

A number of years ago, there was a geologist by the name of Dr. Williamson who was doing some work in the country of Tanzania.

One day, he found himself driving in a deserted area, slipping and sliding along a rain-soaked road.

Suddenly his four-wheel drive vehicle sank up to its axles in the mud and got stuck.

Pulling out his shovel, Dr. Williamson began the unpleasant task of digging out of a mud hole.

He had been at it for a while when his shovel uncovered something strange.

It was a pink-like stone of some sort.

Being a geologist and naturally curious about rock formations, he picked it up and wiped away the mud.

The more mud he removed, the more excited he became, and could hardly believe what he saw.

When the stone was finally clean, Dr. Williamson was beside himself with joy.

He had discovered a diamond.

Now, any diamond at all would be a surprise in that situation.

But Dr. Williamson found what became known as the famous pink diamond of Tanzania.

That stone today sits in the royal scepter of Great Britain.

Today's bible reading is about treasure. The parable of the hidden treasure and of the pearl consist of two sentences each.

They both start with the familiar introductory phrase, "The kingdom of heaven is like..."

These parables occur only in Matthew's Gospel and form a pair.

It's important to note that we read with an analytic Western mind.

We need to ask how would the disciples heard them?

Now, Jesus told the parable of a man who found a treasure hidden in a field.

He said "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

Matthew 13:44

When I was young I remember playing hidden treasure.

I used to make a treasure maps and pretend the treasure was buried somewhere in our yard.

However in our sophisticated society, many would say no one finds treasure anymore.

Yet from time to time discoveries are made: a Shepherd boy near the Dead Sea found scrolls that were 2000 years old.

A diver off the Florida coast located a sunken 17th-century Spanish vessel filled with silver and gold;

And a farmer ploughing his field in Suffolk, England struck a container that held beautiful silver dishes dating from the Roman times.

In This Parable A treasure has been hidden in a field.

At the time this parable was written the disciples knew ancient Palestine, was a country that was frequently ravaged by war.

People often hid their treasure in a field rather than in the house.

In a house, thieves would be able to find it; in a field, the treasure would be much safer.

Sometimes the owner was killed at war and no one would ever know where they had hidden the treasure.

In Matthew 25, Jesus told a story about a master who gave some talents to his servants, but one servant was worried.

He wanted to keep it safe, so he buried it in the ground.

Over the years, the ground of Palestine became a veritable treasure house.

The man in this parable who found such a treasure may have been a hired hand or renter.

He may have been ploughing the field, digging a ditch, or planting a tree.

Whatever the case, he hit something that was hard and it did not sound like a rock.

He dug it out and found a treasure.

We are not told what the treasure was, but the man was filled with joy at finding such a treasure.

In those days, it was not uncommon at all for a person who was ploughing or digging in a field to accidentally come across a treasure.

So, Jesus' parable described a very feasible situation.

Now, there is a concern that some people have with this parable that the man in the parable was dishonest.

However, Jewish rabbinic law states "If a man finds scattered fruit or money, it belongs to the finder." So, the people listening to the parable would not have thought the man was unethical.

In fact, the man had a right by law to what he found.

It is obvious that the treasure did not belong to the man who owned the field.

If it did, then he would have dug up the treasure before he sold the piece of ground.

So, really, the man who found the treasure was extremely honest.

Remember He did not have to buy the field. He could have just taken the treasure.

But he did not.

In fact, he did not even use the treasure to provide him enough money to make the purchase.

Instead, the Scriptures state, he liquidated everything he owned to come up with the money.

So, the man did not do anything unethical.

People at the time may have shaken their heads about such rashness, but the man knew what he was doing.

With his money he would buy the field to get the treasure.

But we need to be careful not to lose sight of the main point of the parable which is this:

**A man found something so valuable that he sold everything he had to get it.**

He was so excited about finding the treasure that he was willing to do whatever he had to do in order to purchase it.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it." Matthew 13:45.

This story is a close parallel to that of the man who found a treasure.

The same dedication is found in both parables.

Each man must have the treasure even if it costs him his livelihood.

**They literally sell all that they have in order to obtain the treasure or the Pearl.**

In the first century pearls had become a status symbol of wealthy people.

Jesus told his audience, "Do not throw your pearls to swine" ( Matthew 7:6 ),

When women wanted to portray their wealth, they put pearls in their hair.

In the time of Jesus, pearls were in great demand.

Merchants had to go to the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and even India in order to find them.

The man portrayed by Jesus is a merchant looking for fine pearls.

The merchant was a man who would buy things wholesale and sell them to a retailer.

We do not know how far he has travelled, but on this day, he finds one particular pearl of great value.

For him, this is the chance of a lifetime.

He will not be satisfied until that pearl is his.

He mulls it over, makes his calculations, evaluates his assets, and decides to sell all his belongings in order to buy that one perfect pearl.

The pearl is an especially appropriate figure for the kingdom because it is the only gem that cannot be improved by man.

All other jewels must be cut and polished by skilled craftsmen before they have retail value as gemstones.

Like the man discovering the treasure, the merchant suddenly sees the pearl.

It is a now or never proposition, sell everything and buy!

Imagine being their friend and seeing them put everything up for sale.

Of course, there was no risk involved in buying the field or in purchasing the Pearl the items bought would keep their value

What they did was most sensible.

**In buying the field and the Pearl, the two men did not make a sacrifice, even though they sold everything they owned.**

There is a basic difference between a purchase and a sacrifice.

A purchase is directed towards acquiring an object of equivalent value.

Sacrifice on the other hand is giving when no reward is expected.

Both the man who found the treasure and the pearl merchant paid the full justifiable price of the purchased items.

They heard opportunity knock and were ready to pay the price. They gave all they had in order to gain the one thing they desired.

Jim Elliott says "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

### **What, do these parables teach?**

#### **Friendship with Jesus is priceless.**

What is eternal life worth to you? A million dollars?

What is peace with God and forgiveness of sins worth?

#### **There are many things tugging at us to be the treasure of our life**

Jesus said when we see the priceless value of the kingdom of God we will sell everything in order to obtain it.

*Conclusion: Bruce Almighty* is a movie about a self-centered man named Bruce Noland.

Bruce lives as though the world revolves around him.

His life dream is to be promoted to the anchor position at a local Buffalo news station.

Unfortunately, nothing goes right for Bruce.

He doesn't get the anchor job, and his girlfriend dumps him.

After complaining loudly about the way God runs the universe, God meets with Bruce and gives him the opportunity to run the universe for one week.

By the end of the week, Bruce has made a mess of things and has had it trying to be God. He's made a mess of the world and his life.

On a rainy night Bruce is walking down the middle of the road crying.

His clothes are soaked by the torrent of rain, and he is weary.

He finally drops to his knees on the asphalt and cries out, "God, I'm tired of being God! I don't want to run my life any more!

I surrender to your will!"

Jesus said when we see the priceless value of the kingdom of God we will surrender, sell everything in order to obtain it.