

“Great Value”

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Matthew 1: 1-2a, 13:45-46**

A snobbish tourist was visiting a small Australian village when he noticed a local man wearing a highly ornate necklace that featured 10 alligator teeth. He approached the man and in a condescending manner said, “Goodness, what a fancy necklace! I guess you people must value alligator teeth the same way my people value pearls.” The man replied, “Well, anyone can open up an oyster.”

Hold on! This isn't easy!

How about this? Last year a Philippine fisherman, following his house burning down, took something he found 10 years earlier while fishing – and showed it to someone who recognized its value. The fisherman had kept his find under his bed for good luck. Well, his find was a giant pearl – is the largest one, to date, found. It is one foot wide and 2.2 feet long. It is valued at \$100 million.

So much for alligator teeth!

Apparently – the value of pearls is consistent in the world history, dating back to at least 5,000 years ago in Egypt. From this recorded history – other civilizations follow suit in – imputing value in this gem of the sea.

No surprise – Jesus uses this gem in one of his stories, moral, parables; The Pearl of Great Price! Imagine: a very valuable, beautiful, great Pearl – would you not readily grasp it? Hold on to it? Realize its immense value? (Not like the Philippine fisherman – he must have missed his Sunday School class on Jesus and the Pearl of Great Value!

“...the Kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Short. To the point! What is the point? Jesus is focusing those gathered – “What is of primary importance, value to you?” what are you willing to commit yourself to, in your life?

This great find changes everything for the merchant! He doesn't want to collect a bunch of pearls, but when he finds that one, unique, special pearl, he has found his fulfillment, his kingdom, his reason for being!

So, what's your pearl – what's that great value that will guide your whole life? Not an insignificant decision, commitment!

This might help

I have three questions for you to ponder this morning.

1. What is important in your life?
2. Is what's important to you, worthy of your commitment?
3. If it is, what level of commitment are you involved in?

Today mediocrity is in the air.

It is all too easy to just “get by.” Isn't it? You do just what you have to do, and that's enough! Too often we cloud our days, our lives with “things to do” to keep us from actually focusing on what's important—really important.

Not to imply, or say that many of the things we do, and must be done, are not of some importance, but think of it this way: at some point in your life you stop, and take stock of your life, what you've done, what you've not done, what you wish you had done. You take a panoramic view of life.

This morning, give it a try. Perhaps, just perhaps, there are some changes that could (should) be made.

What's so important? Really.

That special someone.

Your spouse.

Your children.

Your job.

Your career.

Your house.

Your car.

Your dog, cat, ferret.

Monday night football.

These are all worthy (Well, most of them).

But underlying these or other important things, what's there? What vision, meaning, hope, undergirds your list of important things? Do you have any sense that you have grasped hold of something lasting, of prime importance in your life? Do you have a purpose that gives meaning to your life? Have you taken time to discuss this with yourself? Or have you been “too busy,” out of fear, to quiet yourself and inspect who you are? It's important!

Isaiah 49:4 reads, “I have labored to no purpose, I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing.” Don't let that happen. Job 7:6 “My life drags by—day after hopeless day. (Job 7:16) I give up: I am tired of living. Leave me alone. My life makes no sense.”

Friends, this is no way to live. It's not really living, is it? You see, we are not the first generation to feel alienated, hopeless, confused, lost. But, life can be filled with energy, vision, and purpose! That's what Jesus was declaring throughout his ministry. He was convinced that life has a purpose, a meaning and he devoted his life to that proclamation! Matthew, Mark, and Luke's Gospels are filled with this important belief. Jesus called it the Kingdom of God. We can also describe it as the way of life. Here is a belief, a position on life itself! This Kingdom of God is what we all desperately need. It

is the fulfillment of life. The Kingdom of God is precious! It encapsulates one's drive, one's focus for how to live! It's religious terminology for living a purposeful life!!

Over and over and over; again and again and again, Jesus declares that to live is to live toward the God of love, justice, peace, forgiveness, compassion, and hope! Again this is important stuff!! (If you really believe it) And many of us do! It's a way of life. No, it's the way of life!

Your daily routine, your daily "must dos," need a foundation, a vision, a purpose to give spirit, life to your existence. Paul put it this way, "I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead." You see, Paul finally was caught by Christ's Kingdom, Christ's vision for life. He was never a tepid sort! No way! Once he got a glimpse of this Kingdom of God, there was no turning back, lamenting the past, wallowing in past mistakes. No! Instead Paul got his focus. All of his energies were now devoted to this one thing, Christ's reign of love, and all that entailed. Everything else in his life was controlled, guided by this commitment. Family, friends, profession, work, play, all were immersed in this most important vision for life. And it made all the difference!!

Jesus is declaring that living according to God's Kingdom (the way of life) is the way to live. And choosing to live in this kingdom of great value will cost you everything. In other words, living Kingdom values will change your life—totally if you will allow it. Relationships. Business. Profession. All will come under the reign of Christ's call to love, justice, openness, and a wealth of other Kingdom values. You will see the world with different eyes. Probably most of you know what I mean. It's just good to be reminded. The Christian life has great potential. All you need to do is take that risk, give it your all, it's a treasure, it's a pearl of great value.

Again.

1. What is important in your life?
2. Is what's important to you, worthy of your commitment?
3. If it is, what level of commitment are you involved in?

What's Your Pearl?!

Amen.