



# THE 'GOODLY' PEARL OF HEALING

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**THE GOODLY PEARL PARABLE** is a simple one, but what it reveals about the substance of the kingdom of heaven can make a meaningful difference in healing.

In telling the parable, Jesus said, "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" (Matt. 13:45, 46). During Jesus' time, a perfect pearl was worth an incredible sum. A yellow tinge or a shape that was not perfectly round and smooth diminished the value of the pearl. There were many inferior pearls, so a goodly pearl was of special value. Back then, the pearl was thought to have been conceived by a fish from the dews of heaven. The quality of dew determined whether it was pure and round or cloudy and deformed. So the parable hints that the pearl wasn't just a beautiful material treasure, but a pure, divine substance. The merchant then was truly seeking spiritual substance, and when he found it, the only way he could possess it was to dispose of everything else. In other words, he had to give up his material substance for spiritual substance; he couldn't possess both.

While the parable doesn't say where the merchant man found the goodly pearl, Jesus said those seeking the kingdom of heaven would find it where they are. Jesus also said that the kingdom is "at hand" and "within." From these statements, we may conclude that the true substance of our being is already—and always—present, defining our being right now.

What does the "pearl of great price" substance include? The word *substance* has two parts, "sub" and "stance." "Sub" means under and "stance" means stand or standing. Therefore, the underlying concept of substance is understanding. One dictionary defines *understand* as "to have just and adequate ideas of." This means that true substance is really an abundance of right ideas or thoughts. These true ideas are pure, indestructible, beautiful, useful, orderly, immutable, perfect, and infinite. Right ideas do not originate in us, but in God, Mind—the source of all spiritual ideas or thoughts. Made in the image and likeness of God, we are the individual expressions of all the

qualities of Mind, reflecting the divine substance. Mary Baker Eddy writes further about this when she says, "[Man] reflects God as his Mind, and this reflection is substance,—the substance of good" (*Retrospection and Introspection*, p. 57). The substance we reflect is as eternal and complete as its source, divine Mind.

Realizing our true substance of being is like finding the goodly pearl. And when we find it, we naturally give up matter, or the material misconception of substance. Explaining this, Mary Baker Eddy wrote, "When the substance of Spirit appears in Christian Science, the nothingness of matter is recognized" (*Science and Health*, p.480). Since the kingdom of heaven is infinite and its substance is divine, there is no room left for its opposite, matter. That's because Spirit, or true substance, fills all space.

In times when substance in our lives appears to be diseased, limited, or hurt, we can know that what appears as discordant substance is really a mentally material state. In *Science and Health*, Mrs. Eddy explained, "Whatever is cherished in mortal mind as the physical condition is imaged forth on the body" (p.411). Since a physical condition is merely a false sense of substance, when this false sense of substance disappears, the physical condition disappears, too. Healing, then, is like finding the goodly pearl—exchanging the false sense of substance for the true sense of substance.

When substance is understood as an abundance of right ideas, we see it instantly evident in the very way that is required because God's ideas are ever present. Instantaneous healing happens because there is no matter to be made better, only a misapprehension of substance to be enlightened by the Christ, Truth, which voices the true substance of our being. This fact has proved practical in my own experience.

One morning, I inadvertently grabbed my curling iron by the hot barrel instead of the handle. I quickly dropped the curling iron and turned to prayer. My thought turned back to a few days before when I had gained a clear sense of spiritual substance while studying the Bible story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. These three Hebrews were bound up and thrown into a fiery furnace because they refused to bow down to the golden idol that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up for all to worship. When the king looked into the furnace, he saw four men walking freely in the midst of the fire. The fourth man appeared to be the Son of God, and the flame was not burning any of them. The king then asked Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to come out of the fire. When they came

out, they had not been touched by the flames—and not a hair was singed nor was the smell of fire on them (see Dan., chap. 3). What a powerful example of what understanding true substance can do for one's well-being! Truly, they found the "pearl of great price."

I found it interesting that right in the midst of the fire was what the king described as the "Son of God" walking. I likened that to the activity of the Christ voicing the fact that the three Hebrews—and we—can never be in a destructive environment, but dwell in the kingdom of heaven, where true substance is indestructible and spiritual. It's like the example of someone holding the thought of an intricate, beautiful snowflake and then walking into a hot sauna. Would the snowflake melt? Of course not! As an idea, the snowflake is untouched by any destructive environment. Our true substance of being is safe in infinite Mind, the kingdom of God, and is therefore incapable of being altered by another so-called force.

Along with this Bible story, I had thought deeply about a passage from *Science and Health*, which says, "You say, *I have burned my finger.*' This is an exact statement, more exact than you suppose; for mortal mind, and not matter, burns it. Holy inspiration has created states of mind which have been able to nullify the action of the flames, as in the Bible case of the three young Hebrew captives, cast into the Babylonian furnace; while an opposite mental state might produce spontaneous combustion" (p. 161).

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With the Hebrew boys, it wasn't so much the hot furnace, but their thought about where they were and who they were that made the difference. In turn, the holy inspiration of the Christ rendered the flames harmless. So in my own experience it wasn't the hot iron, but what I thought about true substance and my place in the kingdom, that would bring freedom from any pain or discord. I likened this inspired view to seeking the goodly pearl. Knowing that my true substance was indestructible, I was able to set aside my false sense of substance and listen to what God was telling me about my true selfhood.

As I prayed with these ideas, I realized that what burns is not a material force of heat, but mortal thought. If it is the heat of flames that burns, there was no undoing that force, but if it is mortal thought that burns, then that thought can be redeemed with the Christ-idea that declares that true substance is spiritual. It was then evident to me that matter had no power or intelligence to cause any pain or any physical condition. It was thought alone that determined if my hand was burned.

Continuing to pray, I acknowledged that my only substance was spiritual and that it was comprised of spiritual qualities and right ideas. These qualities of honesty and right ideas of joy and wisdom were in Mind and could not be burned or harmed. The only real power and force of the universe was of God, good—the force of harmony, holding everything in order. There was simply no room for any opposing force. I affirmed that in God, Principle, there were no accidents, and that there was never a moment where God's law of wisdom and harmony were not in operation. In my prayers, I was taking to heart something Mary Baker Eddy wrote: "Remove error from thought, and it will not appear in effect" (*Science and Health*, p. 40).

I prayed until I felt every material misconception of substance had disappeared, and then headed to my office. Despite placing my hand on a hot curling iron, there was no pain and there was never any evidence whatsoever of a burn. Understanding my true substance of being removed any effects, and in those few moments of prayerful communion, the pearl of great price was sought and found.

Jesus' parable teaches a very important lesson: There's nothing more valuable than the pearl of true substance. Though at times our substance may appear to be a tinged, irregular pearl, we can know that the only substance we can ever truly have is divinely pure and ever present. So whether we face diminishing finances, failing health, or any limitation, each one of us has the precious opportunity to see and find true substance, the "goodly" pearl, that brings healing.

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