

LESSON 9

PARABLE OF THE GREAT PEARL

LESSON NOTES

FOCUS: THE MERCHANT AND THE GREAT PEARL (MATTHEW 13:45)

- **PARABLE**
- **CORE PRESENTATION**

THE MATERIAL

- **LOCATION: PARABLE SHELVES**
- **PIECES: PARABLE BOX WITH WHITE DOT, 5 BROWN RECTANGULAR PLACES, 2 FIGURES (MERCHANT AND SELLER), MERCHANT'S POSSESSIONS (MONEY, CHEST, BED, CANDLE, VASE, CHAIR, FOOTSTOOL)**
- **UNDERLAY: WHITE**

BACKGROUND

In the canonical gospels, this parable is found only in Matthew 13:45. Another version of the parable can be found in the Gospel of Thomas (Gospel of Thomas, 76).

NOTES ON THE MATERIAL

Find the material in a gold parable box with a white dot, located on the top shelf of one of the parable shelves. Inside the box is a white underlay in the shape of a circle. There are two figures, the seller, shown sitting at a table, and the merchant.

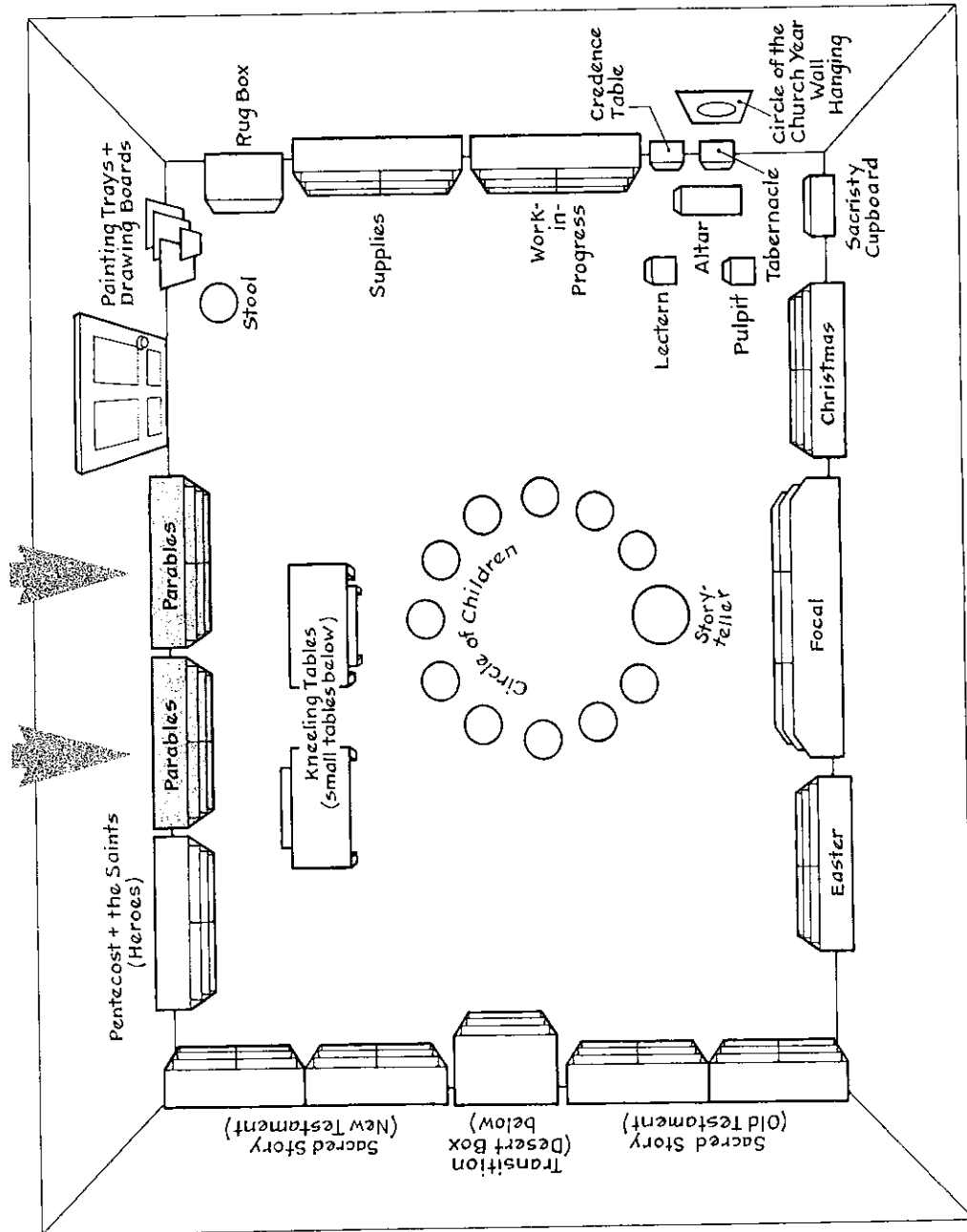
Five brown, felt rectangular "outline" shapes of various sizes represent houses, villages, countries, worlds—living places or other realities. These shapes are empty, with an opening in each one. Inside one shape, place the seller at a table.

Inside another outline shape, place an assortment of goods: a bed, a chest, bags of gold, chair, footstool, a candle, a vase and other things. These are the possessions which the merchant will exchange for the great pearl.

A little gold box contains three pearls, each one a different size. (Placing cotton in the box helps show that the pearls are important.) As you lay out the story, you will place one pearl on the table in the seller's place and two other pearls in two of the remaining empty shapes. One outline shape remains entirely empty.

SPECIAL NOTES

Storytelling Tip: When you tell the story, you may be tempted to use the largest pearl for the great pearl. Choose a different pearl instead, because greatness has to do with more than size. Be prepared for the children's wondering to touch upon this issue. Children often regard big things as more important than small; for example, they might feel that adults are more important than children. Furthermore, our culture holds up big things for us to admire, too, from big houses to big cars and big bank accounts.



WHERE TO FIND MATERIALS

MOVEMENTS

Go to the parable shelves and pick up the gold box with the white dot on it. Point to the dot, but you do not need to say anything about it.

Carry the box to the circle of children. Place it in the center of the circle. Touch it with pleasure and interest as you introduce the material to the children.

Move the parable box from the middle of the circle of children to your side. Remove the lid and lean it against the side of the box between the box and the children. This helps the children keep focused on what is already laid out and not worrying about what is coming next. It also keeps some of the mystery of the parable box in place.

Take out the underlay. Leave it crumpled in the middle of the circle for a few moments as you begin wondering what it could really be. As you continue wondering, smooth it out.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go so you will always know where to find this lesson.

I wonder if there could be a parable inside this box? It is the color gold. There must be something important inside. Parables are very important, so maybe there is one inside this box.

Parables are very old, and this box looks old. Perhaps there is an old parable inside.

Did you know that parables were given to you before you were born? This box looks kind of like a present. Parables are presents, so maybe there is a parable inside this box.

Look at this lid. Sometimes parables have a lid on them, like a door that is shut. The lid keeps you from going inside the parable. I don't know why. This sometimes happens even if you are ready, so don't be discouraged. Keep coming back to the parable, and one day it will open up for you.

I have an idea. Let's look inside this box and see if there is a parable there.

Look at this. It is something. I don't know if it is a parable or not. Well, at least we can see that it is very white. Everywhere there is anything, it is white.

I wonder what this could really be? Yes, it looks like a snowball. It is cold. I wonder what else it could be? Could it be the moon, I wonder? I wonder what this could really be?

MOVEMENTS

When the wondering about the underlay is almost finished, take out the brown rectangular pieces one by one. You will not be able to tell which one you have because they are crumpled. Take them out at random. This helps your own sense of the parabolic. You will have a different configuration, something unsuspected, every time.

Put your finger on a corner of the figure and pull one of the sides from that point. Place your finger at the next corner and pull the next piece out to its length. Do this for each brown piece. This is a way to organize the setting up of the figures and it helps smooth them out. Place each brown piece at a different place on the underlay.

Place the merchant and the contents of his house in one of the brown rectangular figures farthest from you. Those contents include: bags of money, chair, a chest, candle, his bed, and other household or personal items. Place the seller and his table in the large brown figure that is closest to you. You will have three empty figures.

Take out the little gold box with the pearls inside. Let it sit for a moment and then open it with mystery. Silently place a pearl on the table in front of the seller. Put one pearl in two of the three empty rectangular figures.

WORDS

☞ I wonder what this could be? It is brown, but what could it really be in the parable?

☞ Hmm. This is strange. I wonder if they fit together?

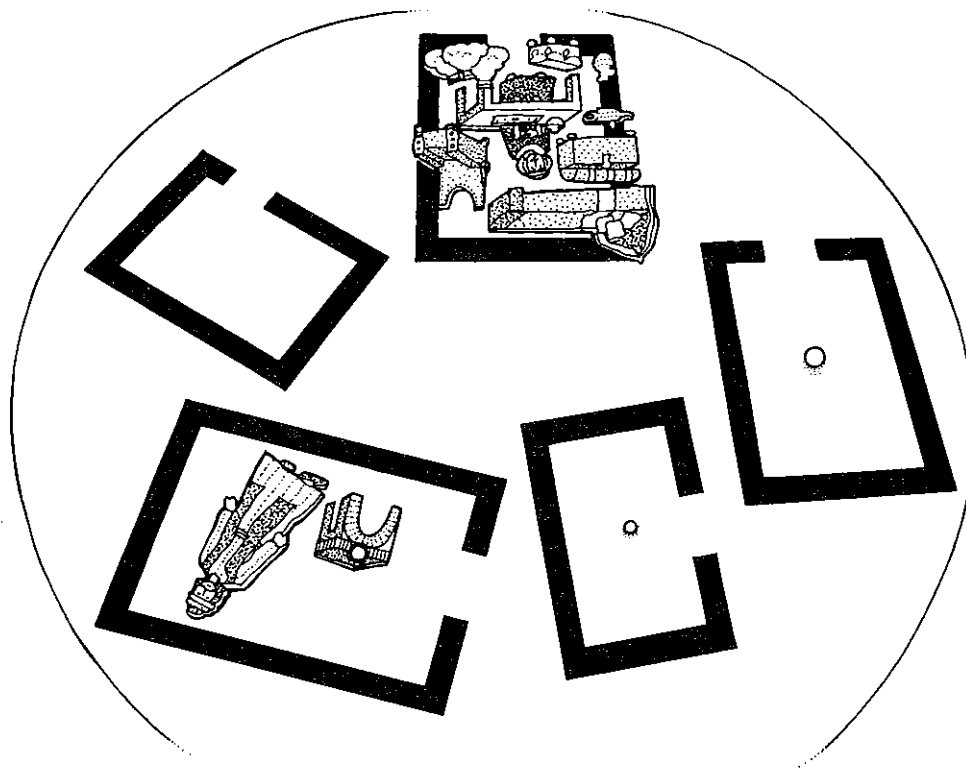
☞ Oh, this helps.

Let's see if there is anything more inside the box to help us.

No. There is nothing else. All we can do now is begin.

MOVEMENTS

WORDS



THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT PEARL (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

Sit back for a moment. Reflect silently on all that is laid out before you on the underlay. Wait until you are ready. If they need it, help the children get ready.

There was once someone who said such wonderful things and did such amazing things that people followed him. As they followed him, they heard him talking about a kingdom, but it was not the kingdom they lived in. It was not like any kingdom they had ever visited. It was not like any kingdom that they had ever even heard of.

They couldn't help it. They had to ask him what the kingdom of heaven was like. One time when they asked him, he said, "The kingdom of heaven is like when a person who buys and sells fine pearls, a merchant, goes to search for the great pearl."

Move the merchant out of his home's doorway and let him stop briefly at each of the other places (the brown outline shapes). Pick up the pearl when there is one there and hold it up close to your own eyes (for the merchant) and inspect it. Put it back and

MOVEMENTS

shake your head. It is not the great one. Finally, the merchant comes to the place where the seller is sitting behind a table. On the table is the great pearl. Pick it up and nod your head yes.

The merchant leaves the pearl on the table of the seller. He goes to his home and brings the bags of money.

He goes back and returns with the chest. He brings the chair, the vase, the candle...everything but his bed. Finally, he goes to get the last piece inside the house, which is his bed. He then returns to his house, folds it up and places it inside of the seller's house.

The merchant then goes back to where his house once was. Leave him there with the pearl, sitting right in the middle of his former home. Place the pearl at the center of the merchant.

There is, of course, silence during the movements of the merchant. Don't hurry. Acknowledge the questions of the children as well as their exclamations. Don't stop until you finish the sentence with the phrase "everything for the great pearl."

Sit back and rest for a moment before you begin the wondering. Prepare for your own wonder. It has to come from within you to be real.

WORDS

"When he found the great pearl, he went..."

"...and exchanged..."

"...everything for the great pearl."

I wonder if the person was happy with the great pearl?

I wonder what the merchant is going to do now?

I wonder why the seller was willing to give up something so precious?

I wonder if the seller was happy with all of his things?

I wonder if the seller has a name?

MOVEMENTS

When the wondering concludes, put the pieces of the parable back carefully into the box. Don't hurry. Name each one as you put it away.

Return the parable box to the shelves and go back carefully to the circle. Sit down to help the children decide what work they are going to get out.

WORDS

I wonder if the merchant has a name?

Now, I wonder what the great pearl could really be?

I wonder what could be so precious that a person would exchange everything for it?

I wonder if you have ever come close to the great pearl?

I wonder where this whole place could really be?

Here is the great pearl.

Here are two other pearls.

Here are all the merchant's new things.

Here are the places.

Here is the seller, and here is the merchant.