts! But thinking is an occupation that a great many persons altogether dislike. They are frivolous. We cannot get them to think about anything.

Why is it that people are so passionately fond of reading novels, and so seldom read the true histories which are quite as interesting, and far more capable of affording pleasure and pastime? It is

because the minds of men are frivolous. An idle tale—a silly story of a love-sick maid—will engross them by the hour together. But anything that is solid and worth the knowing seems to have small charm for their shallow brains. Many minds never get on the wing at all.

Not a few men work so hard with their hands, and suffer such fatigue from bodily labor that they are scarcely able to think much. While there are others who dissipate their time and consume their lives in idleness, till they are utterly disqualified for any vigorous thought. They are lazy and sluggish. They have dry rot in their very souls. Their brains do not work. They seem to live in one everlasting lethargy and daydream.

Oh that men were wise, that they were thoughtful! Happy were the preacher who knew that he was addressing himself to a thoroughly intelligent, thoughtful congregation. We should expect, then, that the handfuls of good seed would drop into the furrows readily, and bring forth an abundant harvest. This merchant man's mind was aroused. He had something before him.

Equally evident is it that *he had a fixed definite object*. He had given himself to pearl hunting, and pearl hunting was to be the one object of his life. If you had met him and said, "What are you seeking?" he would have answered in a moment, "I am seeking good pearls, have you any to sell me?" He would have been sure to have the answer ready to hand.

But ask many a man whom you meet with, "Sir, what are you living for?" he would, perhaps, tell you what his trade or what his profession might be. But if you pressed him with the question, "What is your main object of life?" he would not like to say that he was living only to enjoy himself—seeking his own pleasure. He would hardly like to say that he was living to grasp and grab and get a fortune. He would hardly know how to answer you. Many young men are in this condition, they have not a definite object.

Now, you will not make a good captain if you do not know the port you are sailing for. You will make a poor life of it, young man, if you go out as an apprentice, and then afterwards as a master, with no definite aim and end. Say to yourself, "I can only live for two things. I can live for God, or I can live for the devil, which now am I going to do?" Get your mind well fixed and firmly resolved as to which it shall be. I will put it to you as boldly and baldly as even Elijah did when he said, "If Baal is God, serve him; and if JEHOVAH be God, serve him."

If the world, if the flesh, if the devil be worth serving, go follow out the career of a sensualist and say so. Let yourself know what you are at, but if God be worth serving, and your soul worth the saving, go for that. But do not sneak through this world really seeking yourself, and yet not having the courage to say to yourself, "Self, you are living for yourself." Have a definite and distinct object or else your vital energies will be wasted and your most industrious days will be recklessly squandered.

This merchant man, in the next place, had *an object which was not at all commonplace*. Other people might go in for bricks and stones, or for grain, or for timber. He went in for pearls. He was a merchant man seeking pearls, and those the best he could pick up. He did not go in for common sea pearls, or pearls such as you may get in a Scotch river, but he went in for goodly pearls. He took a high aim, as far as that line of action was concerned. He went into a fine business. I would to God that many who have not found Christ nevertheless had sufficient common sense, sprinkled over with grace, to say, "I will go in for something good. My life shall not be a mean one"—

"Lives of great men all remind us
We may make our lives sublime."

It augers well for a young man when he has such an aspiration as this within him—"My life, too, shall be sublime. I will not seek mean or menial objects. I will not cultivate any depraved or groveling tastes. I will seek something that I can commend to my own conscience—something that will bear reflection when I come to die—something that will carry the sterling mark when I have to value it in another world."

O young merchant man, if you are about to start in business, I recommend this business of seeking goodly pearls. Seek truth, seek honor, seek temperance, seek peace, seek love, seek that which will make you good and true and right. I will tell you anon where you may find these, but for the present it may suffice me to inculcate a laudable ambition for everything that is honest and of good repute, and an eager desire with your heart for that which your conscience commends.

He went thus, to seek pearls, and *he sought them with diligence*. The merchant man was seeking goodly pearls. He did not open a shop and say, "Pearls bought here if anybody likes to bring them," but he went forth in quest of them. How far he traveled I do not know, but the oriental trader frequently goes immense distances. You may meet a Nijni-Novgorod, in the south of Russia, with traders who have been all round the globe seeking what they want—men who do not always travel by railway, but who will walk any distance to obtain the very article on which they have set their minds, and in which they deal. Distance seems with them to be no object.

Ah, and when a man has got a noble object before him and says, "Before I die, I will accomplish something that shall be right and true and beneficial to my fellow men," he will face hardships that would baffle his fellows.

I pray God that he may have the perseverance to carry that out, and that he may say, "Is there anything right to be learned, I will learn it, let it cost me what it may of care and toil, of headaches and heartaches, of buying experience and burning the midnight oil. If there is anything to be done that is good and true, I will do it at any hazard, for I am seeking goodly pearls."

And as the man was seeking, so he was *using discrimination at the same time*. When we are very diligent and full of desire we are in imminent danger of being easily deceived. But this man seeking goodly pearls, was not like a lady unacquainted with the nature of pearls, but he was a merchant man who knew a pearl when he saw it. He knew the character of pearls and the value of pearls. He could tell which were cloudy, and which had a soft radiance, and which were of the first water. Indeed, he could tell a genuine pearl from an imitation one.

He was a merchant man seeking goodly pearls. Yes, dear friend, and I pray God that if He put into the heart of any brother here to live for the right and for the true, He would give you great discrimination, for there are many shams in the world, and you may readily grasp that which appears to be substantial goodness, and it may turn out to be a shadow. Seek not pearls alone, but seek goodly pearls. Go in for the good. Yea, cast your soul about to find the best.

Evidently this merchant went into the business with comparatively moderate expectations. He was seeking pearls. They must be of a tolerable size and pure. He evidently expected to buy a good many of them. It was what he was seeking, seeking goodly "pearls" (in the plural). He had not reckoned that he should be fortunate enough to light upon one huge pearl that should be worth an emperor's ransom. That he had not looked for, though he did feel a desire that way.

If anybody had said, "Would you like to find a big pearl?" he would have said, "That I would, infinitely better than to find a number of little ones." He hardly hoped for it, and therefore he did not seek it. But still, he was ready enough to have it if it came his way.

And so, my dear friends, I am speaking of a class of persons—and I hope there may be representatives of them here—who want everything they can get that is good and true. You want to be temperate in all things. You want to have an unsullied character. I recollect that was my own desire, when first I thought of the life that lay beyond me.

Before I knew the Lord I used to think, "O that I might be kept from dishonesty, that I might be preserved from falsehood, that I might be kept from a malicious spirit, that I might be right-hearted and true." Those were the pearls that I wanted. I did not know just then that I could find something that would include all these minor pearls and a good deal more. Still, it is well when such a desire as that is in the heart especially of any young man. I wish it were in the heart of the old, if up till now they have never found the pearl of great price.

Thus have I shown you the man while he is seeking. I wonder whether he has come in here tonight and is sitting among this assembly. Perhaps it is not a man at all, but a woman, a merchant woman. They can do trading well. Lydia, that seller of purple, was, no doubt, an admirable tradeswoman, and in the divine trade of which we are now speaking there is no difference. Well, you do not know the Lord yet, dear friends, but you do want to seek everything that is excellent. So far so good.

II. Let us go a stage farther then, and look at this man's FINDING.

He was buying pearls everywhere. Where he went he asked people if they had any pearls. He went down back streets, into the slums of big cities, and found out the Jews in those old days, living in the dirtiest corners of the city. He wanted to know whether they had any pearls. It was pearls in the morning, pearls at mid-day, pearls at night. If under his window at night anybody had cried, "Pearls!" he would have been downstairs in a trice to get them. He was hard after pearls, and so it came to pass that he lit upon a pearl that he never hoped to see. It was more than he expected.

Ah, I pray God that some here, whose hearts are honestly seeking after that which is right, may find Christ, who has in Him more of the spirit of temperance, uprightness, truth, and philanthropy than will be found anywhere else. Oh, that they might find Him who is the truth and whose doctrine is perfect holiness and everlasting life. It will be more than they ever expected to find. But when they do find it, how glad they will be.

Certainly this man was in the way of finding a fine pearl if anybody was. He was seeking *goodly pearls*, not *the one* pearl, but he was in the pearl line and so he was likely to discover the best pearl if anybody discovered it. "Being in the way, the Lord met with Him," says one of old. Oh, if you have desires after that which is right and true and good, I trust that the Lord Jesus will manifest Himself to you, and that you will say, "This is the very thing I sought for. I have longed and pined after it and here it is."

This find was to this merchant man *a remarkable one*. He did not find goodly pearls, he found what was much better, one pearl. And to him that one pearl contained all the little pearls that he had aforetime been seeking after. Tell it, and let all men know it, that all that is good beneath the moon—all that is true, all that is right, all that is loving, all that is philanthropic, all that is of good report, commendable before God and praiseworthy among men, is to be found in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, and will be given to us and worked in us when we submit ourselves to Him. and make Him our all in all.

He who is a Christian, if he be perfectly a Christian, has all good things in one. If there be aught that is to be praised and extolled by philosopher or sage, you shall find it in the example of the Master, and He will give us grace to exhibit it in ourselves.

So this man *found all in one*. What the value of that pearl was I do not know. The estimate of its value is not given. We only know that he thought it worth all that he had, and he went away and sold all that he had that he might buy it. And he evidently thought it worth all the other pearls he had ever been seeking for because if he spent his all upon that one pearl it would be clear that he must have abandoned henceforth the searching after smaller pearls since he had no capital left. But he thought the one pearl of more account than all other pearls, and worth more than all that he had.

Yes, I warrant you that he thought it worth a great deal more than all that he possessed. He would not have sold all that he had in stock to buy it if he had not the notion that it was worth ten times the price then, and that when he had paid it all he should have made his fortune, and should be rich beyond a miser's dream, for that is how traders in such things are sure to fetch their bargains.

Well, when a man finds Christ I cannot tell you how much he values Him, but this I know, all the world besides seems nothing to a Christian when he has once found His Lord and Master. "Oh what a Christ have I!" saith he. But he cannot tell how dear—how inconceivably precious—the Christ of God is to his soul.

Concerning this find we must mark next that the man having found it, was *resolved that he would have it*. Having found the pearl of great price, he did not question whether he should buy it or not. If he had not gone out honestly to seek pearls he would have demurred at the price, but being intent upon

pearl finding, he no sooner found this than he said, "I must have that. I can let the little pearls go if you like, but I must have that."

And it is a grand thing when the Lord brings the human mind to this. "I see that in Christ there is everything I want—pardon for my sin, cleansing for my nature, grace to maintain my character and to make me perfectly fit for heaven. There is all in Christ that I want, and I must have Him. I *must* have Him. It comes to this—at any price—whatever it may cost me, I must and I will have Him."

Now, although the parable does not say it in so many words, it is perfectly clear that the person with whom he was dealing was willing to sell. When he had found one pearl of great price he bought it, which he could not have done if the other had not been ready to sell it. Albeit the Lord in His mercy does not sell His grace, but gives it freely, the manner in which He disposes of it is here described under the figure of selling. If you want Christ, you may have Him, if you are willing to come to the terms which God lays down. Of this I shall have to speak presently. If you desire this pearl of great price, there is no reason in the world why that pearl should not be yours tonight.

If now you have found Him, who is "the chief among ten thousand" and "altogether lovely," and you value Him so that you cannot be happy without Him, He will become at once your portion. If, having heard of Christ, your desire is toward Him as all your soul can need, and you are ready to say, "I will not leave this house of prayer till Christ is mine," there is no obstacle to your possessing this priceless boon. Yea, God, even the Father, is willing that you should have His only begotten Son to be your pearl henceforth and for evermore.

III. Having thus described the seeker, and described the finder, we must go on to describe him SELLING OUT.

He sold all that he had. It had taken him a long time to get it together, and I have no doubt he had much pleasure in the accumulation. But now he has great pleasure in selling. "Buy my farm," he says to one man. "Come, buy it!" "I don't know that I want to buy farms," says the other. "It is nought, it is nought." "Nevertheless, let us come to terms. I want money, and I must have money." And away went the furniture in the house, one article after another. They must all go, clear them all out. This was a rapid sale. He must have money. They must go, everything must go for that pearl.

Though he did not tell anybody his motive, that pearl was on his brain and on his heart, and all must go. He is more glad to get rid of his possessions than ever he was to obtain them. Away they shall go at the best price they will fetch, but go they must, for he must have the pearl. Well now, Jesus Christ is to be had, but there is a great deal that a man must give up if he is ever to call Christ his own.

"What, then," says one, "what am I to give up?" Well, there must be a selling off tonight of a whole mass *of old prejudices*. Sometimes when the truth as it is in Jesus comes to a man's mind, he repels it because it is so different from what he has learned ever since he was a child. And the notion is that you had better follow the religion of your parents. If you had been a Khoikhoi, you would have worshipped a fetish. If you had been born in Hindustan, you must have worshipped Juggernaut, according to that theory.

But it is a great mercy when a man says, "Now, I understand that Jesus the Son of God has died in the room and place and stead of sinners that believe in Him, and I am simply to believe in Him and I shall be saved. On my believing I shall receive a new nature and be born again by the Holy Spirit, and henceforth I shall become the disciple and the servant of Christ. Now," says the man, "I will do it. It is contrary to what I have always been told. I have been led to think that it was my good works which would save me. I have heard that grace was in the sacraments, but at last I perceive that God teaches in His Word that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ, and I will have it. I will sell my prejudices off. Away they shall go."

Next to that you must sell off *your righteousness*. It will not fetch much, but I daresay you think it is a fine thing. Hitherto you have been very good and your own esteem of yourself is that as touching the commandments—"All these have I kept from my youth up." And what with a good deal of church

going, or attendance at the meeting house, and a few extra prayers on a Christmas day and on Good Friday, and just a little dose of sacraments, you feel yourself in tolerably good shape.

Now, friend, that old moth-eaten righteousness of yours that you are so proud of you must sell off and get rid of it, for no man can be saved by the righteousness of Christ while he puts any trust in his own. Sell it all off, every rag of it. And suppose nobody will buy it, at any rate you must part with it. Assuredly it is not worth putting amongst the filthiest of rags, for it is worse than they are.

And everything else that you have heretofore thought fit to boast of—come on, you must get rid of it. You know so much. Well, you had better sell off what you know, for unless a man become as a little child he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. You are somebody, you fancy you are not cast in a common mold, for you have a great strength of will, and can force your own way to heaven. You will have to get rid of that little conceit, for that strength of yours will be your weakness.

It is only when we are weak in ourselves that we can ever be strong in Christ. Are you content so to do? Will you sell off all the old prejudices and all the old righteousnesses? Going, gone! Will you let them go, or have you got a reserve price? Let them go, for they are dross and dung, and the sooner they are gone the better, for then you can buy the pearl, but not till then.

Ay, and there are some men that will have to give up a good deal of what they call pleasure, *sinful pleasure*. No pleasure which is honest, which is really beneficial to us, need ever be denied to us.

"Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less."

It makes them vastly more. But any pleasure that savors of sin is to be done away with. Come, can you sell all that off? That mixing in loose company, anything approaching to lewdness, anything that has to do with the gratification of the vile passions of the flesh—come, for Christ's sake, can you give it up?

Well, if you cannot, of course you cannot have the pearl. If you must have the world you cannot have Christ. If you can find pleasure in the haunts of sin, you are of your father the devil, and his works you do. But come out from it. Give it all up, cast it behind you. These things must be sold off if we are to have the pearl.

And then sometimes, in some cases, men have to give up a good deal of the honors and the satisfaction of life that arise from the esteem of their fellow creatures. Has it come to this, "If I become a Christian they will ridicule me." Well now, can you not put up with a little obloquy for Christ? "But if I am an earnest Christian then I shall have to encounter all sorts of slander." Be it so, and can you not give up the applause of men for the sake of Christ? Come and let the dogs tear your character to shreds as long as you are right before Him, and your motive is pure.

"Yes, but I know what it is. I shall get the cold shoulder in society if I become a thoroughly earnest Christian. There is Lady So-and-so, for whom I have very great respect, whose good opinion I would not forfeit on any account, and she will not recognize me any more." Very well, but can you put the whole lot of it into the scale and say, "I sell it all off, I let it all go, that I may have the pearl"? That man is not worthy of Christ who would be ashamed to stand in the pillory with Him, or go with Him to prison and to death. We must so love Him that we count reproach for His sake to be honor, even as Moses counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.

"Well, you have taken enough, surely." Yes, but this pearl hunter sold all that he had, and you have got a little left. You have got some prospects. If you become a Christian your old uncle will cut you out of his will. You know very well that if you shall go to hear the Gospel at such and such a place you are very likely to be turned out of your situation. "But we *must* live," says somebody. This is not at all clear to my mind. I know that we must die, but as to "must living" I do not feel quite so certain about it. Infinitely better to die than ever to do a dishonorable thing.

If Jesus Christ be our Master, we must be content to let the fairest prospect go, and all things that seem to tell for our success in this life must be secondary in our account. We must seek first the

kingdom of God and His righteousness. Ay, and sometimes even love that has been longed for must go for Christ's sake. Company that has been delightful must be forsaken for Christ's sake, and if all this be done, yet still it is not enough. He that has Christ must give to Christ himself and all that he has. I should doubt whether I were a follower of Christ if I had not in my very soul given up to Him all that I am and all that I have, to be forever His.

He has bought us with a price, and it is not surely meet for us to give Him only one arm, and one eye, and one foot, and half a heart. He that is a true Christian is a Christian through and through. Whatever he possesses of talent, whatever of substance he owns, he looks upon nothing as being his own, but as all belonging to his Master, and he is prepared to use all for his Master's glory, and to part with all if so it were needful for the maintenance of his Master's kingdom. The merchant man sold all that he had.

I think I see you draw back. "This—this is too hard a line." Very well, if you do not want to buy the pearl, you see—that is to say, if you do not want to make your fortune—for the buying of the pearl was the making of the man's fortune—if you do not think the pearl is worth it, pray do not have it. It is not possible to estimate the intrinsic value, the real worth of Christ. We do not cast pearls before swine. If you do not want Him there are plenty who do. He need not come begging of you that you will be His customer. God forbid you should refuse, but if you do not want Him, then say so. Only do say it, and definitely and distinctly say it, "I will have nothing to do with Him."

But this man went and sold all that he had. I tell you he was glad to sell it. He counted that the man who bought his farm was doing him a favor. "Take it," he said, "there, I will let you have it under price if you will only let me have the money. I so much want to get money." No, but he did not dare tell him so much for fear he should go and raise the price, but in his heart, "I do so much want to get that pearl that I really would be obliged to anybody who will take of me that stock off hand."

So if you really want Christ, instead of needing Him to urge you to dispose of these poor effects which I have described, you will be eager to be rid of them that Christ may be yours. May the Spirit of God work in you such a high resolve.

IV. Now, the last thing is THE BUYING.

He had sold all that he had, and then he pays the shekels over—pays them over that he may have the pearl, and he gets the pearl. It was a considerate purchase—a deliberate bargain. He did not see the pearl and then in a hurry go and sell his goods and guess at the value of it. No, but he had looked at it, for he was a seeker of pearls. He knew a pearl when he saw it, though I dare say he did not tell the seller all that he had seen in it. He said to himself, "That is a wonderful pearl. If I can get the money—my little stock won't fetch above five hundred pounds—but if I can get it for that, I am a made man."

And so he thought it over. It did not want much thinking over. Oh, if a soul did but know Christ, he would not think twice before he would have Him.

If men were not such fools—if they had but light from heaven to see the value of my Lord and Master, instead of our standing here and having to beg and persuade and find out new words of commendation, I think they would only say, "Tell us about Him. We will have Him. What does He ask of us? What can we do for Him? What can we submit to so long as we may but make sure of Him who forgives all sin, who gives immediate and perfect salvation to all who trust Him? So long as we may have the Christ of whom it is written, 'He that believeth in him hath everlasting life,' we shall be content." It was a well considered purchase.

And it was an *immediate purchase*. He did not go home and say, "I shall think about this." No, but he knew that pearl and he said, "If I let that slip through my fingers I shall never see the like of it again. If anybody else gets that bargain, then I shall have lost the one opportunity of my life." And so he does but take time enough to go and sell his farm off, and the little land he had, and the little property he had. He was back quickly with his money, only afraid somebody might have slipped in between and offered another thousand or two more than he was able to raise, and that thus he might lose the pearl.

So, dear friends, he that comes to Christ aright may well deliberate about it, but the end of his deliberation ought to be very speedy. "If He is to be had, let me have Him. Oh, if I can know my sins forgiven, let me know it. Oh, if by any means I can have peace with God—if I can become a child of God and an heir of heaven—if my eternal happiness can be secured, oh, let it be secured! How is it done? Come, tell me at once. I wish not to leave my seat till I have found that which you speak of." It was a deliberate bargain—an immediate bargain.

And then it was a *joyful one*. I am sure his eyes twinkled as he paid over his money. I should like to have a picture of his face, when at last he had got his pearl. Now, that which he had been all over the world for he had got, only something a great deal better. He had got his pearl, and I dare say he was ready to jump for joy to think that he had got ready with his money. Ah, when a soul gets Christ it is—

"Happy day, happy day,
For He has washed my sins away."

It is the beginning of delight to a soul when he can say, "Jesus is mine. I know He is. Grace has enabled me to lay hold upon Him."

And oh, what an *enriching purchase* it was which the man had made. When he had once got the pearl instead of his property he thought to himself, "Why, I have got a hundred times more property now than I had. Though I have given up that bit of land I can buy half a province now, if I like, with this pearl which I have obtained.

So brothers and sisters, if you have ever given up anything for Christ I am sure that the Lord Jesus Christ has made you very ample amends. Some years ago a person rather eccentrically advertised for persons who had been losers by obedience to the divine command—that if anyone who had lost anything through love to Christ would apply to him, he would make it up. The odd advertisement appeared for some months in one of our religious periodicals. But the oddest thing is that nobody ever answered it. I should have thought that somebody would have tried and made out a case, but nobody did. They cannot make out such a case, they are no losers by Christ.

"But," say some, "the martyrs were, were they not?" Well, they are up there, ask them. They will tell you as you look at them with their ruby crowns, all brilliant in the light of God, as they stand—

"Fairest of the sons light,
Midst the bright ones, doubly bright,"

that they counted it their honor that they should be permitted to lay down their lives for Jesus' sake.

Oh, there is no losing when you deal with Him. You will make five hundred per cent, over this exchange, be sure of that. No, it shall be a thousand per cent, for "No man," says He, "shall lose house and lands for my sake that shall not receive in this world a hundredfold, and in the world to come, life everlasting."

This was a *final purchase*. The merchant man, according to the parable, never went buying pearls anymore. "No," said he, "No. I have bought a pearl of great price, and now I will go out of the business." And when a man once finds Christ—ah, then he seeks nothing more. If Jesus Christ is mine, more than all in Him I find. He does not want a secondary object. His desires all stay home, and satisfy themselves with the fullness that is in Christ Jesus. He went out of the pearl-hunting line, for he had found all the pearls he should ever want.

And it was *a purchase he never regretted*. The parable does not say that he came back to the seller and said, "There, take your pearl, and let me have my house and lands again." No, it was done. The great transaction was done. He never wished to have it undone. With his pearl of immense worth he was a rich man, worthy to be the rival of princes, and he felt that it was enough. Oh, blessed are they who can say, "It is enough," and can rejoice and bless and magnify the Lord.

"Now rest, my long-divided heart;
Fix'd on this blissful center, rest;
With ashes who would grudge to part,
When call'd on angels' bread to feast?"

Let me, however, just put in one word of caveat. Take care, dear merchant brothers, that when you buy a pearl you buy a good one—that it is the pearl of great price, because I have known noble spirits whom I have admired and felt ready to weep over. Men that have been heroic in the pursuit of that which seemed to them perfectly true, and have made a sacrifice of all that they had for it, and yet they have been deceived. They have grasped antichrist instead of Christ, and they welcomed the lie of hell which came to them in the garb of the angel of light.

Mind, mind that you get Christ and His truth as you find it revealed in Scripture, and revealed a second time in your own heart by the Holy Ghost, for whatever is short of Christ will prove a cheat and deceive you.

Some years ago one of the largest pearls that was ever found passed into the hands of a Russian. It was a very large pearl indeed—as large as an egg, and of a pear shape. He purchased it, the party who had it being ignorant of its value. He was a man of substance, and he kept it, and prepared a house which, though mean on the exterior, was sumptuously furnished within. And he would take his guests into an inner chamber which when it was unlocked, contained a table of marble in the center of which was a box which had to be unlocked with divers keys and the reading of an alphabet, and so forth, and at last he produced this pearl. And he was very chary of ever permitting it to depart from his hand, for it was of immense value.

The Emperor of Russia bid an enormous price for it, and promised him honor and rank besides, but he would not part with it. It happened, however, that the possessor of this pearl was implicated—whether truthfully or not I cannot tell—in a conspiracy, and had to leave his home at St. Petersburg. He took with him nothing but his pearl, and came to Paris sufficiently rich in the possession of that pearl. On a certain day the Duke of Brunswick, who was his only rival in such matters, came with some others to see the pearl.

The owner unlocked it with great care and much deliberation, and when he had opened it he was observed to turn suddenly pale. It seemed as if he had been stricken with death. Unhappy man! His pearl had suddenly become clouded, as pearls sometimes do. It had been taken with some disease which happens to pearls, if I may so express it. In a short time it would turn to powder. It had ceased to be of any value whatever, and he had come down from a millionaire to a pauper. Yet he had bought a good pearl notwithstanding.

There is only one pearl that never can be clouded, and will last right on throughout eternity, and that is the Son of God, "who only hath immortality." If you get Him, you have a hope divine which never can fail you. But if you get a hope in priests or a hope connected with sacramentarianism, or any other hope but that of which Christ is top and bottom, beginning and end, you may make what sacrifice you will, but your brightest prospects will end in bitterest disappointment. The Lord grant that none of us may ever be thus balked of our life-confidence, that no such blank bewilderment may ever fall on our spirits.

"Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that *seek* the LORD." The voice of Jesus is heard in this parable of the kingdom describing and directing the *seekers*. Such persons comprise no small fraction of an assembly like the present. It would indeed be strange if seekers were not always largely represented here, and that in every stage of anxious inquiry. I am sure some of you have seen the pearl you want sparkling before your eyes. I wonder how many of you have resolved to sell all you have to buy it?

But who among you all have actually made the pearl your own and rejoice in its possession? That such of you will go on your way rejoicing there is no doubt. But will you not return and give glory to

God? Shall we not have the happiness of greeting you here in the fellowship of the kingdom of His grace? The Lord grant it may be so for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 13

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—434, 657, AND 109
CHARLES WORTH'S COLLECTION ("ART THOU WEARY")

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