

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

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Readings: Genesis 29:1-28; Matthew 13:45-46

There is a truly conjugal love, or true marriage love, which today is so rare that people do not know what it is like, and scarcely that it exists (Conjugal Love 57).

Both of the stories I just read to you have something in common, something very special that the Lord wants each one of us to know about. They both teach us that we can find something so precious and so beautiful that we are in awe of it. And we can have this beautiful thing, if we are willing to do what it takes and to work as hard as we can.

In the story from the New Testament, there was a merchant who was collecting pearls. You may have seen pearls—they are beautiful round gems that we take out of oysters. They are formed by a piece of sand getting into the oyster and rubbing, so that it forms layer upon layer of a white substance until you get a beautiful pearl that shines in the light. People often make jewelry out of them.

This merchant collected pearls, and he was always looking for the best. One day, he saw a pearl that was of great price, which means that it was very expensive. It was so beautiful and so important to him that he was moved. He might have thought to himself, “Look at that! This is the one I have been waiting for. This is the one I have searched for all my life!” He sold everything he owned in order to buy that pearl, and he was happy. His life was complete.

Now think about the story of Jacob. Jacob was searching for a bride and was sent to the land of his relative, far away. He had never been there before. When he came to this place, he suddenly saw Rachel and fell in love with her immediately. He knew that she was the one for him.

Do you remember that there was a big rock over the well where he saw her? Some people were waiting there for everyone to gather. They were waiting because the rock over the well was very heavy. They needed everyone to lift the rock together so that they could give water to their flocks of sheep. But when Jacob saw Rachel, he went over to the well and rolled the rock away all by himself for her. Then he came to her and kissed her and wept because he was so happy he had found her.

What happened next? Jacob agree to work for Rachel’s father, Laban, and in return Laban promised that he could marry Rachel. But Laban tricked Jacob. In the middle of the marriage ceremony, when it was dark and the women had veils on, Laban brought his older daughter, Leah, to Jacob. The next morning

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Jacob woke up and found out that he had married Leah instead of Rachel who he loved. He had just worked seven years for Rachel. But Laban told him that in his country the older daughter must be married first.

Now in those days, it was the custom that a man could have more than one wife. So Laban told Jacob that if he would work for him for another seven years, he could marry Rachel as well. Jacob knew that he had been tricked. Some people might have gotten angry, walked away, gone back home. But Jacob decided that he would stay and work for Rachel. He loved Rachel so much that he worked another seven years for her.

The Lord tells us that heaven is like that. Heaven is a beautiful place. It is like a beautiful person we fall in love with. In fact the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church talks about this beautiful love, which it calls “conjugal love”. This love is like a pearl. It is like finding Rachel. The Lord promises us that two people can love each other so much that they can have a life together that lasts all the way into heaven. Like a pearl though, there is a lot of agitation while this love is being formed. Like Jacob, sometimes it takes a lot of work to have that kind of love. But it can happen.

The Lord is presenting us with beautiful things in our lives all the time. For example, you might be reading about angels and think to yourself, “Someday I can be an angel.” Is that true? Absolutely. That goal can be like the merchant’s beautiful pearl of great price. You see that it is worth everything. So you decide, “I will do whatever the Lord teaches to be that angel. I will do whatever the Lord says to be a good person.”

You might also wonder about what the Lord wants you to do in this world. And the Lord is going to show you this as you grow up. There are many things you can do to help people. You might be a good listener. You might be good at music. You might be good with your hands. Think of all the things you are good at. The Lord is telling you, “This is what you will give to the world.” When you see what you can do, you will work hard so that it can happen.

The same is true of the friendships we have and of marriage. If you want to have a good marriage, you should learn to be a good person, pray for a partner, obey the Word, and shun lusts. Then you will receive a partner, if not in this world, then in the world to come. This is the promise that the Lord gives to each one of us.

All of these things are hard work, and things will not always go the way you think they will. But when we see the beautiful treasures the Lord lays before us, we should do whatever it takes to attain them, working hard, following the Lord, and trusting in Him. Then those treasures will be ours forever.

Amen.