

Matthew: The Life & Teaching of Jesus the Messiah

Lakewood Presbyterian Church

Key Idea: *God does not mind his people having things; He forbids things having his people.*

Lesson 32 Matt. 6:19-24 Treasures In Heaven (7-19-26)

Treasures in Heaven: Matthew 6:19-24

Nothing can be secular when everything is in fact done before the face of God and should be done according to His will. For just as the call to be Salt and Light in the world around us will admit no false dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, so Jesus returns to this point in Matthew 6. In this case, Jesus places a disciple's "religious" devotions--giving, praying, and fasting (Matthew 6:1-18)--and his "public" business in the world--money, possessions, food, drink, clothing, and ambition (Matthew 6:19-34)--back to back, showing how God is equally concerned with both areas. For one must necessarily come to dominate the other, and if Jesus is not Lord of all, then He is not Lord at all. Or to put it another way, our most scrupulous attention to the details of worship and devotion are belied by where our treasure truly is, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (6:21). So in both spheres, Jesus calls us to an integrity and priorities different from that of the world, different from that of the surrounding culture, or as Stott puts it, different from the hypocrisy of the "religious" (6:1-18), and different from the materialism of the irreligious (6:19-34) (p. 153).

¹⁹Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus had begun this chapter largely with the problem of sham religion in mind. Now he turns to deal with the pagan value system which underlies the hypocritical giver, the babblers of prolonged prayers, and the self-glorifying faster. At each stage he presents us with two alternatives and asks which is to be master. Treasures on earth or treasures in heaven (10-21)? Light or darkness (22-23)? God or mammon (24)? Our bodies or God's kingdom (25-34)? For by the nature of the cases, one must choose one way or the other. There can be no neutral middle ground, no deviation from single-minded adherence to God.

I. A QUESTION OF TREASURE

What are the things that matter most? What will you value as you lie on your death bed? These are the questions which Jesus sets before us as he directs our attention to the comparative *durability* of two kinds of treasure. And for Jesus, the question is not *if* we shall store up treasure for ourselves but *what kind*, for "the place where we choose to store up what we value most shows what our values are deep down" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 153). Obviously then, the only sort of treasure which can even be called treasure is that which _____.

In forbidding "treasures on earth," what does Jesus not forbid (Hint: see Stott's list)?

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____

What Jesus does forbid is the *selfish accumulation of goods*, the concentration on prosperity in this world to the neglect of all else. Give some biblical examples of this:

Luke 12:15-21 _____

Luke 15:11-16 _____

Luke 16:19-26 _____

How are we western, affluent Christians just like the persons portrayed in these parables? _____

Is hoarding treasures on earth only a temptation to the rich or to the poor and middle class as well? Why? _____

If laying up treasures on earth does not refer to being provident but to being covetous like misers or materialists, what then does it mean to lay up "treasures in heaven"? _____

Give several examples: _____

²²The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

II. A QUESTION OF VISION

Jesus now turns from the comparative durability of the two treasures to the comparative benefit to be derived from two conditions, for the contrast between blindness and sight underscores the fact that just as the eyes affect our whole body, so our *ambition*--where we fix our eyes and heart--affects our whole life. Biblically, we might make the following observations:

- In Scripture, "heart" and "eyes" are often used synonymously (Psalm 119:19). Where one fixes his gaze is also where one sets his heart.
- Traditionally, the single or "evil" eye points to a miserly or covetous person (Deuteronomy 15:9; Proverbs 23:6; 28:22), the sound eye to a generous one.

So one might explain Jesus' analogy in this way:

Just as a seeing eye gives light to the body, so a noble and singleminded ambition to serve God and man adds meaning to life and throws light on everything we do. Again, just as blindness leads to darkness, so an ignoble and selfish ambition (e.g., to lay up treasures for ourselves on earth) plunges us into moral darkness. -Stott, p. 157

As Stott rightly concludes, it is a matter of vision. Where we set our hearts and upon what we fix our gaze determines what sort of disciples we shall be. A disciple whose gaze is not firmly fixed upon the things of God can hardly be a Spirit led, effective member of the kingdom.

²⁴No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

III. A QUESTION OF WORTH

Finally, behind the choice between two treasures and two visions, there lies a still more basic choice between two masters, between the living Creator of this universe and an object of our own creation, money. There are probably only two main points here:

- **It is inevitable that one must serve.**

The logic of being human and having a will is that we make choices, and those choices are based upon whatever desires we choose most to cultivate. One can choose to cultivate ignoble things--sloth, adultery, greed--or even noble things--art, gardening, charity--and yet still be his own master. Or he can acknowledge God as master and choose His will over our own. There really is no in-between, no other choice than God or autonomy. Similarly...

- **God can only be served exclusively.**

The logic of being a slave is that one can serve but one master devotedly; and though Money itself (Aramaic "mammon", literally "wealth" or "property") may make no overtly exclusive demands upon us, God does (Exodus 20:3; Isaiah 42:8; 48:11). And he will not share his sovereignty with another. Shared ownership must therefore inevitably be a failure. And as Jesus illustrates elsewhere (Matthew 10:34-39; 16:24-26), the only sort of discipleship worthy of the kingdom is that which is rigorously single-minded.

IV. A FINAL EXAMPLE AND WARNING: THE RICH YOUNG RULER

Luke 18:18-30: _____

NEXT WEEK: Anxiety vs. the Providence of God: Matthew 6:25-34