



[Matthew 13:45-46](#)

(45) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, (46) who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

New King James Version

Though it is one of the better known [parables](#), the Pearl of Great Price also happens to be misunderstood frequently. The common explanation is that the merchant represents a Christian, and the pearl of great price is the [Kingdom of God](#) to which he gives his all so he can be a part of it. Another interpretation is that the pearl is Christ, and a Christian gives his all to Him. As meaningful as these interpretations may be, another is far more meaningful, and the evidence given in the narrative favors it.

In this parable the merchant is seriously and deliberately searching [the world](#) to secure the best and costliest gems. It is the very business of his life. He travels widely with zeal and a lofty purpose because he can do so and appreciate the best when he sees it.

The common interpretation shows the sinner, the merchant, diligently searching the world and sacrificing all to find the Kingdom of [God](#) or Christ. This cannot be true! On several counts it is totally out of alignment with Scripture as well as experience. This approach puts the seeker totally in control of his destiny.

Three scriptures disprove that we are the merchant seeking to "buy" the Kingdom of God, Christ, or eternal life.

[Romans 3:11](#) : There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God.

[Luke 19:9-10](#) : And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

[John 6:44](#) : No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

It is Christ who seeks the sinner! The Shepherd seeks the sheep, not vice versa. Furthermore, if the pearl is either Christ, the Kingdom of God, or eternal life, it contradicts other scriptures regarding God's grace. Notice **[II Corinthians 9:15](#)**, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" **[Romans 6:23](#)** adds, "For the wages of [sin](#) is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Finally, in **[Luke 7:41-42](#)** Jesus says in the **[Parable of the Two Debtors](#)**:

There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will [love](#) him more?

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price shows the merchant willing to buy a pearl at high cost. Can we possibly buy the Kingdom of God or eternal life or forgiveness if we have nothing with which to buy? If we think we have something with which we might barter with God, or if we think we have something to sell in order to buy from Him, then grace ceases to be grace!

The Bible consistently reveals we have no righteousness, skills, or intellect that is of any value in purchasing anything from God. **[Isaiah 64:6](#)** confirms this: "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags." Peter's denunciation of Simon Magus plainly shows that men cannot buy the things of God. "But Peter said to him, 'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!'" (**[Acts 8:20](#)**).

We are not the active agent in choosing Christ. [John 15:16](#) specifically refers to Christ's apostles, but the principle extends to us: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." Jesus clearly states in [Luke 19:10](#), "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

By this time it ought to be clear that [Jesus Christ](#) is the merchant, the price paid was His life, and the church (the individual Christian in a very narrow sense) is the pearl. The church is one pearl, one body, composed of those He has sought out through the ages to be a habitation for God by His Spirit and who will be His bride at His return. This beautiful and meaningful little parable shows some of the extent of His labor of love for us.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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[Parables and a Pearl](#)

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