

Jesus on Treasure

Text: Matthew 6:19-24

Introduction: What is the one thing that you treasure most in the world?

I'm not talking about your relationship with the Lord. Your church. Your Bible. Your family. I'm talking about earthly possessions. What is your one earthly possession that you treasure most in the world?

Maybe for some of you it's a family heirloom that has been passed down through generations. Maybe it's a gift you received. Something that is very special and meaningful to you both because of what it is and because of the person who gave it to you. Maybe it's a big purchase you made. Something you really had to save up to buy. Maybe it's something you've always wanted but never thought you would have.

I was thinking about this question for myself this week. What is the one thing that I treasure most in the world? I couldn't really come up with an answer. So, I asked Ashley. What is the one thing that I treasure most in the world? She couldn't really come up with an answer either.

But then I went to work, sat in my office, started writing this sermon introduction, and I realized what it is. As I looked around me at all of the books lining the shelves in my office, I realized that my most treasured earthly possession has to be my library. Books I've accumulated through undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral studies. Books that have helped shape my life, theology, and ministry. Books that have been my conversation partners as I've wrestled with difficult texts of Scripture in preparation to preach God's Word. So many books. And of course I want more. It's not hard for me to convince myself that I need more.

There certainly is not anything wrong with having earthly possessions. But we have to be careful, don't we? Because it is very easy for our earthly possessions to have us.

That gets to the heart of what Jesus has to say here in Matthew 6. Go ahead and turn in your Bible to Matthew 6. We're going to be looking at verses 19-24. You can find it on page 761 in the black pew Bible in front of you. We are making our way through the Sermon on the Mount. And we are over halfway through at this point. This morning we're looking at what Jesus has to say about money and possessions.

(Read Matthew 6:19-24...Pray)

We all have things in this life that we value. But I want you to see this morning that **followers of Jesus treasure God over everything.**

First, Jesus makes clear that...

I. Followers of Jesus treasure God over earthly possessions (Matthew 6:19-21).

A. Jesus says, "Do not pursue earthly treasure" (vs. 19).

- 1. Look at verse 19. (Read vs. 19)**
- 2. The words of Jesus here are exceedingly clear, aren't they? Jesus doesn't mince words. He doesn't tell a parable that has to be interpreted. He simply says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth."**
- 3. The verb is a present imperative. That means it's a command. It also means it's a command requiring continual action. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth."**
- 4. This is the temptation in all of our hearts, isn't it? And it's really not dependent on how much we have. If we have only a little, we want to keep all that we have, and we want MORE. If we have a lot, we still want to keep all that we have, and we want MORE. No matter what. We want MORE.**
- 5. At least that's the natural inclination of our sinful hearts. We think that more will make us happy. We think more will bring us satisfaction. So, we seek to accumulate more.**
- 6. But Jesus says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth."**

7. Now, why would Jesus say such a thing? Doesn't Jesus want me to be happy? Doesn't Jesus want me to experience satisfaction in this life? Why would Jesus say, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth"?
 8. Thankfully, Jesus answers that question. Look at the second half of verse 19: "Where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal."
 9. Jesus says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth [because treasures on earth are temporary]. They don't last."
 10. Several years ago, I took Ashley's wedding dress, and I sent it off to one of these companies that preserves wedding dresses. I don't know exactly what they do. They clean it up, and they do something that helps to keep it from turning yellow and degrading over time in storage. Then they put it in a nice display box and send it back. That's great. It will last longer this way. It's a nice keepsake from a very special day in our lives. But it won't last forever. I doubt anyone will ever wear it again. We certainly won't be able to take it with us when our lives on this earth are over. And eventually, someone will make the decision to dispose of it.
 11. Jesus told a parable in Luke 12 that illustrates this point. He said, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God" (Lk 12:16-21).
 12. The truth is that nothing lasts forever. You can lay up for yourself treasures on earth. You can do everything you can to preserve those treasures. To keep them safe. To prevent them from decaying. To keep them from getting damaged. And still, they won't last forever.
 13. Solomon learned this truth in the book of Ecclesiastes.
 - a. He writes, "I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool?" (Eccl. 2:18-19a).
 - b. He further describes the futility of accumulating treasure on earth when he writes, "There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand" (Eccl. 5:13-15).
- B. It's this futility concerning earthly treasure that leads Jesus to say in verse 20, "Do pursue heavenly treasure" (vs. 20).
1. Look at verse 20. (Read vs. 20)
 2. Jesus isn't against storing up treasure. He's against storing up the wrong kind of treasure in the wrong place. Again, the words of Jesus are very clear. "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."
 3. Again, the verb is a present imperative. It's a command. But it's an ongoing command. Throughout our lives on this earth as Christians, we are to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.
 4. If you attempt to lay up for yourself treasures on earth, you need to know that it won't last. It will be lost. Either in this life or when we die. But if you lay up treasures in heaven, they will last for all of eternity.
 5. I'm sure you've seen the commercials on TV about buying gold or silver or other precious metals. Usually the idea being pedaled is that if the U.S. economy crashes and the dollar loses its value, you'll have all these precious metals that won't lose their value. I'm not sure who they think is going to be interested in buying your gold or silver if the economy crashes. You'll be better off as a doomsday prepper with a cellar full of canned goods if the economy crashes. You can't eat gold and silver.

6. I like the illustration Randy Alcorn gives in his little book *The Treasure Principle*. He says, “Imagine you’re alive at the end of the Civil War. You’re living in the South, but you’re a Northerner. You plan to move home as soon as the war is over. While in the South, you’ve accumulated lots of Confederate currency. Now, suppose you know for a fact that the North is going to win the war and the end is imminent. What will you do with your Confederate money? If you’re smart, there’s only one answer. You should immediately cash in your Confederate currency for U.S. currency—the only money that will have value once the war is over. Keep only enough Confederate currency to meet your short-term needs. As a Christian, you have inside knowledge of an eventual worldwide upheaval caused by Christ’s return. This is the ultimate insider trading tip: Earth’s currency will become worthless when Christ returns, or when you die, whichever comes first. (And either event could happen at any time.)” (Alcorn, 13-14).
 7. Alcorn goes on to write, “Jesus functions here as the foremost market timer. He tells us to once and for all switch investment vehicles. He instructs us to transfer our funds from earth (which is volatile and ready to take a permanent dive) to heaven (which is totally dependable, insured by God Himself, and is coming soon to forever replace earth’s economy).” (Alcorn, 14).
 8. “To accumulate vast earthly treasures that you can’t possibly hold on to for long is equivalent to stockpiling Confederate money even though you know it’s about to become worthless” (Alcorn, 14).
 9. “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth,...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”
 10. So, how do we lay up treasures in heaven? Well, think back to the ground we’ve already covered in the Sermon on the Mount?
 - a. Who does Jesus say is blessed by God? Those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.
 - b. In fact, He says that those who are persecuted and reviled will receive a great reward in heaven.
 - c. Jesus says that loving your enemies results in eternal reward.
 - d. When you give to the needy in secret, your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
 - e. The same is true of genuine prayer and fasting.
 - f. We lay up treasure in heaven by following Jesus. By devoting ourselves to Him. By treasuring Jesus above everything else.
 - g. When we invest our time, talent, and money in God’s eternal kingdom, we lay up treasure in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.
- C. See, Jesus says that what you treasure reveals your heart (vs. 21).
1. Look at verse 21. (Read vs. 21)
 2. We’ve seen throughout the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus cares most about our heart. Our actions matter. But Jesus is most concerned about the heart behind our actions. And nothing reveals the status of your heart quite like where you choose to place your treasure. What you do with your time, talent, and money.
 3. Jesus told a short parable in Matthew 13. He said, “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matt. 13:44).
 4. What do you treasure most? Jesus calls us to treasure Him and His eternal kingdom. Everything else is going to fade. Everything else is going to pass away. But God and His kingdom will endure forever.
 5. I wonder what your checkbook or bank statement says about your heart. What does the way that you use your time say about what you value most? What about your talents? Are you using the abilities God has given you to build His kingdom or your own?

6. **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

Followers of Jesus treasure God over possessions. We also see that...

II. Followers of Jesus treasure God over darkness (Matthew 6:22-23).

Look at verses 22-23. (Read vs. 22-23)

A. Here Jesus uses a metaphor concerning eyesight to illustrate the importance of treasuring God over everything.

1. See, Goshen, what you set your eyes on matters.
2. Jesus says that when our eyes are healthy, we see clearly. The whole body is full of light. But when our eyes are not healthy, we are unable to see clearly. The whole body is full of darkness.
3. In his little book on the Sermon on the Mount, Sinclair Ferguson writes, “Our Lord is speaking about ‘the eye of the spirit,’ the heart. In the language of Scripture, fixing the eye and fixing the heart amount to the same thing—focusing our attention and concentrating all our energies on something” (Ferguson, 121).

B. The point Jesus is making with this metaphor is that what you set your eyes on matters. It affects everything. Your entire life.

1. Ferguson writes, “Jesus is saying that the dark spirit of anxiety that grips so many lives is caused by failure to focus spiritually, and by thinking about life with a mistaken—or diseased—perspective. That diseased eyesight affects more than the eyes. The greater tragedy is that ‘the whole body is full of darkness.’ So it is with our hearts. Poor spiritual vision—having wrong spiritual priorities—influences the entire direction of our lives” (Ferguson, 121).

2. We have to learn to view the world with spiritual eyes. We need to see life as Jesus sees life. That’s why this series through the Sermon on the Mount is so important for us as followers of Jesus. I know of no better way to allow Jesus to shape the way we view life and eternity than by devoting ourselves to His teaching on these matters.
3. Most of us have had an eyesight test before. What do they do? They put the big chart of letters in front of you. You have to start at the top reading the letters and then work your way down. And as you work your way down, the letters get smaller and smaller. The Sermon on the Mount is like an eyesight test. It tests our spiritual vision. How much does the way you view life and eternity match the way Jesus views life and eternity. The good news is that the Sermon on the Mount is more than just a test. It’s also the prescription. If we find that our view of life and eternity is out of step with Jesus’ view of life and eternity, we can adjust our vision to bring it into alignment with Jesus and His vision.
4. We don’t want to remain in the darkness of this world. We want to walk in the light. And the only way to walk in the light is to look to the one who is the light. The light of the world. The Lord Jesus.

We treasure light over darkness. Followers of Jesus treasure God over darkness. Finally...

III. Followers of Jesus treasure God over money (Matt 6:24).

Look at verse 24. (Read vs. 24)

A. This isn’t unlike what we’ve said already, but Jesus makes Himself exceedingly clear here. You cannot serve two masters.

1. Sinclair Ferguson points out that we were made to have a master. God is our master. He made us for Himself. We were made to worship and serve God.

2. **The problem is that we very easily turn our attention away from worshiping and serving the Lord. We turn our attention to other things. And when we do so, we don't stop worshiping and serving. We start worshiping and serving something other than the Lord. And these other things have a tendency to enslave us.**
3. **The Apostle Paul writes about this with regard to money in his letter to Timothy, "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs" (1 Tim. 6:9-10).**

B. Goshen, this is a warning that you and I need to heed.

1. **You cannot serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other. Or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.**
2. **Money is a tool. It's a wonderful tool. But it's a terrible master.**

Conclusion: I'll finish this morning where we started. What do you treasure most?

We've seen that our earthly possessions won't last forever. We've seen that what we treasure shapes the way we see the world. And we've seen that we cannot serve two masters.

So, what do the things you treasure say about your heart? What does the way you spend your money say about what you value most? What about the way you spend your time? The way you use your talents?

See, Jesus isn't just concerned with what you do with your money. He's concerned with your heart. And He knows that what you do with your time, talent, and money reveals a lot about your heart and what you treasure most.

You can only have one master.

God made you for Himself. He created you to worship and serve Him. The problem is that you have rebelled against Him. You've pursued other masters. You've sought to worship and serve yourself. The Bible calls that sin. And our sin is what separates us from God.

But the good news of the gospel is that God made a way for you to be reconciled to Him. Through Jesus Christ. Who came to this earth. Lived a sinless life. And then went to the cross and died to pay for your sin.

Turn from your sin. Place your trust in Jesus. Be reconciled to God.

Treasure God above everything else.

Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.