

TEXT – 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.”*

When our Lord spoke this parable to the people, all scribes and Pharisees, and all of the devout Jews all roundabout were horrified. This offended the Jews to no end, because the pearl comes from the oyster and the oyster under the Jewish law was regarded as an unclean animal. Who was this man who was telling them that out of an unclean living being could come a great treasure? Our Lord of course was testifying to them that while they were unclean in their own being, and the same applies to us today, we can never become a treasure. We have to go through a cleansing process. He was telling them that the Kingdom of God would be like that great pearl, and He was testifying that He would bring into the world the teachings, the way He would be the head, but there would have to be also in this life a living being or a living organism that could bring about the way and show the door to this Kingdom of God. Revelation Chapter 21 verses 19-22, the city that will become the Kingdom of God: *“And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire, the third, chalcedony, the fourth, an emerald, The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz, the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it”*. If we follow that description and we relate it back to our Lord's teachings, all those treasures and all those valuable stones, none of them are living. They are all metals that have been created down through the years through the acts of God. There was only one living treasure described there and that was the pearl, the gate or the entry into this city where the light of God will shine at all times. Therein we see that our Lord was testifying of a way, a living way that we could go and become part of this. He was testifying of the Church that He would establish on this earth and it could be the means of showing the way, providing access to those doors to allow us in.

We then have to contemplate on how the pearl is created. Firstly it needs the oyster which we have already heard under the Jewish law was regarded as an unclean animal. We are all in that situation. We are unclean until we are redeemed through the Grace of Christ. The oyster is not an animal that moves from place to place seeking and looking and trying to find a better place. It sets itself firmly on a rock. We the Church must set ourselves firmly on the rock of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We must not move to other places thinking that they will be more prosperous, that they will be better for us, that we will receive more from following this around. The rock of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will be the only thing that will hold firm no matter what happens. The oyster does not travel around looking for its food. It sits and waits patiently, opening its doors so that God can provide it with its sustenance. That sustenance comes through the water being distributed through it back and forth, and it is the same with the Church. The water of the Holy Spirit has been given unto us to feed us with the proper things in life. This water will always come. Every now and then a grain of sand will come which is an obstacle, which is something that gives us pain we might say. That is not the kind of thing that we would look for, and so it is within the Church. Many things come within the Church that we think are objectionable; but does the oyster throw it out - No. Through the Grace of Christ it takes that objectionable thing and it works on it, and it coats it in a coating, a white coating, a coating of righteousness, and this then becomes a shining precious pearl that others can look upon and wish that they also could be partakers of this. That is why our Lord said - We must never judge in this life. 'Judge not, and ye shall not be judged.' We must show mercy, we must show compassion, we must show love, we must follow His example. We must treat everyone as having God within them and we must never reject. We must always try and encase them, lead them to the Grace of Christ so that they too can become another pearl, another door, showing the way into this great kingdom that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has prepared for us. We are blessed. We have received the Word of God over many years. We understand the blessings, but there are many out there in the oceans as grains of sand that are flowing here and flowing there, and they have not yet lodged within this home or within this living creature that can bring about a peace and contentment and beauty that they cannot find within the world. We must constantly be aware of the obligation to tell others of this wonderful way into this Kingdom of God.

Apostle Cliff Flor  
North Queensland.

TEXT – 1 Timothy 2: 1.

*“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.”*

Paul reminded Timothy - his own son in the faith (I.Tim 1,2) - regardless of anything else to set priorities for a lively prayer activity in the community. It is all about the 'Breath of Faith': the prayer, the communication, the dialogue with the Triune God. Only through this can a Christian community survive. It is just like the human organism, breathing is a vital necessity. Once the breathing stops due to a life-threatening incident, death is inevitable, if no appropriate action is applied. Our body requires oxygenous air to keep the blood circulation and the organs intact for life to function.

A Christian community, even the whole church can only stay intact respectively keep functioning if a **lively prayer life** is in place and being practised. Most of all it is salutary and vital for God's people to breathe in 'Divine Oxygen' through the prayer, so that their (ecclesiastical) blood circulation is pulsating and the organs (officers, helpers, community members) of the Body of Christ are filled with Godly Life by the Holy Ghost. And that makes it wonderful, comforting and keeps us strong in the faith when HE fills us with his life saving breath through His Spirit when we talk to God. Then our tired soul is revived to new life. Just as a candle goes out without a supply of oxygen, it is just as likely that our light of faith will soon go out (suffocate) when the breath of faith wanes or stops altogether. And sometimes as in the present we become very "short of breath". That is why the appeal of Apostle Paul regarding our Christian existence is of the highest priority to remain **unwavering in our prayers** (Romans 12:12).

Almost everyone in our society has a mobile phone. But for some it is used to pass the time, a toy or has even become an addiction. But the mobile phone should be a motivating reminder in regards to our prayers, in all places, at any time and in all situations to connect with God, our **Lord**. And how and for whom shall I pray to God?:

- The first priority is to **pray** to the living God, to worship and praise HIM (Ps. 95:6)1 - To pray to God in a **thanksgiving** prayer for all HE is giving us!
- To reveal to God **all** our concerns (problems, poverty, illness, unemployment etc.) and beseech and plead in a fervent prayer.
- To pray to God for **intercession** (for members of the family, fellow men, strangers, non-believers, the persecuted, the unpleasant and even for enemies etc.)!
- But also **thanksgiving** prayers for God's help for others.
- **Intercession** for the own community, for the whole church and all of Christianity, some of which are suffering from persecution worldwide!
- **Intercession** for the ungodly society!
- **Intercession** for the government, politicians and for the nation and fatherland!
- **Intercession** for the suffering creation which is longing for the manifestations of the sons of God! (Rom. 8:19)
- And **intercession** for true peace for this world which is shaken up by prevailing evil!

And if the Christian community tries to cultivate such a life of prayer, it will be good, truthful, and agreeable to God our Saviour! The aim of the LORD our God is that all people get the help they need and that they will recognize the understanding of truth (Verse 4).

When praying to God you should not forget that it should be done **in the name of Jesus Christ** because the Son of God with His Father in heaven is the **true mediator** of our prayers (John 14:13).

It was and is surely an important commandment for all times to build a "**prayer front**" against the powers of darkness because that is the only way to disarm Satan. That is the reason why Paul begged the brothers (and sisters) in his letter to the Romans to support his fight in their prayers (Rom. 15:30).

The old saying "ora et labora" (pray and work) has not lost its relevance to the present. It should still be our beneficial life motto. In all our prayers, intercessions, and supplications the request in our Lord's prayer "**Thy will be done**" must remain dominant to keep us from misinterpreting God the Almighty LORD not as some fulfiller of our wishes.

As Christians let us remain strong and persevere by "breathing in deeply" our faith and there will always be a happy and thankful sigh of relief. And then, in the spirit of Paul, we will also be "**real sons and daughters**" in the faith.

**Ready - let's go: Oxygen" into the Lungs" and off to Work"!**

Apostle Frank Volkmer (Since retired)  
Germany.

TEXT -Matthew 5:42.*"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."*

This teaching of Christ was bought back to me in a recent conversation with a retired farmer who had been a pioneer in his field. He was commenting on the changes he had noticed over the many years, not only in the methods and technology, but in the attitudes of other farmers, neighbours etc. He noted that as a young boy on the land with his father, they started with nothing but a will to make it, and all their neighbours for miles around, were in the same boat. All were equal, had nothing in material things, and because of this, each were prepared to lend to each other the things that they did have and to help each other, and more importantly, to ask each other for help. Because of this, a close relationship developed and they seemed to all be blessed and benefited by this attitude. These blessings were granted them because they were obeying Christ's commandments. Rev. 22:14. *"Blessed are they that do his commandments."* As these blessings multiplied, he said everyone became more independent and acquired many farm products, even to the extent of keeping up with the Jone's attitude. Slowly came the attitude that "I don't need any help", and as a result no one fulfilled the first part of our text. No one asked anymore and even worse, even though there were times when things could have been lent, for fear of being turned away, people forgot how to ask. Because of this simple break down to Christ's commandments, attitudes changed and it was only in extreme hardships of drought, fire, flood, dear times, and calamities, that neighbours were drawn together.

When we reflect on this, no matter what our station in life is, we probably can all relate to this. We can all remember some time in our life when we really needed something, but because of pride, we would not ask to borrow it from someone else. Or perhaps we had made up our mind before asking, that we would be refused and we were not going to give anyone the satisfaction of refusing us. We also begin to think of our possessions as ours, and not something we were allowed to obtain or more correctly on loan from God, and anyway, what if the borrower does not return it? Of course, God will have the final say in such matters as in Psalm 37:21-22. *"The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth. For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off."* This independent attitude in our natural life, can also lead us to adopt the same attitude in our Spiritual life. We begin to also break other commandments of our Lord. Matt. 7:7. *"Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."* We begin to forget to even ask of the Lord His blessings. Matt. 11:28. *"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."* We think we can go it alone.

In the world we live to-day, there is one possession or blessing that we have that we should consider in light of our text, and be prepared to ask, to borrow from others, and be prepared to lend to others, and that is TIME. As married couples, we must lend and be prepared to ask for time one to another; as parents, we must be prepared to give this time to our children; as teenagers, we must share our time with our parents and friends. We see many lonely people in the world, we must all be prepared to lend some of our time to those, and if we feel alone, we must be prepared to ask for time. We can lend time to the sick, the sorrowing, those that are distressed in any way. If we become more conscious in our lives and start with time on loan, we will soon find other things follow and before long, we will be once again living by the text, and once again experiencing that better feeling as the old farmer remembered in days gone, by, and most importantly, we will find we are giving more time to our Lord and this will not go unblesed.

Apostle Cliff Flor  
North Queensland.

TEXT – Matthew 5: 14 – 16.

*“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*

### **Life As A Lighthouse Keeper**

If you are sick, you stay home from school. If there is a big snowstorm or hurricane, you usually get the day off, too. But if you had a job as a lighthouse keeper, there were no days off. You had to work all the time. In bad weather, you usually had to work even harder! Most of the time though, your work could be boring. There were no days off for a lighthouse keeper. Read on to learn more about life as a lighthouse keeper.

Lighthouses help ships stay away from dangerous shorelines or rocky cliffs. This means that lighthouse keepers often lived in the most dangerous spots in a body of water. When storms blew in, high winds, pounding waves and driving rain brought danger. Of course, ships leave waters when storms are coming. Lighthouse keepers had to stay and be sure the lights were kept burning. Because the lights were at the top of the lighthouse, winding stairs had to be climbed in terrible weather so the lights would continue to warn anyone still out in the storm. In very early days of lighthouses, some of them did not even have a roof. It must have been very difficult to do your job during a storm in those days! Often, the lighthouse keeper's family and animals lived with him. Famous stories tell how keepers and their families had to save themselves and pets during fierce storms.

While storms brought danger and maybe even excitement to a lighthouse keeper, daily life could be boring. Lighthouse keepers kept logbooks. These journals are full of "tales" of dusting the lighthouse, cleaning the lens, and filling the oil lamps. These kinds of boring jobs had to be done every day. Some tasks brought danger. Painting the lighthouse tower was a difficult task. Keepers had to climb high with brushes and paint buckets to keep the lighthouse sparkling. Often lighthouse keepers had a sad morning chore. They had to sweep dead birds from the deck. The birds were attracted to the light and crashed into the lighthouse.

The lighthouses were often placed in the water or along a rocky shore so getting to them was not easy. This meant that lighthouse keepers had a lonely life. Sometimes family members could take a trip to a store for supplies. Sometimes a boat would arrive with food or mail. When a family or keeper could talk with other people, this was exciting! It helped break up the lonely days and nights.

You may wonder why anyone would want to be a lighthouse keeper. Many people love the water. They say that being a part of life on the sea is exciting. Some liked being away from other people. They enjoyed the loneliness. Being a lighthouse keeper meant you had a place to live and you were paid for staying at your house.

Today, electricity means that most lighthouses do not need keepers. Lights are run automatically. Workers check the lights every so often but they are not required to be at the lighthouse twenty-four hours a day. Improved navigation instruments on ships means fewer lighthouses are needed. But some people still long for the days of lighthouse keepers. If you are one of those people, you can take a vacation at a lighthouse! You can polish lamps, dust the lens, or even paint stairs. And ... YOU have to pay for the privilege of doing this!

God called us to be like a **lighthouse keeper**. He wants us to keep the light burning with the use of oil (Holy Spirit) so that people who live in darkness can see the light of the LORD.

Priest Reynante So  
Auckland, New Zealand.

TEXT -Acts 22:20.

*"And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him."*

After the conversion of Saul, who became the Apostle Paul, he realized the things that he had done, he had no problems in confessing his wrong doings to the Lord as with our text. It does however highlight the words 'Thy Martyr'. This word, martyr is used so often today out of its true meaning, and there are even those who make a stand on an issue hoping something will be done to them so they can appear to have to give up something and thus become as a martyr, so that others will support and follow them. Like all bible predictions, these things come to pass. False prophets, false teachers, false apostles, and yes, even false martyrs. To help us be sure we are not led astray by this falsehood, we should examine what is a true martyr in God's eye, and what falsehoods are used to deceive us.

In our period, the meaning given in the dictionary is important and is "one who has proved the strength and genuineness of his faith in Christ by undergoing a violent death". As Christ is the word of God, we see those that suffered death by standing up for God's word in the pre-Christ period also fall in the same category. Now a false martyr also suffers loss but usually for standing up against something that he believes in. Very seldom is it something that Christ believes in or taught, and in fact it is often in direct contradiction to Christ's teaching. Our text declares that Stephen was a true martyr, so as we read the recording of his violent death, we see also other attributes necessary in determining a true martyr and this is found in Acts 7:59-60. *"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."* We see God fearing and mercy shown by Stephen. With false martyrs the reverse is present as they use the situation to try and turn their followers against others. We must always be careful that out of sympathy, or enthusiasm, or misunderstanding, or obsession, that we try all the facts before we are misled into believing one has become a martyr. Look to see if the stand is for Christ, or His word, look to see if what is being given up is being taken by force or only made to look that way. Look for God fearing and above all look for love and mercy being shown. If we do these things with an open heart, we will not be deceived. We should not feel sorry for a genuine Martyr, but take comfort in Christ's teaching in Matt. 5:10-12. *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven."*

The Apostle John saw in The Revelation, a special place under God's Altar, for the Martyrs and saw that white robes were given them to guarantee that they would partake of the first resurrection when Christ returns so as to fulfil His word.

Apostle Cliff Flor  
North Queensland.

TEXT -I Corinthians 13:2.

*"And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing".*

After Peter's confession that Christ was the Son of the living God, Jesus said flesh and blood had not revealed it to him, but His Father in Heaven. Inspired from above is also the "love song" of the Apostle Paul (I Cor. 13:1-13). All remarkable achievements are useless when divine love is missing. The love there is not just a characteristic among others but a pointer to God Himself, without love = without God. Yes, this love song proves that the Holy Spirit worked in a man, who was aware of his own lack of power, and who submitted all his virtues, knowledge, gifts, and capabilities to God. Through such a humble attitude, we get an insight of how to grow in God. Let us notice the words Apostle Paul uses to transfer from chapter 12 to chapter 13. With the love song, he introduces a new precept "and I will show you another, better way. " In chapter 12 he shows the many tasks for members of the body of Christ. But what use are all these without love? Humble hearts receive advice and fulfilment. Titles, office positions, religious activities are inadequate, but will assist to penetrate in believing response, to love. If such response is missing, everything else will fail.

A missionary wrote about his own experience: "who wants to be a missionary according to the example of the master Christ, is not able to bring the heathens anything greater than the shining love of God, in his own person. Speech of love is universal. A missionary needs many years to learn the language of his area. But the language of love is understood by all, right from the beginning. It is not words, but the personality that makes a man. His message is himself.

In central Africa, I met natives who could remember the only white man they ever met. That was David Livingstone. As soon as one spoke about the Doctor, the faces lit up. It had been a long time ago, but in Livingstone, these people had recognized the presence of love without the help of a single word.

Let it be hoped that through our service, that wonderful power of love, penetrates into our working environment. We cannot imagine our mission to be any bigger, but should not be satisfied with anything less.

The statement of the missionary includes everything that is said and done in God's Kingdom. The "love song" mentions a few: speaking in tongues, prophesy, belief in wonders, knowledge of secrets, doling out all one has, give my body to be sacrificed. Ah, what would all these be without love? Just a sounding gong and a clanging cymbal.

We have all experienced the emptiness of rhetoric without passion. When love is missing, other motives play a role. E.G. ambition, self-satisfaction etc. Above all, the way divine love acts, is being told in verses 4 -7. Naturally we must not only test according to this standard which is round about us, but also which is inside us. And we have also experienced how ashamed we were, when that divine love came to meet us. In a like manner, we can learn from Apostle Paul where he wrote in the I form: I may speak in tongues of men or angels, but am I without love, then I am nothing. Also in the breakdown of his theme he persists with the I pattern, ceases to act as a child, and humbly he admits how he first learnt bit by bit, but finally will be whole in knowledge (of the Lord)

"Why is Love greater than faith and hope?" we may ask. We can also ask what good is faith without hope? But it is love that binds our soul to God, for God is love.

Faith and hope are the means to reach the goal. The goal is more important than the means. " ...and have all the faith to move mountains and do not have love I am nothing..." I pray for the power of love, that reveals itself in Jesus.

Late Apostle Andre Grein  
France.

TEXT- Romans 5: 1-4.

*“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope.”*

We have all experienced the frustrations put upon us as we seek to achieve something that involves permission. It is referred to as “Red Tape” and describes the often annoying way that bureaucracy hinders things from getting done. It began in the early 1800’s, and originally referred to the common practice of binding official documents with red ribbon. An outspoken Scottish historian, Thomas Carlyle, made a name for himself by referring to ‘red tape’ each time the government delayed in fulfilling its promises and frustrating all by the excuses and slow payments due to war veterans who had returned from various fields of battle. He wrote that ‘red tape’ will become legendary in the world as the public service expands. He noted in his observations there appears that there will be only one place of authority that it will never take over and that will be the Throne of God.

The Apostle Paul confirmed this in our text when he wrote of Jesus Christ, “by whom also we have **access** by faith into this grace in which we stand.” When our hearts are broken or our lives are troubled, there is no red tape hindering our access to God through Christ who has paved the way so we can have access at any time.

Hebrews 4: 15-16 *“For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”*

There is no red tape to cut through to present our needs to God. Through Christ, we have full and immediate access.

Apostle Cliff Flor  
North Queensland.

TEXT - Matthew 27:46.

*"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*

We often find ourselves in situations which bring us sorrow and pain. We find ourselves in darkness and despair, apparently forgotten by God and the world. We complain and ask "Why?" Our source of comfort and strength in the darkest moments of our life is when we look to Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sakes, our Saviour and Redeemer.

During Jesus' life on earth many of His followers left Him, every time His suffering increased. Finally, when He was taken captive in the garden of Gethsemane, all His disciples left Him and fled in fear. In human terms, this was Jesus' darkest hour. His soul was troubled unto death. His darkness, loneliness, torture and finally His terrible death on the cross, were all caused by those who had fallen away from God. Because of our transgressions, He was wounded and *"He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."* (Isaiah 53:5)

The Son of God who because of God's eternal love, became man in all things but sin, had to eat the most bitter fruits of our sinful world. His dying words "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" reveal His humanity and show Him as a man with feelings like us.

Jesus' "Why" as He was hanging on the cross feeling forsaken, should give us the answer: He was forsaken by God for some time so that He would feel the same as we do when we are forsaken, suffering and miserable and then He could take pity on us. It is in times of trouble, that He will support, comfort and be close to us. The author of the letter to the Hebrews says *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15). Knowing that Christ is always there to help and comfort us, there is no need to fearfully ask why, for we can be sure that He will redeem us, set us free and give us peace.

It is true that because of our continual disobedience God sometimes hides His face from us, but with Jesus Christ who, though sinless, sacrificed Himself for all mankind, God with everlasting kindness will have mercy on a sinful world and redeem us. (Isaiah.54:8)

Through Jesus Christ, who was scorned and martyred at Golgotha. God showed His great love for man. This love is so strong, that it conquered death and sin. The day of Christ's resurrection dawned brightly on the dark scene of the crucifixion. The way to God was open again to all mankind, through the unique sacrifice of God's Son. It was no longer reserved for the privileged and pious teachers of the law as they had preached. The rending of the temple veil in Jerusalem symbolized this act of mercy by the Almighty. Christ redeemed us from the tyranny of the law and gave us His love, which is the fulfilment of the law.

Apostle Frank Volkmer (Since retired)  
Germany.