



[Matthew 13:45-46](#)

(45) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. (46) When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

New International Version

The word "merchant" has had an interesting evolution. It originally meant a passenger on a ship, but gradually became applied to the wholesale dealer as distinguished from a retailer. This is how John uses it in [Revelation 18:3](#), 11, 15, 23. The merchant made trips far and wide to buy specific merchandise in which he had expertise. The context of the parable gives no indication he was pursuing anything but pearls. He knew the real worth of pearls, and in this case, he assessed the value and was very willing to pay the price.

This is another indication that the merchant is not a human seeking Christ, the church, [eternal life](#), or the [Kingdom of God](#) because before [conversion](#) we had only a vague notion of what to seek for. Before [God](#) sought us out, we were commandment-breaking sinners. [1 John 2:4](#) says, "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the [truth](#) is not in him."

Jesus knew merchants well. Nazareth, where He grew up, was very close to a major trade route linking Babylon, to the northeast of Palestine, to Egypt, to the southwest. Caravans bound in either direction had to pass by His door.

Even the use of "seeking" ([Matthew 13:45](#)) helps to identify the merchant as Christ because it means "to depart from one place and arrive at another." Jesus did this Himself to pay the price of the pearl. He departed from heaven and arrived on earth to complete His mission.

From this perspective, this parable presents a beautiful picture of the purchase of the church. Paul writes, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the [Holy Spirit](#) has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God *which He*

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Matthew 13:45-46 (<http://www.theberean.org>)
purchased with His own blood" ([Acts 20:28](#)). [Psalm 45:11](#) adds a tender touch to this, "So the King will greatly desire your beauty."

It ought to inspire and encourage us to know that He never seeks us as a legalistic, grudging response to duty. He does not merely stumble across us, but He seeks us out. He desires us and pursues us as a man courts a woman to be his bride and wife. His is a whole-hearted and loving response to our Father's purpose and our eternal well-being.

It is no accident that we are part of His church. He sold all to possess us! Will we ever fathom what it cost Him to redeem us? Paul says in [Philippians 2:6-7](#), "[Jesus], being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men." He adds in [II Corinthians 8:9](#), "For you know the [grace](#) of our Lord [Jesus Christ](#), that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." We should also understand, lest we get the wrong impression, that the pearl's value resides not in its own intrinsic worth, but in the immensity of the cost paid for it.

One final thought: Ordinarily, a merchant would buy a gem of this nature with the idea of selling it and making money on another's desire to adorn himself with its beauty. In this case, however, the merchant's intent is different: "That He might present to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" ([Ephesians 5:27](#)). Jesus Christ purchased us so He can eternally possess us.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:
[Parables and a Pearl](#)

Related Topics:
[Bride of Christ](#)
[Christ as Merchant](#)
[Christ's Sacrifice](#)
[Church as Pearl](#)
[Church, The Merchant](#)

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Matthew 13:45-46 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

[Parable of the Pearl of Great Price](#)
[Pearl of Great Price](#)

Commentary copyright © 1992-2016 [Church of the Great God](#)
New International Version copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by [International Bible Society](#)