

## THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Near the end of Matthew 13 Jesus said that the kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Do you comprehend just how great this pearl of great price is? Tonight I want to talk about what this pearl of great price is and what it should mean to you and me?

My first introduction to the church was when I picked up this magazine, the December 1983 issue of the Plain Truth on a newstand on a trip out to Ipswich with my mother. Having a healthy interest in astronomy, the title "Yes, there is life out there!" grabbed my attention. It was interesting but it wasn't till I picked up another issue at another newstand at Garden City that God really got my attention. It was this issue of February 1984, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of the Plain Truth. I was 14 years old at the time. The Cold War was still going at the time between Russia and America. As a teenager in the 80's I was absolutely frightened to death by the prospect of nuclear war and that fear was heightened even further by TV shows such as the Prophecies of Nostrodamus and the Day After.

It was this article on the World Tomorrow "Yes: A Brighter Tomorrow is Coming!" and the hope of God's kingdom – the pearl of great price – that changed my life! In the article it said: "Can you imagine a world where nations live at peace? Where not one dollar is budgeted for defense? Where no family has to worry about sons and daughters being sacrificed on a battlefield? Where words like tank, battleship, bomb, warhead and holocaust are only in the vocabulary of historians?

"This is prophesied for nations that will choose to follow God's way of life. And can you believe a world where drought need never affect a crop? Where hunger is unheard of? Where floods never destroy homes? Where rain falls in due season? Where food supplies are more than adequate to support the population of the entire world? The fantastic world tomorrow will not be a result of politics, science or technology. It will not be by blind chance either. Man will not just accidentally stumble on the way of peace. It will come from one source, and one source only. The Eternal God will intervene in the affairs of men. He will send Jesus Christ to bring world peace."

The author went on to quote many of the Old Testament prophecies to back this up and I immediately sent away for Mr Armstrong's book "The Wonderful World Tomorrow". Not long after I sent away for the Incredible Human Potential where Mr Armstrong laid out the phenomenal plan of God from start to finish to reproduce Himself through mankind explaining how those of us in the church now will be able to help Christ to transform this world as members of the God family with all the powers of God Himself and that the whole universe beyond that then waited for us. To say that my mind was blown away was an understatement and right there and then you could say I signed on the dotted line and I was all in regardless of whatever cost I had to pay. I felt just like Paul when he said that NOTHING in this life is worthy to be compared to what God is offering us in return. The thought of ever giving it away has never even entered my mind since.

God's great Master plan is truly amazing and shows the profound depths of His love. A friend of mine calls this plan of salvation, where God plans to bring us lowly dust of the ground into His Family, as the "Clod to God Program". It's a pretty apt description. This incredible potential is being offered by God to you and me if we choose to live by His way of life, develop godly character and endure to the end! It's utterly amazing that God is reproducing Himself through us and wants to share His wonderful God level of existence with each and every of us!

It was this good news of God's coming Kingdom and the future beyond that brought me into the church so that's why it means so much to me.

Our young people I feel should be actively encouraged to dream more about the World Tomorrow and have that big picture focus because the more real it can become to them the less prone they'd be to giving up and leaving the church because when the full magnitude of how great this pearl of great price is sinks in, it changes you – it's so hard to walk away from it. When I see people leave the church or drift away I find myself thinking that the grandness of the pearl of great price didn't sink in with them and that makes me sad when they don't catch that vision. Proverbs 29:18 says: "Where there is no vision the people perish."

I feel an important part of preaching the gospel needs to be helping people catch this unbelievable vision and exciting people about this incredible future – this unbelievable destiny we can have in God's kingdom and family. The more we are excited about this amazing future the more we'll want to share it with others and for others to be a part of it!

In a sermonette on baptism I made the point that it is good to count the cost as the Bible tells us to do but what is better is to count the reward. Look out at what you'll miss out if you don't commit to God. Imagine what it'll be like to help Jesus Christ with the awesome job of fixing this world up and creating the wonderful world tomorrow here on earth and then on out into the universe? This is what God is offering us if we are prepared to commit to Him and endure to the end! Overcoming, repentance and baptism are all important because they are our passport to the World Tomorrow and being a part of that better resurrection. It says in 1 Corinthians 2:9 that, "Eye has not seen, nor ear has heard, nor has entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

As life's pressures build we need all the encouragement we can to get through life and dreaming about the wonderful things God has prepared for us helps us keep our mind on the big picture and give us that encouragement and vision.

Let's let the full magnitude of that pearl of great price truly sink in and excite us to the max and let's help as many other people catch that great vision too.