

What Value Does Christ place on his church?

July 1, 2017 Sermon by Pastor Diana J. Perkins

Looking at people through God's eyes would make our world a different place to be.

In the fallen world, parents neglect children and curse them, oftentimes even murder them before they even come into the world. They are a nuisance to them, a financial burden, and a liability to them and how often do those children hear the words, "I can't wait for you to turn 18 cause then you are on your own." In this generation there are many thrown out on the streets for society to support and take care of at very young ages. So many people feel unimportant, useless, neglected, unloved and unwanted because they value themselves based on other people's assessment, rather than God's value system.

When I was a little girl, I felt unloved and inferior to my brother and sister in our family. Someone gave me a child's Bible and on the cover was a picture of Jesus holding a blonde curly haired girl about my size and I often looked at that cover and imagined that Jesus was holding me. That image has stayed with me all my life and the Bible has been my source of strength and joy throughout the years and how grateful I am that God has been watching over me and has drawn me away from the paths of sin that would have destroyed me if I had insisted on staying there. Satan tried to entrap me, but Jesus set me free. He tried to bind me with shame, guilt and doubts, but Jesus set me free. He set out to fill me with despair, darkness, fear, and hopelessness, but Jesus replaced these with love, joy, peace, light, and a purpose that Satan cannot destroy because God is LOVE!

I want to talk about pearls today to illustrate the verses in Matthew 13.

Fine pearls come from the bodies of oysters. In order to protect itself from irritation caused by a foreign object such as a grain of sand, a parasite or piece of shell lodging itself in a oysters soft inner body where it can't be expelled, the oyster immediately starts secreting a smooth hard crystalline substance called nacre around the uninvited guest. Nacre is a mineral substance that fashions the mollusk shell. Layer upon layer of nacre also known as mother of pearl coat the object until the object is completely encased with the substance and a brilliant, colorful, radiant gem called a pearl is formed. A perfect pearl is truly a rare even since less than 5% of the harvested oysters yield pearls of such perfect shape, lustra, and color to be considered fine gem quality.

The Old Testament prophets proclaimed that the coming Messiah would speak truth to the people in parables. Those whose hearts were soft towards spiritual truth would grasp the meaning, but the majority of people would not understand the meaning of the stories. In Matthew chapter 13, there is an example of this type of teaching executed by Jesus Christ. In verse 34, it proclaims that all these things, Jesus spoke in parables and without a parable, he didn't speak to them in order to fulfill the predictions of the prophets that said, "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."

Jesus was explaining what the kingdom of God is like in some of these verses. In verse 31, he taught that the kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. The mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds, but once it was planted and over time, it grew to be the greatest among herbs and then it became a tree so large that the birds of the air would come and lodge in the branches of it.

Jesus was referring to the small band of followers that his heavenly Father had given to him, the 12 disciples, to the many multitudes of believers that would over the years come to know Christ through the preaching of the gospel.

Jesus didn't call the religious, super intelligent, Torah experts to be in his inner circle. Interestingly, he called ignorant fishermen, tax collectors, and ordinary laborers who were carrying out their daily routines of work when Jesus called, "Follow me!" They responded immediately and though all of them forsook him at the cross, he had prayed for them and he brought them back together (except Judas) following his resurrection, filled them with his power and holy boldness and inspired them to write the New Testament. Saul, a well-educated Pharisee, was called by Jesus as the infant church was being formed. They preached the gospel as Jesus had revealed it to them and it has survived, thrived and Satan and all of his forces will never be able to crush it for Jesus has ordained it to be so. Jesus spoke about the tares in the field and the disciples asked him to explain that story to them. The story was about a man who planted good seed in his field. But while he slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and then went on his way. When the wheat began to peek its head out of the ground weeds also tried to crowd out the grain. When the servants went out to check on the wheat, they found tares growing among the wheat. They asked where the weeds came from. The householder told them that an enemy had done this. They asked if they should go out and pull the weeds. He told them to let things alone until harvest and then the weeds would be harvested first and burned and then the wheat would be harvested and stored in his barns.

Jesus told his disciples that he was the one who sowed the good seed. The field is the world and the good seed are the children of the kingdom. The tares are the wicked people in the world. Satan has used them to crowd out the goodness and to destroy the work of God. However, angels will be sent to reap the harvest and the people who live wicked lives, sinful lifestyles and reject Jesus' teachings will be punished. But the righteous will receive their reward for they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of God. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.

In Matthew chapter 7, Jesus spoke about two types of people; one produces good fruit and the other produces bad fruit. There are false prophets that come as wolves dressed in sheep's clothing. Beware of them and recognize them. A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit and a bad tree will not produce good fruit. When the reckoning

name, cast out demons? And in thy name, done many wonderful works?" And then I will profess to them, "I never knew you, depart from me you that work iniquity."

Then Jesus spoke about pearls. The kingdom of God is like treasure hidden in the field, which when a man discovered it, he hides it, and for joy of it goes and sells all that he has and buys the field. Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man seeking fine pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price went and sold all that he had and bought it.

The field is the world which the Lord himself purchased at the priceless cost of his own blood in order that He might have the treasure. (1 Peter 1:18) The Jews were God's treasure in the Old Testament, and a remnant of Jews was chosen according to God's grace after Jesus had been rejected by the nation of Israel to be their King. Thus the remnants of Jews are included with the Gentiles in God's church and they become one body, the body of Christ and salvation has come to all of them collectively. (Ephesians 2:14-18, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 4:4-6) and thus we are Christ's inheritance (Ephesians 1:18) and his joy (Hebrews 2:2)

The true church is the pearl of great price and the formation of it covers the many years of generations of people who are added to it by believing on the holy Son of God. It is called a mystery (Romans 16:25-26) Christ gave himself to purchase the pearl and is now preparing it for presentation to himself. (Ephesians 5:25)

The kingdom is not the church, but the true children of the kingdom during the fulfillment of these mysteries, baptized by one Spirit into one body (1 Corinthians 12:12-13) compose the Church which is the pearl.

Are you in the body of Christ? Are you wheat or are you weeds? Are you building up the kingdom of God with your life or are you God's enemy who rejects his sacrifice for your sins by his shed blood?

If you have a desire to learn how Satan stole the inheritance that God had created for mankind and you want to know about your true identity and value to God, spend time in prayer and reading his word. You will learn that Satan is a master deceiver, a liar, a murderer, a thief, and is full of darkness and evil conniving yet he comes as an angel of light and offers people wealth, riches and a name to be proud of. What he really delivers are worthless trinkets, sorrow, pain, shame, guilt and a crushing blow that ends in death for eternity. He is your enemy and he goes about like a roaring lion seeking those whom he can devour. (1 Peter 5:8) The only hope we have of escaping his devices is to hide in the Rock of Ages for his name is a strong tower and the righteous runs into it and are saved. Proverbs 18:10.