

DEACON GEORGE'S HOMILY FOR SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

In the ancient world, men desired to own a pearl. They desired a pearl, not just for its monetary value, but for its beauty. They found pleasure in touching it, holding it, and gazing upon it. They found an aesthetic joy in simply possessing a pearl. In those days, a pearl was a byword for something that had **supreme** value.

In our first story: a farm worker, was diligently going about his daily work then one day, he unexpectedly stumbles upon a pearl. He then sells everything he owns, in order to buy the field, and therefore as owner of the field, he can **keep** this pearl.

In our second story: the rich man devotes his whole life in search of a fine pearl. He is an expert, and knows exactly what he wants. Then one day, he discovers the finest pearl that he has ever seen. And likewise, he sells everything, in order to own this pearl.

In both stories: both men know the true value of what they have discovered, and are prepared to pay the cost of **everything**, in order to have this new item of treasure. Onlookers, might think that they are bonkers to risk everything on this one "**must have**" item. But to the farm worker, and to the rich merchant they are certain and convinced of what they must do, namely, **own that pearl**. To miss the opportunity of owning the pearl, for them, would be total folly.

In these two parables, Jesus is asking his listeners, and today, that means us, to perceive the kingdom of God, in the same way as the farm worker, and the rich merchant, perceived the pearl. For them, it didn't matter, whether the discovery, was the result of an unexpected find, or the result of a long, conscientious search, their reaction was the same, **everything, had to be sold, and sacrificed, to gain this precious pearl**. And now, their whole existence is dominated by their **discovery**.

For Jesus, the greatest of all treasures, namely **his** pearl, was his Father's **will**. When **he** discovered what it was, he gave up everything he valued, in order to do his Father's will and preach the kingdom of God. He gave up his family, his home, and his security. His own friends and neighbours thought he was a fool. And when he gave up his life on the Cross, his disciples could not understand this ultimate folly. Now, we are asked to see the kingdom of God, as **a treasure**, worth more than everything, we now value in our life.

There is a saying, here up North, "**that ya can't get owt fer nowt**". So, if we desire a house, or a car, or a holiday, we have to give up some of our **money**, in order to have these things. To be a good football player, we have to give up our **time**, in order to practice. Therefore, **We cannot gain anything, without renouncing something**.

Now, I don't think any of us here today, will find a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow, or win millions on the lottery. However, we have **all** stumbled on treasure. And we don't have to search very far, to find it. Because, it is right under our noses. Our treasure **is**, the kingdom of God. And it is **here, now**. But what is the kingdom of God? It is the life that we live, a life in the way of Christ, sharing our daily lives, with our families, friends and neighbours, using the opportunities we face each day, to live out the Gospel values. This may not seem like a wonderful, glittering prize, that has been given to us, however, it is within our **ordinary, daily** life, living in the kingdom of God, that we discover our **greatest** of all treasures, our **pearl, and our pearl is, Jesus**.

However, in order to discover our **pearl**, I am not advocating that we wait patiently, like the farm worker, or go on a monumental quest, like the rich merchant. I am suggesting that we do a bit of both. We should go about our daily lives, living within our treasure, the kingdom of God. **But**, we should also **live**, and **pray**, with an **expectant faith**, in the belief that we have already found our **pearl**. And if we believe, that we have found our pearl, then, we should live in the **hope**, that one day we will **meet** Jesus, and **touch** him. And perhaps meet him more than once, perhaps many times in our life.

However, if we do **not** see the kingdom of God, as our treasure. And if we do **not** believe that we have found our **pearl**, Jesus. Then, we will be **unable** to give up **anything**, and therefore, **unable** to meet Him. Jesus **is the pearl of great price**, who is hidden in the ordinary, hoping, that we will **find** him. He is the pearl that our spirit is **searching** and **longing** for, with **expectant faith**. He is the pearl, whom we **desire**, and for whom we give up **everything**. **For when we have found Jesus, everything else, is secondary, when compared to Him**.