

will not do the job in bringing men to Christ and back to His service. I believe that if a man can look on the face of Christ on the Cross, and see the torment of God as the world trembles and shakes in the grip of an earthquake, and if that will not change his heart and life and cause him to dedicate himself to Christ, then there isn't much any preacher can do. And lost men will be won when they know that God loves them and when preachers and Christians prove they love them, too.

Your city is filled with people who for one reason or another have never publicly taken a stand for Jesus, they criticize the church, they hide behind a poor church member. But you remember this, whoever you are, you are going to be called upon one day to explain your actions before the same Christ whom you have denied publicly.

He shall stand at the right hand of your God and look full into your face while you try to tell God why you were ashamed of His Son and refused to let the world know that you loved Him, much less that you knew Him. The world desperately needs men and women who are not afraid to come out for Jesus, who are constrained by His love, bound by one purpose and that is to win this world to Christ.

The truest test of discipleship is the desire to tell someone else about Jesus.

Over and over again, I have listened to men and women who in the very act of trusting Christ the Saviour have continued that very prayer asking for mercy for someone else. A mother, a father, a husband, a wife, a son or daughter, a neighbor or friend, someone, and "oh, God:" they cry out, "now that you've saved me, please save my husband, please save my family, my mother or my father."

No wonder our old world drifts on battered, and bloody, and desperately looking for remedies. Our eyes are dry. We are constrained by His love to care what happens to others, much less to ourselves. Oh God, today, wherever men may be, may something happen within them that will cause them to live in the dimension of intensity, in the service of Christ. That they will have come to the place where they are not afraid to be called a fanatic, that they're not afraid to be called fools for Christ's sake, but realizing that men are dead in trespasses, realizing that Christ had died for the lost, and realizing that His love constrains us, we dare not stop.

Then we shall leave our work—the carpenter shall turn from his bench, the housewife from her table, the layman from his desk, the factory worker from his machine, and one and all shall witness to a lost world that Jesus died for us.

## **The Merchant**

**August 22, 1954**

The words in Matthew 13:44-46, although brief, give us some interesting facts upon which we may do some prayerful thinking today. Read them.

I think Jesus knew this man. I think undoubtedly in the heart and mind of God there was some man that completely fulfilled this description. Jesus preceded the two verses with another story of a man with a wonderful experience. He said the kingdom of heaven was like unto a treasure that was hidden in a field, that which when a man has found it he hideth it, and for joy thereof he goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field.

Now these two men are very closely akin to one another. This farmer and his merchant, but there is an important difference. The man who found a treasure hidden in the field did not suspect that it was there; but going

about the business of ploughing and preparing that field for the crop, he came upon a treasure. The other man was in search of pearls, that was his business and he finally found the one pearl that surpassed them all.

### **The Decision**

There have been many unkind things said about a man in the scripture whose name was Thomas. He has been variously described as the absentee disciple, the doubter, and on and on. I have a genuine admiration for the man because of one incident in his life. It is that closing moment when he comes in and sees the risen Lord, looks full into his face, he sees the scars on the hands and the feet of Jesus, and without one instant of hesitation he says: "That's what I want, that's it. My Lord and my God." If that word were trans-

ated actually it would say: "Lord of me and God of me." I like that. I like that man because he met the moment and he made his decision and that settled it.

### **Pearl Buyer**

Now this story that I've read you this morning is equally as stirring. It's the story of a man who had made it his business in his youth to search for and buy pearls. He was a connoisseur of gems. He could recognize them instantly as real, as perfect, or not. He must have been an excellent merchant.

This man watched their flashing radiance and they captured his heart every time he saw one. But the one thing I believe about this man is that in spite of the fact that he bought many priceless and valuable pearls, all of the time he had a dream in the back of his mind that somewhere in this world there must be one pearl that exceeds them all. There must be one somewhere that's larger, more iridescent, more beautiful than any other pearl.

### **Christ—Our Pearl**

I believe in every man there is that portion of his soul that can never be completely satisfied outside of Christ, who is the pearl of greatest price. And I know that it is to that portion of a man that God makes His appeal every day of his life; that sooner or later he'll come face to face with greatest pearl, the incomparable Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I believe in every man's heart, EVERY man, that there's a dream that one day, some way, things are going to be made right between him and God. And I think when a man comes to the place where the things of the world are no longer satisfying, he becomes sick inside, restless and wonders if he'll ever find that which will satisfy his longing. I'm talking to men today who have experienced this peculiar nausea that comes to man when he knows that he has missed the one thing that he wants most of all.

Perhaps Lord Byron, the poet, summed it up best. A man who at the age of 32 had the world at his feet, perhaps the greatest poet in his day. Soon to die a tragic death, he wrote these words: "My life is in the yellow leaf, the cancer and worm is all I have." A young man, who though talented and gifted was a profligate. He failed to find the precious pearl, the greatest of them all, and life turned sour on him immediately.

I think that's what Isaiah was appealing to in chapter 55 when he turns to the people of Israel who have been very successful in their business life, says: "Why are you spending your money for that which satisfieth not? Why are you eating bread that really never kills your appetite? Why are you drinking water that never quenches your thirst?" It has never satisfied the heart of any man in this world. The only answer is Jesus Christ.

Many a man I have known is seeking to satisfy himself with the second best. Men are listening to me today who know that somewhere they have missed it all and they are sick inside, though they may be unwilling to admit it.

### **One Happy Life**

I want to tell you something—my entire ministry is based upon this belief. There is only one truly, happy life, and that is in CHRIST. No matter what else you feed on you are not going to be full, there's only one water of life, and no matter what else you drink you will never quench that thirst outside of Him.

Let me remind you that Jesus placed these parables side by side—the one of hidden treasure and the one of the pearl of great price—for a purpose. He was saying among many other things, some men find Christ unexpectedly. They find Him without having searched for Him particularly.

I had a man in the service who came one night because he said his mother had made him come. At the close of the service he came down the aisle with tears in his eyes and told me, "Pastor, becoming a Christian was the furthest thing from my mind when I came tonight," but the Holy Spirit had gotten a hold of his heart and in a moment's time he was converted.

### **Chance Meetings**

There are many instances in the Bible. The woman at the well who was trudging along, sick and tired, distraught and through, and she met Jesus. In an instant's time her life was transformed. Zaccheus was not searching for salvation. He climbed up in a tree one day, out of curiosity, I think, and his eyes met Jesus. When they met there took place a fusion that changed his life, and he came down out of that tree a man of faith.

I think that Paul was going down the road to Damascus, cursing under

his breath that these Christians were making it necessary for him to be out in the hot sun, when suddenly a flash of light from Heaven and a voice from eternity, and he met God right there.

And that's what Jesus said about the man of the field who was ploughing and unexpectedly found a treasure. I am talking to some people today who are saying: "Well, that's the way it will be with me, I'm sure it will. I'll be going about my business and I'm not going to pay any special attention to religious matters, and I'm not going to church, and I'm not reading the Bible, but one day, all of a sudden it'll happen to me."

My friend, I want to remind you that the instances of that occurring in the Bible are few, and the instances in which it has occurred in my ministry have been exceedingly few, and the Bible says: "Him that seeketh me earnestly, shall find me." Now don't forget that. And that's the reason that this story is told. This man was looking for a pearl of great price. He was searching for it. He looked everywhere for it, high and low, and one day he found it.

And, brother, that's the way it happened to me, and that's the way it happens to thousands upon ten thousands of others who are thirsting in their soul. They say, if I don't meet Him I'll die. If I don't find Christ as my Saviour, I don't see how I can live to see the morning sun.

### Must Own It

This parable teaches something else. It teaches that salvation cannot be ours until we make a personal appropriation of it. WE must own it. This man walked into a shabby shop one day or perhaps he was talking to a man on the dock at some seaport; and a man pulled a bag from his pocket and turned his back so the crowd could not see him and out of the bag he poured this one pearl.

It fell into the palm of his hand and when this pearl merchant saw it he almost quit breathing, his soul began to shout, his eyes flashed, and then that moment of tingling went through him such as he had never felt before. "This is the one I've been waiting for," he said, and seeing it was not enough; owning it was an absolute burning necessity.

He waited breathlessly and when the

owner set the price the pearl merchant rapidly calculated that if he took every pearl in the world, if he took his golden rings, if he took every treasure that he had and converted it into money, it would be enough to pay for the pearl. And do you know what happened to him? He went and did exactly that.

To say it was beautiful was not enough, it had to become his own. Jesus may be and is the bread of life, friend, but if you do not eat of Him you starve to death. He may be and is the water of life, but if you do not partake of him you will die of thirst. He is the saviour of the world, but if you never come to know Him you're lost. You must take Him and make Him your own.

### Worth Any Price

This merchant as he looked at that pearl suddenly became the poorest man in the world, though I am sure he was very wealthy. The value of what he owned died in the face of the value of the thing he so desperately wanted. It thrills me to the depths of my soul when I see this man not offering any silly excuses as to why he didn't buy it. He had said all his life, "that's what I want," and when he had met it face to face he did not offer some foolish, thin excuse. He didn't haggle about how much it cost, he didn't try to buy half of it. Do you realize that the pearl is the only gem that is never divided? It must be sold and worn as it is, and this man knew he had to pay the price. There was no waiting for it to be marked down.

I think he walked away that day with a radiance in his soul such as he had never known before, and he was glad he had paid the ultimate price, and he would have paid it 10 times more if it had been demanded. That's what he wanted more than life itself and he got it.

I'm ashamed of these Christians so called, who want everyone to know of the self-denial they've made as a result of becoming a Christian. I don't know the price you are asked to pay, but it doesn't begin to measure up to the cost of your salvation—the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. You should be radiant, and you should sing and be thrilled with it all. A man who comes to the place where he says that nothing is too much for him to pay, he has reached the spot where he is ready to be saved.

To the worldly, the Christian life is  
drum and dull, but to the born-  
again man who knows Jesus Christ as  
his Saviour, he's able to shout: "I've  
found the pearl of great price, and life  
is radiant with the realization of it all.  
Jesus, fairer than ten thousand, is the  
greatest treasure of them all. He's  
the incomparable Christ, philosophy's  
highest theme, theology's greatest pin-  
nacle, man's greatest good. He's the  
Saviour of the world, whose purity is

able to absorb your sin, whose blood  
is capable of washing out every stain  
from your soul, whose love is able to  
reach wherever you are and lift you up  
and make you whole.

There would never have been a sad-  
der picture in all the world, if that  
merchant had seen that pearl, turned  
and walked away. Will you do that to-  
day—will you be guilty of that kind of  
crime against yourself?

## **The Lawyer**

**August 29, 1954**

You must be born again.

The one to whom Jesus spoke these  
words was Nicodemus, who was un-  
doubtedly not only a lawyer but also a  
member of the Sanhedran, the supreme  
court of the Jewish nation.

In your imagination follow with me  
for a while as we go into Joseph's love-  
ly garden. Stand there behind one of  
the flowering shrubs, and watch as two  
men enter the gates, bearing as best  
they can the body of their dear friend.  
His body has already been wrapped  
and they carry it to a tomb where  
never one body did lie. The stone was  
rolled back from the door and a small  
rock placed under it to keep it from  
rolling back out of place, and the two  
men tenderly pick up their burden and  
carry it inside the darkened tomb,  
there they found the ledge over the side  
that had been hewn out of solid rock  
and there they laid the body of Jesus.

I do not know, but I think that as  
Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimethea  
stood there and looked down upon His  
still form, there must have raced  
through their mind the picture of the  
first time they had seen him. We are  
not sure of Joseph of Arimethea, but  
we are fairly sure of the first experi-  
ence of the man Nicodemus.

### **Nicodemus Knew**

Nicodemus had been in the city of  
Jerusalem and had been making great  
preparation for the Passover. Reading  
from John now: "The passover of the  
Jews was at hand and Jesus went up  
to Jerusalem and He found in the tem-  
ple those that sold oxen, and sheep  
and doves and He made a scourge of  
cords and He cast all of them out of  
the temple, both the sheep and the  
oxen, and He poured out the changers'  
money, and He overthrew their tables,

and to those that sold the doves He  
said: 'take these things hence, make  
not My Father's house of merchan-  
dise, and His disciples remembered that  
it was written "Zeal for thy house hath  
eaten me up."'"

Now skip to the first verse of the  
next chapter: "Now there was a man  
named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews,  
a Pharisee."

It's unfortunate to me that there's  
a chapter division there for I think  
John as he was writing was trying  
his best to carry through a thought  
that in the crowd that day in the tem-  
ple here was one whose eyes were fas-  
tened on Jesus. His name was Nico-  
demus.

As he and Joseph walked out of the  
tomb that night and rolled the stone  
into place, I think they went out and  
sat on a bench out under the sky. They  
sat quietly for a moment and then  
Nicodemus began to remember out-  
loud this first experience. He said to  
Joseph, "I watched him that day. At  
first he seemed to me to be nothing  
more than a peasant preacher. But the  
more I watched the more impressed I  
was with the things he did, because I  
too had become disgusted with the way  
the temple had become cluttered up  
with those stinking animals. I, too, was  
digusted with the way men had taken  
the house of God and made it into a  
house of merchandise. But, I had never  
had the courage to do what this young  
man did. I saw him stoop down and  
pick up the pieces of cord and plait  
them into a whip, and then he turned  
and lashed those who were near him,  
and drove them and the animals from  
the temple. I shall never forget it.

"I began to watch him as he healed,  
as he performed his miracles, as he  
preached that day, and as I watched