

The pearl of great price

(Matthew 13: 45, 46)

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”

The emphasis is on the one pearl and its supreme value, and this of course represents divine Science. Our realization that Science is indeed the pearl of great price leads to our willingness to lay down all preconceived notions which were not wholly scientific and thus to purchase the joy of pure Science expressed in our life.

Unless the merchant in this parable of the pearl had throughout his career valued the lesser pearls in his possession, he would never have reached the point where he could recognize the one supremely valuable pearl and where his one desire was to sell all the less beautiful pearls in order to buy it. And so it is with any individual seeking Truth: unless he values the pearls gained from his spiritual longings and experience, he is not in a position to discern the pearl of great price or to give up all the concepts he has previously most cherished, in order to make it his own.

Many people who have been brought up with beliefs about Christian worship and life which have been very precious to them — they have been real pearls as far as they were concerned — have gladly relinquished them all when they have discovered Christian Science. They have “sold” all that formerly satisfied them, in order to “buy” the pearl of great price through understanding — “understanding, dearly sought, With fierce heart-beats” (Chr.53:16). They would agree with Mrs Eddy that Christian Science “is the pearl priceless whereof our Master said, if a man findeth, he goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth it. Buyeth it! Note the scope of that saying, even that

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Christian Science is not merely a gift, as St Paul avers, but is bought with a price, a great price; and what man knoweth as did our Master its value, and the price that he paid for it?" (Mis.252:31-5)

Anyone who is sincere in his desire to find the ways of good will be given those pearls which will equip him, as they did Mrs Eddy, for a higher discovery of God's allness. Without knowing it she had always been seeking the pearl of great price. She had led a life of unselfish devotion to good, dedicating herself to Christianity and the Bible and to healing through the best means she knew. All this led her up to that point of revelation where she glimpsed "Life in and of Spirit; this Life being the sole reality of existence" (Mis.24:17-18). Having come upon this pearl of great price, which all the lesser pearls in her possession had enabled her to value, she gave herself singlemindedly to its purchase. (See S&H 471:23-31.)

After her healing, which followed the inspiration of this revelation and which had come about through reading the words of Jesus to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee," she spent three years seeking the solution of the problem of Mind-healing, as she put it; she searched the Scriptures and "devoted time and energies to discovering a positive rule." She says, "I knew the Principle of all harmonious Mind-action to be God, and that cures were produced in primitive Christian healing by holy, uplifting faith; but I must know the Science of this healing, and I won my way to absolute conclusions through divine revelation, reason, and demonstration" (S&H 109: 11-12, 14-15, 16-22).

Many individuals have been healed through a sudden illumination, but then the shadows and the night have closed in upon it. Mrs Eddy, like Jacob, would not let the light go until it fully blessed her in its universal Science. Searching the Scriptures and above all the words and works of Jesus from her new standpoint, she found confirmation of what she had glimpsed when she was healed. Everything strengthened that original glimpse until it took form in rules and laws of the presence of God to the elimination of everything in opposition. That was Science, the pearl of great price. Whether you take Science in its divine definition as "the atmosphere of God" (No.9:26) or in its

human definition as quoted by Mrs Eddy from Webster (“knowledge, duly arranged and referred to general truths and principles on which it is founded, and from which it is derived”), its one theme is the allness of Spirit and the nothingness of matter. Mrs Eddy discarded everything else for the joy of paying the full price for the attainment of Truth. When she had once glimpsed the truth of perfect God and perfect man, perfect Principle and idea, she gave up all the lesser pearls of her previous learning.

She laid aside all the humanitarian methods of helping mankind which were pearls she had previously purchased and valued as being of the finest quality. She now saw that their basis was, first, the admission of error and then the attempt to overcome that error through good Christian effort. This had to be left behind in order to devote all her thought and endeavour to the realization of the one pearl of pure spiritual reasoning, unhampered by any admixture of belief in materiality. “It demands less cross-bearing, self-renunciation, and divine Science to admit the claims of the corporeal senses and appeal to God for relief through a humanized conception of His power, than to deny these claims and learn the divine way” (Ret.54:5-9). It was not toil-some to Mrs Eddy, but a matter of joyful consecration to the one supremely valuable ideal.

A pearl is created by friction inside the oyster. This points to the truth that the real pearls of life are not formed through easy living. They are not necessarily the outcome of moral goodness and may come into being from hard necessities. When an individual has travelled a rough path and then seen that which gives him clear-cut answers and the perfect provision of everything he has always longed for, he recognizes the pearl of great price and goes all out for it.

He who was called a “friend of publicans and sinners” was aware that among their number were those who would value the pearl he had, because they had already gained some pearls of understanding of life along the rougher paths, and this had given them some appreciation of real values. This was outstandingly so in the case of Mary Magdalene. The hard facts of life had driven her to make a living out of being a harlot, but if she had been merely a harlot, with her only

desire to make money out of men, she would not have been the Magdalen. Her profession was only a necessity of living with her, and she was led up to seeing the real way of meeting her necessities of life and seeing the real necessity of living. She had worked in an area of experience where there could only be pain, sorrow, and disappointment and so these frictional qualities must have caused her to long for and thus be able to recognize that which was exalted above such things. When at last she heard of and found herself near an individual of "undoubted goodness and purity, who has since been rightfully regarded as the best man that ever trod this planet" (S&H 364:1-3), she recognized the pearl of great price. Then she demonstrated how much her experience had prepared her not only to recognize it, but also to give up everything for it, including her source of income, and go through all barriers, the chief of which would have been her self-condemnation. The earnest student needs to recognize this barrier and dismiss it immediately with a conviction that a perfect Principle can only have a perfect idea as its expression. All such barriers were thrown down by Mary at the feet of the man who represented the purest and loveliest pearl which has yet been found by men.

Unless we see the value of the pearl of great price, we shall cling to the pearls we already have, because they will still seem to us a nice string to hang around our neck and so we shall have no wish to exchange them.

The rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-22) exemplified that state of thought which is unwilling to sell its "goodly pearls" for the one pearl of great price, because it has not discerned its value. He "went away grieved" when Jesus advised him to sell all that he had (all his pride in human goodness, symbolized by his obedience to the Commandments) and "give to the poor." He was not ready to give up all his lesser standards and leave them to those who believe they need to think in terms of poverty because they cling to process and improvement from an imperfect basis. The whole teaching of the Christ seemed too explosive to the good human standards which the young man represented at that time. The Christ standard admits no process towards perfection, and Jesus saw that this rich young ruler was qualified

to follow that absolute standard, although he did not choose to do so. We can liken him to anyone who clings to the belief that a man cannot be healed until he improves, for instance, in his expression of love. That is a "goodly pearl," but the pearl of great price demands the taking up of the challenge of seeing that he is already loving *now*, because he is wholly spiritual now and wholly expressing spiritual qualities. Is it not our educated belief in process and in human goodness on a material basis which prevents instantaneous healing being more common in our experience?

This is a parable which makes clear Principle's preparation of its child for the reception of its supreme gift. It cuts right across every walk of life, every vocation, every seeking, every desire, every form of honesty, thoroughness, and love, and shows that all those who have some spiritual gleams and glimpses of the infinite, whether born of spiritual culture or of the pangs of necessity and longings, will have some pearls of character and understanding and will be led to discern the pearl of great price, or divine Science.

Two arguments which may present themselves should be watched against. First, an individual may feel that he has not sufficient "goodly pearls" in his character-formation and his understanding to qualify him to recognize the pearl of great price and, secondly, that even if he did recognize it, he would not be prepared to stir himself to purchase it. The facts are that *everyone* has the "goodly pearls," for everyone reflects and expresses intelligence, love, understanding, and so forth. These are the "goodly pearls." If anyone has not discovered that he has these pearls, he can do so at once by being honest with himself and realizing that God made him and therefore made him complete in all the qualities of manhood and womanhood. Secondly, he can admit that not only has he these qualities but also by every true instinct wishes to improve their expression, so that he does not fall into the unhappy and disappointing position described by Paul, "the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do;" he will be helped not to do so if he acknowledges that all the qualities he has in character are spiritual and spiritual alone and also that his whole being longs to see a higher and better expression of those qualities in his

daily living, to the benefit of himself and all who come within the radius of his cognizance. Everyone by instinct recognizes and is drawn to the pearl of great price, the ability to express Science in its perfection and through this expression to have it demonstrated here on earth. These things are not in the hands of man to have or not to have. They are mandatory with Principle and Principle's expression of itself, and for true happiness and health a full acceptance of these facts has to be made and a full response to all that they require.

In order to possess the pearl of great price we have to exchange the lesser "goodly pearls" whose standard has previously seemed sufficiently high. The concepts of human kindness we have cherished hitherto must now be relinquished for a higher ideal; "there must be a change from human affections, desires, and aims, to the divine standard, 'Be ye therefore perfect'" (Mis.50:20-22). For instance, we may always have felt that we have a loving nature and that we feel for others. This can be exchanged for response to the higher demand that our love is shown in seeing only perfection. We cannot truly love someone if we admit imperfection. The only true understanding of another is *spiritual* understanding, the understanding of the other individual as perfect because he is Principle's expression of itself. The exchange needed in every case is the upvaluing of spiritual qualities from the level of their good human activity into the exactness of their divine requirement.

"Seek Truth, and pursue it. It should cost you something; you are willing to pay for error and receive nothing in return; but if you pay the price of Truth, you shall receive *all*" (Mis.342:24-27).

If through love of the spiritual any man increases the value of the pearls which are his, he will be led to the ability to have the same Mind "which was also in Christ Jesus" — to approximate a perfect expression of a perfect Principle. Mrs Eddy was able to exchange her many "goodly pearls" for a very high sense of the perfect expression of a perfect Principle — as near as one can get to it in the flesh. She points out that John the Revelator saw "a new heaven and a new earth" while on our plane of existence. Through his love and pursuit of the truth which his Master had taught him, he was led to the "out-

of-this-world" experience which enabled him to see that "new heaven and new earth" where harmony reigns and there is "no more sea" of turbulent thinking. Anyone who has even glimpsed such a thing is willing to give up all other forms of reasoning except that which proceeds from perfect Principle and perfect idea.

At that point a man does not possess the pearl of great price, but this pearl of consciousness possesses him. He is possessed by the Christ Mind, the Mind which embraced Jesus' mind, outlook, and understanding until he could say to Philip, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father," because he had learnt how to be fully embraced by the divine Mind to the elimination of everything else.

He who longs to discern and be able to buy the pearl of great price will be encouraged by seeing that it is not a question of waiting inertly for final admission to the precincts of holiness, but of actively admitting the presence of pure spiritual good and building up such admissions and the realizations of what they mean in an ascending purposefulness, until ultimately all consciousness is directed that way and ceases to be able to be directed in any other way.

"When loving, we learn that 'God is Love' " (Message 1902, 8:6-7). If it is through loving and learning what love is that we discern the truth that God is Love, this applies to all the other synonymous terms for God. The important point for the student to accept is that he has the "goodly pearls" and needs only to bring them out and polish them through usage. This in itself can give him a true sense of wealth, such as the merchant obviously had. It enables him to discover that he can exchange all lesser ideals for the one ideal of supreme value — Spirit's onliness, matter's nothingness, and the perfection of Principle and idea. That pearl is his, because it is him, and he knows it if only he will allow himself to do so.

Any individual who recognizes what it means to be a good man or, better still, a good Christian Scientist and longs to attain to this can realize that in his longing he is actually looking at himself and what he already is, for the saying "What thou seest, that thou beest" is true. All that such an individual has to do is to break down the distance defined by his longing and see that he is not looking at himself "out

there," but being told by Principle to recognize that desirable self as already here and to enjoy the realization of this fact, working out *from* it instead of *towards* it. That is what the Master taught and practised, for this *is* the Science of being.

There are certain simple rules to be gathered by the student from this parable. One is to recognize that he has the goodly pearls of genuine character, such as kindness, love, joy, and so forth, and let nothing suggest to him that he has not. But having accepted that he has these pearls, he like the merchant should burnish them in readiness for the exchange for the pearl of great price — in other words, practise in his daily life to the best of his ability all that is defined by those goodly pearls and do so more than he has ever done before. This activity will reveal to him the value and the certainty of the presence of that pearl of great price — divine Science — and will also equip him both to understand the demands it makes on him and also fulfil those demands.