

Treasure – in Heaven or On Earth?

Matthew 6:19-24

Jesus spoke more about wealth than about marriage, politics, work, sexual immorality, or power. This should tell us that wealth is often a problem that stands in the way of true righteousness. God created us to be treasure seekers, but the problem is that we are often pursuing the wrong treasure. Jesus addresses this issue to correct us so that we can belong to his kingdom and be true disciples.

Two Treasures (6:19-21)

Jesus begins with a simple command: *Do not store up for yourself treasures on earth.* So, does this mean that we have no possessions? While some have been tempted to move in this direction with teaching, it does not fit the pictures that we see of righteous people in the scriptures who were blessed by God with wealth. Abraham had much wealth; Jacob was blessed materially. We do not see the condemnation of owning possessions, though we are warned that these things can steal our hearts from God. Rather Jesus shows us that it is the pursuit of possessions to accumulate that poses great danger. It is the whole accumulation process that is the greater problem. Notice that this is the contrast that is given to us in this command. Do not lay-up, store up, and accumulate treasures on earth but lay-up, store up, and accumulate treasures in heaven. Make treasures in heaven your treasure. So, Jesus challenges us to monitor and answer the question – “am I treasuring treasures in heaven or treasuring treasures on earth? And where are we accumulating these treasures?”

Jesus gives us reasons why we must not accumulate treasures on earth. The first is because everything that we accumulate for ourselves on earth does not last. Y’all still own your first car, right? Y’all still own and use your first smart phone, right? Why not? We understand that all these things get old, wear out, break, and do not work like they used to. Do not treasure earthly treasures because these things are useless and do not possess lasting value. They are temporary. They cannot satisfy because they are not lasting.

By contrast, the treasures of heaven are permanent and lasting. They cannot wear out. It does not take much for us to understand this, but it requires us to think about this truth. Consider, when you die, how important will your accumulated wealth matter? What value will all your wealth and possession have for you when you die? Jesus is trying to put these things in proper perspective. Treasure heavenly treasures because those are the only lasting treasures.

The problem is - greed is subtle. Everyone thinks that what they are doing with wealth is necessary. No one believes they are accumulating wealth. No one thinks they are laying up treasures for themselves on earth. No one thinks they are materialistic. We think others are materialistic but certainly not us! It is amazing how easily these things capture our hearts and minds. So, this command requires some real honesty. Notice that Jesus does not give an amount. Jesus does not say that if you have more than 6 days or 6 months of food or wealth that you are storing up treasures on earth. This really is a question of the heart. What do you love? What do you prize? What do you desire? Eternal or temporal?

This is the point of verse 21. ***“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*** **What happens to our treasure happens to us.** This is the window into our hearts. We can carry on the charade of faithfully going to church while having our heart on earthly treasures. The location of our treasure indicates where the heart is already at.

Notice again that Jesus **does not say** that the possessions are the problem. The problem is our heart is chasing after and trying to accumulate these things. So, self-examination is in order. What do we worry about: spiritual things or wealth and possessions? What occupies our thoughts and desires? What do we dread losing? What do we measure others by? What can we not be happy without? Jesus tells us that the reason we must truly consider these things is because whatever controls our heart is what controls our behavior. What you treasure will control you.

Two Eyes (6:22-23)

As you read verse 22 you might think that Jesus has moved on from the teaching on treasure. In reality He has not left the subject of treasure in heaven because in verse 24 He speaks about serving God or money. So, what is the point Jesus is making when he tells us to consider our eyes? First, Jesus begins with a statement. ***“The eye is the lamp of the body.”*** Jesus continues that when our eye is healthy, then our whole body will receive light. But if our eye is bad, then our whole body will be full of darkness. It is a simple image. What am I looking at in life? What is my eye set on? What is my focus? The way we look at wealth is a barometer of our spiritual condition. Wealth is not to be hoarded and accumulated. It is a blessing from God. Do we see what we have as a blessing from God to enjoy and use? Do we see what we have as God’s blessing to enjoy with our family? Do we see what we have as God’s blessing to advance the work of God’s kingdom? The condition of the eye determines if our body is receiving light or darkness. What is the condition of the eyes of our heart? What is blocking our spiritual vision? Jesus is telling us that if we focus on money and possessions then this problem cannot be fixed. What you focus on is going to affect your heart. This is why lust corrupts the heart. Wealth corrupts the heart. Envy and jealousy corrupt the heart. Rivalry corrupts the heart. To address our problem, we must not focus on these things.

Two Masters (6:24)

Jesus gives us this truth that we must accept and believe. ***“No one can serve two masters.”*** We think we can, but we cannot. It is impossible for a divided heart to serve a master properly. Either I put my hope in and seek the treasures of this earth - **or** - I put my hope in and seek after God for my joy and satisfaction. We cannot be a slave to both. Either we are serving God over self or we are serving self over God. There is not another option. The things of this world are rivals to the love of God.

Money is one of the greatest rivals of God's love because we look to money to bring us security, peace, happiness, and hope **rather than God**. A Christian is a person who turns from idols to serve the living God. Paul said it this way, *“For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”* 1 Thessalonians 1:9.

I want us to think about what Jesus is teaching. Jesus teaches us that we:

- cannot store up treasures in both places
- Our devotion is either to God and his pursuits or it is with self and our own pursuits.
- We cannot serve God and serve something else or someone else.
- Only one person can be on the throne of our hearts. It is either God on the throne of our heart or it is self that is on the throne. Only one can rule. This is why Jesus said that we must deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow him.
- I cannot rule my life and think that I am letting God rule my life.
- I cannot store up the treasures of earth for myself and think that I have stores up the treasures of heaven for myself also.
- We must choose this day who we will serve.

One of the verses from a song we often sing in worship reminds us of this truth. From the song Trust and Obey, a verse begins, **“But we never can prove the delights of his love until all on the altar we lay.”** How true this is! We have not begun to enjoy the delights of God's love if we have not sacrificed our worldly pursuits.

Conclusion

Jesus calls for true disciples to truly be honest with themselves and consider where they have accumulated treasures. One way we can know is by looking at our hearts. *“Where our treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* So, what do you look at? What do you desire? What do you trust in? What do you hope for? What is your goal in life? What are you striving for?

Jesus presents a choice between two ways of life. There are two treasures. Will we store treasures on earth or in heaven? There are two eyes. Will our eyes be light or be dark? There are two masters. Will we serve God or serve money?