

The Kingdom: Living Within: Part 13

Last week we studied the parable of *The Leaven* and through this parable we came to understand that it is a symbol for the corruption of men. In this we saw that The Lord's plan is to allow His chosen to be "fully leavened" or corrupted by sin, so they can come to know their need for the One—the only One—who is truly good. Once a person knows that they are not good and are not God, then they can be fully empowered to exchange that corruption for the Lord's redemption, by simply acknowledging it as reality and receiving His goodness. The full leavening is not meant to provide a forum for us to go out and battle much less conquer sin, it is meant to provide a forum for us to be defeated by sin so we will finally relent and let God have His role in our spiritual awakening. It is all about the exchange. God allows us to drown in our depravity and be thoroughly corrupted so we will become absolutely convinced of our true need for Him; it is part of His plan. It is only from that place of need that we become willing to receive His life in ours. The full leavening of our humanity stands as a representation of His perfect ways yielding His perfect results.

In this leavening, we have more to contribute than our mere depravity, we have an alternative to having our darkness be our identity. **Hebrews 13:15** says we can bring a "continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name." This sacrifice of praise can look like a simple, authentic thankfulness for His generosity to complete us in spite of us. The example representing this sacrifice of praise is symbolized in the Old Testament through the *Wave Offering* and the *Peace Offering* presented as a *dedication* and a *Thanksgiving Offering*. Take note, these

offerings are holy and set apart exclusively for the priests to eat and enjoy as a meal. They are never burnt on the altar. These sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving (*Wave Offering* and *Peace Offering*) are translated into our practical today through our confessions of our neediness for God and more specifically through our continual dedication to living our lives through the three foundations of truth: Jesus is Lord and sovereign over all things, only God is good, and we are aliens and strangers in this world.

Now we move onto the parables of *The Hidden Treasure* (**Matthew 13:44**) and *The Costly Pearl* (**Matthew 13:45-46**) and it becomes quickly important that we understand what we have studied thus far, because the context of the previous parables play an integral role in receiving the message of these next two parables. Jesus knew it was essential that He reveal the spiritual realities of the **Matthew 13** parables in a specific way so that we are able to take them in and participate in the fullness of what God wants to give us through them.

For example, our understanding the nature of the soil in our hearts as described in the parable of *The Sower and the Seed*, gives us knowledge about the relationship that we have with truth as individuals. It gives us a very detailed perspective on the battle that is happening within, how it is compartmentalized, how we as humans approach it, and what affect it has on us. Likewise in the situational reality of functional humanity, represented in the parable of *The Wheat and the Tares*, we are given another piece of context that is necessary to understand the behind the scenes spiritual drama dictating what is happening from a spiritual perspective in our lives day to day. We can understand that anyone could be wheat or a tare because we understand the reality surrounding his or her presence. This gives us a

way to understand the verse that explains not all who say “Lord, Lord” (**Matthew 7:21**) will enter the Kingdom of Heaven and that there is only one way to truly secure your citizenship with God, by doing the Father’s will. Similarly, the awareness of the kingdom of the Devil, symbolized by the mustard tree, gives us a tool to understand and identify with confidence what is happening to us and around us. In this understanding we can never truly be confused or stumped about what is happening because we have been taught that the Devil is a part of our spiritual journey and a tool in our spiritual development. Continuing on, Jesus explains the leaven to us so that we have another tool to understand a piece of our condition that is very real and integral to our becoming like Him, while also being able to make sense of the role sin and corruption play in our lives.

This is powerful training that is equipping us to succeed as these first four parables have brought an amazing amount of context to our understanding of who we are as children of God and who we are in connection with this world. Behind the scenes, these parables have also been preparing our hearts and minds to process what Jesus is about to say next in the parables of *The Hidden Treasure* and *The Costly Pearl*. You see the message behind these two parables will probably be the hardest message for many of you to accept. And, as we start to discuss their meaning, you are going to begin to understand why it has been necessary for Jesus to first give us the information from the other four parables. For Him to express what He expresses in these next two parables, He knew He would first have to deal with our understanding regarding all the reasons we would create to deny His words about the treasure and the pearl. And what do we fight more than anything; push away more than anything? More than anything, we deny our own acceptance.

We deny His unconditional, undeniable love and acceptance for us. But in these two parables, He is asking you to finally let it in and let it have its place in your life.

Matthew 13:44–46

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Let’s start like we usually do by identifying the players. The collective **Beloved**, the beautiful Bride of Christ, is the treasure hidden in the field. Jesus is the man who found it, hid it again and then sold everything to buy the field.

I’m confident in these identities because of a few details I will explain here quickly. First, “hidden” is in the *perfect passive participle* so we know it is an act God the Father did as the *passive* tense is used most often to indicate an act of God. He *perfectly* hid it like no one else can, could, or did hide it. It is also a *participle* meaning we can conclude that He continues to keep it hidden (which no other being even has the power to do). Secondly, “found” is a *participle*, He found and is still continually finding the treasure. This means that as time progresses, this man (God the Son—Jesus) finds and continues to find the treasure. In the parable He hides it again but only as an act of saving it for Himself. He then goes and sells all that He has to buy the field. What does it mean for Jesus to go and sell all that He

has? Consider this passage in *Philippians*.

Philippians 2:5–8

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Isaiah 53:2-11

My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all. He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that

he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave. But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin (*when He sells the farm*), he will have many descendants (*a treasure*). He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands. When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

He sold all that He had; reputation, status, honor, glory, power, purity, and more; more than I could ever list here. The Darling of Heaven, also Heaven's most precious artifact, sold by the Father, offered freely by the Son; so that the Triune God could come and buy the field to have the treasure contained within it—us. He redeemed the field and purchased it with the money He got for selling everything He had; it was money made of His blood (**Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:14; Revelation 14:14**).

Moving on in our passage to the parable of *The Costly Pearl*, the Lord says, "again," which means He is connecting these two parables saying that one is part of the other; so the Pearl is another picture of the same message He is communicating. The communication however is pointed at an individual level versus the **Beloved** at large. The merchant is Jesus and He is seeking fine pearls. We as individuals are the Pearl that He finds and so He sold all that He had and bought it. In other words, even if one of you were the only one on the earth, He would have been pierced, crushed, beaten, whipped, struck, slaughtered, pierced,

and killed just to have you.

Looking closer at the detail behind the wording we see that “seeking” is a *present active participle* meaning He is now and continually seeking for the fine pearls. When He found one pearl of great value he went and sold all that he had. So what does it mean for Jesus to have sold all that He has? It is similar to when He goes and sells everything He has to buy the field with the treasure in it, but in this part of the parable “sold” is in the *perfect active indicative*. The *perfect* tense indicates that there is no reversing this sale and the *indicative* means this is a statement of fact that it is sold. Everything that was necessary to buy the pearl of greatest price has been accomplished. This is reminiscent of the cross and when Jesus spoke the word “*tetelestai*” meaning “it is finished.” Everything necessary to buy us was completed and nothing could be reversed. To continue, “had” is in the *imperfect active indicative*. The *imperfect* is the formal past tense and the *indicative* is a statement of fact. He did it, He gave up everything as explained previously in ***Philippians 2:5-8***; nothing more can be done or needs to be done to highlight the specialness of this sweet story Jesus is telling to convey His desire for us, “bought” specifically means to go to market and to buy or literally to redeem (***Galatians 4:5***; ***Titus 2:14***; ***1 Peter 1:18-19***; ***Hebrews 9:12***). From a Jewish perspective, this idea of redemption is to literally buy back what belongs to you. For example, the way Jesus redeemed His people from Egypt (***Exodus 6:6***), the way land is redeemed for the original owner (***Leviticus 25:27***), the way the Levites were offered up as redemption for the first-born of Israel (***Numbers 3:46-47***), and so on. Though His blood, Jesus is literally redeeming what is most precious to Him—those He chose from before the foundation of the World (***Ephesians 1:4***). This is clearly stated to us in ***1 Corinthians***

6:20.

1 Corinthians 6:20

For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

So the overall message in these two parables is that the most important, special, cherished, desired, and wanted thing that God could ever lay His eyes on is you, me—us. He gave up everything that has any value to Him to have access to us. As a collective, we—the Beloved—are the treasure and we, as individuals, are the pearl.

Quite often this passage is turned around and taught as if we are the merchant and God is the pearl of great price. However, this simply cannot be supported by scripture. For example the idea that we are the merchant who is seeking for treasure conflicts with and is in 100% contradiction to what we know to be true about ourselves from **Romans 3:10-18** where it states that “No one seeks God, all have turned away, all have become useless.” In that case it is impossible to make a case that the merchant is even human. So there is no argument that could legitimately describe this person as any man. Also **Genesis 6:5** states the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great and that every intent of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually (this is the condition of all mankind). We do not seek God, we can’t seek God, and we are not even able to. As we discussed last Sunday, according to **Romans 8:7-8**, our *Old Sinful Nature* is entirely incapable of such things, for it is entirely hostile to God.

To drive this home for anyone that may be struggling with our capacity to desire God apart from the desire He places in those He chooses, let's take a quick look at **Genesis 1**.

Genesis 1:2-5

The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day" and the darkness "night."

In addition to the story of creation, this is a layered picture depicting the work God does on our soul, which without Him is formless, empty and dark. Only through the work of the Holy Spirit (hovering over our lives) do we ever wake up to our need for God. It's as if the Spirit prepares us until the day that the Light (Jesus) invades our soul. But left to ourselves, as stated in **Romans 8:7-8** and **Romans 3:10-18**, it is clear that we simply do not have the integrity apart from God's light invading our humanity to even go looking for the treasure of God. It sounds nice and makes us sound intellectual and less selfish as if we would be the ones who would want something selfless and pure; but the unfortunate fact is that apart from His engaging with us we do not want God, never have wanted God, and are not even able on our own to want God. In my opinion, this puts the idea that "we" might be searching for Him, selling all we have, and then spending every last dollar we have

to get Him, a bit out of the question and also unrealistic.

Besides, to God we ARE a treasure, and you and I are a pearl of great price. As we stated, God has not been proven to be man's treasure by any means. Humanity does not walk around raving about how much they love God. However, God has NEVER ever wavered in His stalwart expression of love and wanting of His people. We are completely leavened and corrupted, still He values us like a great treasure and a pearl. And it should be no surprise at this point that this is the true gospel story—the Good News. We love Him and we can only love Him because He first loved us (**1 John 4:19**). He loves with a love established and decided upon before we had ever done anything good. Besides, what do we have to barter with or to sell (see **Romans 9:10-13**). Before we move on, I'd like to share some tender communication from God with you about being His treasure.

Exodus 19:5

Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me.

Deuteronomy 14:2

You have been set apart as holy to the LORD your God, and he has chosen you from all the nations of the earth to be his own special treasure.

Deuteronomy 26:18

The LORD has declared today that you are his people, his own special treasure, just as he promised, and that you must obey all his commands.

Malachi 3:17

“They will be my people,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. “On the day when I act in judgment, they will be my own special treasure. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient child.

Song of Solomon 4:9-12

You have captured my heart, my treasure, my bride. You hold it hostage with one glance of your eyes, with a single jewel of your necklace. Your love delights me, my treasure, my bride. Your love is better than wine, your perfume more fragrant than spices. Your lips are as sweet as nectar, my bride. Honey and milk are under your tongue. Your clothes are scented like the cedars of Lebanon. You are my private garden, my treasure, my bride, a secluded spring, a hidden fountain.

This is our identity and our destiny. Yet, I know this is a very difficult message for many of us to hear. We are so steeped in shame and condemnation that our insides reject the idea that we are this special. Maybe you can fathom that you are a tarnished old coin within the treasure, but a single pearl of greatest price; no way. I can almost tangibly see this communicating bouncing off the front of many of your foreheads and landing on the floor in front of you like flattened tennis balls. But

this is the truth and that means that you are responsible to find a way to let this into your knowledge base so that it can ultimately be a part of your structure of belief and grow your faith. This is why Jesus is telling us this! He wants us to take a hold of the **beauty** He offers and let it do its work in us.

You see this is why I was discussing the order in which Jesus delivered the parables. He needed to lay some groundwork for us before He dropped the reality that we are not just players in this drama, we are the stars of the show. We needed to understand the soil of our hearts, the wheat and the tares, the mustard tree, and the leaven to be able to even let this unfathomable reality about how God feels about us into our hearts.

Understanding the spiritual implications of being fully leavened is, in particular, critical to us being able to allow God's true intentions for us have a place to take root. You see, knowing that we are fully leavened does more than simply put us in our place. It isn't just about making sure we know that God is good and we are not. It is actually a mechanism or a type of doorway for MANY of the special blessings of the Lord to have room to land on us. There are so many pointless battles that we fight and so many beautiful freedoms that we forfeit when we are fighting for our goodness. People who cannot agree with their full leavening and who cannot stop competing with God for their position of goodness are actually blocking Him out in more personally harmful ways than just believing they still have some goodness of their own.

For example, living in the reality of the full leavening finally allows us to let go of our own goodness, which stands in the way of our being able to accept how special we are to God. When we are striving to be good for God we cannot accept that we

are SO special to Him because we can't meet His standards in our own power. Therefore, we continue to identify with failing Him instead of being accepted by Him. Similarly, we resort to all kinds of weird mutated forms of relationship with Him, such as manipulation, bargaining, lying, negotiating, and being afraid of Him. We convince ourselves that our goodness is the one thing that will resolve all of our insecurity issues, dissatisfaction, hurt, lack of trust, and more; but that is all a farce. Understanding the reality of the Kingdom as it is presented within these parables is what will really help for you to let the control you have over your life go.

This works the same way with many other spiritual milestones. When we will not walk in the reality of our specialness to God, by rejecting our own goodness and understanding we are fully leavened, we block our accessibility to freedom, peace, joy, love, rest, and more. We also block ourselves from being able to participate in the work God has appointed and ordained for our lives; as well as our ability to learn more and more knowledge about the Word that will help our faith grow and strengthen.

This is a different kind of delusion that jack-knives us to the opposite extreme of the delusion we have been talking about thus far. Instead of fighting for our goodness saying things like "I'm not that bad" or "It could be worse," we are saying, "I am not good enough" and "I'm too bad." This side of delusion keeps relationship with God at arm's length, just as much as the other extreme does; except, in this extreme, it rides on our shame and our personal inadequacy versus our pride.

A key step to conquering delusion is to understand how beautiful and amazing we are and embrace it. Settle down in the fact that you are the beautiful pearl of greatest price, it will open a whole new accessibility to God that you can't touch as

long as you are debating whether this is true or trying to make your worthiness happen on your own goodness. This also makes so much sense why Jesus made sure He explained that we are fully leavened before He told us how special we are. We would have never believed it! We would have blown over these parables and assigned some kind of qualifier to it such as “He’s not talking about people like me” or “He’s just trying to pretend He loves someone like me.” But if you understand that you are fully leavened, then you can let this beauty in and allow it to open those doors so that the next stage of transformation AND understanding of His mysteries can occur. Let me show you a practical example from the Bible.

Luke 7:36–50

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat. When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She’s a sinner!”

Then Jesus answered his thoughts. “**Simon,**” he said to the Pharisee, “**I have something to say to you.**” “Go ahead, Teacher,” Simon replied. Then Jesus told him this story: “**A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver* to one and 50 pieces to the other. But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more**

after that?" Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt." "That's right," Jesus said. Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. "I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love." ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven." The men at the table said among themselves, "Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?" And Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

This is our beautiful example, a woman who is walking around tainted by her reputation of sin. But she doesn't even care because all she wants is to be with Jesus. She doesn't stay away from Him until she buttons up all the bad things she has done or until she makes a new name for herself. She comes into the house of one of her accusers just so she can be with Him! She knows she is fully leavened and she just sits like a pearl waiting for her merchant to scoop her up and adore her while a servant of the Devil accuses her before God. This story is such a practical example of all the parables we have studied in **Matthew 13** in action!

And what does Jesus say about it? He says the person with the greatest debt will love Him more; the person whose sins are many has the capacity to show much love. He says, she is the one who is doing it the way He intended and SHE is His.

Again, God's plan has always been to leaven us so that we could both participate in the relationship of pure love and adoration together. This is such wonderful news. I also want to mention that Steve has used these parables of *The Treasure* and *The Costly Pearl* in several of his teachings to convey these same concepts. In one teaching he said "As we know, pearls are uniquely formed because of an irritation in the tender side of an oyster. Perhaps this is meant to give us the sense that the church was formed not only out of the wounds of Christ but also the wounds of humanity that were necessary for the pearl to be formed."

So you see, to be able to sit at Jesus' feet and wash them with our tears, dry them with our hair, and anoint them with rare perfume, we must be able to believe that we belong there. We must be able to believe that we are His treasure and His pearl.

In conclusion, I want to encourage those of you that simply cannot get past this point to challenge yourselves to start living like you are the pearl. This is no position of entitlement, justice or injustice; it is a position of freedom that God is offering to you. As I prepared this teaching, I reviewed everything we have studied on the pearl of greatest price up until now at Pathway and I came across an amazing teaching on **Hebrews 2:5-18** that I want to strongly encourage you all to go and read. It is nothing new but it is an encouragement for you to take responsibility for the truth about what you believe and walk in it. It starts by saying "I have to ask you, what have you done this week to remember the words of truth that were spoken over your life, to remember how great of a salvation you have been given?" We must start living in the truth of the mysteries of these parables. We must start living like pearls.

Finally, I need to tell you that it is critical that you engage with these truths because now you know them. You have been taught what this all means and you cannot blindly stay in your same old way of handling your life without blatantly rejecting God. You cannot sit and be confused anymore. Because you have participated in this study and because you understand the mysteries of these parables you must change and let your *New Creation* have the room to do things differently. Not only is it time for you to walk in freedom, if you are not already, but you are accountable to walk in freedom. You are accountable to believe that we are the treasure and you are the pearl. Fall at the feet of the Lord and wash his feet with your tears and your hair. Pour fine perfume on Him and be bought and found by His grace. Give yourself to Him, dedicate yourself to Him, and offer up the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving that can only be expressed by one who understands the true nature of their redemption.

He who has ears, let him hear.

Let's pray.