

The Pearl of Great Price

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great price, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.” Matthew 13:45-46

The wonderful gift of “*aionian*” or “*age-abiding*” life (usually mistranslated as “*eternal*”) escapes many so-called “born-again” Christians. When we view our reward as something external to us, something that we receive after death in a faraway place called Heaven, we miss out on the joys of Heaven within that are available to us right now.

An interesting analogy would be Jesus’ parable about the “*pearl of great price*.” When we read this parable, many of us might view it as some sort of treasure hunt. Somewhere, in the depths of the ocean, lies an oyster, with a beautiful pearl inside. In order to find it, we would need to rent a boat, perhaps hire a guide, and diligently scour the ocean bottom in search of it. The search for this pearl could be very long and arduous, and very few would be able to find it.

My theological studies over the past few years have led me to the understanding that each of us has a hidden identity as a child of God. In the deepest recesses of our consciousness, we are all intimately connected with God. The oyster that contains the pearl of great value is not to be found somewhere at the bottom of the ocean. Instead, we are the oyster, and the pearl actually lies within us. To find it, we need to look within.

Christian salvation is not an instantaneous event, based solely on a one-time confession of faith whereby we ask an external God to come to us and dwell within us. In my view, salvation should be visualized as a process of discovering our true identity as children of God, already redeemed by Christ. It is the process of discovering and experiencing the Kingdom of God (ie. the rule of Christ) that already exists within us. God loves us unconditionally before we become saved in our conscious awareness. It is not God who changes when we experience salvation. Instead, it is we who change. We don’t have to be anxious about whether or not we qualify by our faith or works for salvation. We don’t have to worry about the timing of it, or how long it might last. All of us are loved and accepted by God, just as we are, right now. All that remains for us to do is recognize it and experience it.