

I've had an up-and-down few weeks. You see, I've been working really hard to have enough. My heart is set on it. I thought I was there a few weeks ago. My balances were finally where I wanted them to be, I had all the stuff I wanted, I was fit and full. But then a big bill came and balanced dipped and, frankly, I got a little nervous. I felt exposed. Was I going to have enough? And then I looked out the window and my neighbor was driving home with a brand new car. And it got me thinking that maybe it's time to trade mine in. But I need to get the newest iPhone first. And the newest AirPods. And I could do with another plaid shirt. I don't have enough of those. And then I can put some more money away and get to a safe balance. Then I'll have enough. Then I'll be happy. I mean, it's not all about stuff, but I think I deserve it. I work hard and God wants me to be happy. I'll be good when all that happens.

And all of God's people said, "That's absurd." I agree. Guess what we're going to talk about today?!?!? Jesus has been laying out his manifesto on the Kingdom of Heaven, a God-forged Kingdom with a culture nothing like the world's. And he's been checking us to make sure our living is Kingdom living, that we are living right, out of a right relationship with God. And today he's going to address what many consider the greatest threat to American Christians living out our purpose as Kingdom citizens. It's a pre-occupation with money and stuff. You can call it materialism, hoarding, idolatry, it doesn't matter. Whether you have a little or a lot, what we own can ultimately own us. When that happens, though we're still in the Kingdom, our lives stop being about the Kingdom because **whatever we give our hearts to defines the purpose of our lives**. Jesus knows this threat and he wants to hit it head on.

[Matthew 6:19-21] ¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus begins by making us consider what we treasure most in life. He's asking a question about value, what is it that is most important to us and motivates our lives? **What we value becomes what we treasure, what we treasure we give our hearts to, and whatever we give our hearts to we ask to fulfill and propel us in our lives**. Could be family, church, business, God, stuff. Jesus says there's really only two categories to choose from: worldly (earthly) and heavenly (Kingdom). What is it for you?

Jesus warns against us storing up treasures on earth. He's talking about wealth, money, stuff. He's not against earthly possessions. Some of the wealthiest people I know are living Kingdom lives. He's not against proper stewardship of our resources. The book of Proverbs commends the ant for storing up food for winter. Nor is he against saving for a rainy day. He's against hoarding, self-indulgence, accumulation merely for the sake of self, often at the expense of helping others, and the discontentment that comes with it all. It's for a couple reasons.

First, it's impractical. When we do this, we put our treasure in things that are perishable, that will decay, or be taken away. Jesus uses a word that literally means to be eaten away. If you've been to the grocery store recently you've seen that a dollar doesn't buy you what it did just six months ago. This recent surge of inflation shows us just how unstable earthly treasure is.

But those aren't the only things perishable. So are you. You can't take any of this stuff with you. Just ask the Pharaohs of Egypt. They got buried with all their treasure thinking they could take it with them in the afterlife. You know where all their stuff is now? In a museum for us to look at. Your treasures today could become someone's artifacts tomorrow.

More importantly, Jesus knows what this does to our heart. When we treasure earthly things, we tether our hearts to this earthly kingdom. Where your treasure is there your heart will be also. If you don't believe it, buy into Bitcoin this week and see how much more interested you become in it. Bet some money on a game today and see how badly you now want that team to win. Our treasures have strings attached, and those strings are attached to our hearts. **In whatever you treasure, your heart gets invested and your life gets directed.**

So why are we so inclined to put our treasure in earthly, perishable things? See if any of this resonates with you: We believe it's the path to ultimate fulfillment. We believe he/she who has the most, wins. We are hurting and buying stuff makes us feel better. My security is found in how much I have. I'm always comparing myself to others and want to keep up. I have an image to project and protect. Any of that connect? The problem is that there's always someone with more (unless you're Elon Musk), you're using money to cover up an issue that can only be solved by God, you are lacking in trust, you think you have more control than you do, or you aren't settled in your identify in Christ, so we treasure the wrong thing.

But Jesus has an alternative. He encourages us to store up treasures in heaven. He doesn't specify what those are, but he's likely referring to our own obedience and holy life, souls won for Christ, disciples grown up in their faith, and the caring for the practical and spiritual needs of others. In short, it's using all we have for the glory of God. Your money and stuff can be a big part of that, and the more you have, the more Jesus is encouraging you to invest in these kinds of treasures. It's why he's given it to you. **The greatest investment you can ever make won't make you a cent in this life but will have an infinite return in eternity.** A great example is Pine Cove founder Bill McKenzie who believed God was asking him to use his lakefront land as a showplace for God's glory. It's now presented the Gospel to over 1.5mm people. When we treasure these kinds of things, our heart becomes tethered to, invested in, and directed towards the Kingdom of Heaven.

You may hear that and hesitate. It requires sacrifice. Not convinced it fulfills. Want instant gratification, even though that usually lasts only for an instant, rather than the payoff of a slow, deliberate walk Jesus. But if your treasure is in earthly things, have you ever gotten to a place where you said "I'm good"? So how do we get this mixed up?

[Matthew 6:22-24] ²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! ²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for 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 God and money.

Jesus uses cause and effect to show us how we treasure what we treasure. It all depends on our spiritual vision. What we treasure is determined by how we see things. If our spiritual eyes are healthy, we'll see value in Kingdom things. If not healthy, we'll focus on earthly things. It's like those activity books I used to get when I was young. They had special glasses attached and depending on what glasses you put on you could see different things on the page.

Just think of Adam and Eve. When they were following God, they were seeing right, treasuring right, and living right. But when they were tempted by the devil, they put on different lenses, and the fruit that was forbidden they now SAW as good for eating.

What we treasure is determined by how we see things and how we see things is determined by who we serve. Jesus uses slave language because a slave is totally committed in service to one master. He says we can either serve God, which allows us to see and treasure the right things, or we can serve money, where see and treasure the wrong things.

This is a big check for some of us because we're pretty sure we can straddle the fence here. We believe we can live a godly life with money at the center. But look at the language Jesus uses. Whichever we love, we'll hate the other. Whichever we devote ourselves to, we'll despise the other. Serving money really means serving ourselves, and if we are serving ourselves, we are on the throne of our lives and building our own Kingdom. Jesus wants us free of that.

[Matthew 6:25-32] ²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

Jesus says "Therefore". He's given us the proper perspective on money and now it's time to apply it. His first application is "Don't be anxious." He wants us to see what happens when we tether our hearts to the wrong thing. I said earlier whatever we devote our hearts to we ask to fulfill and direct us, **but we also ask it to secure and sustain us.** If we ask money to do that, we are asking something unstable to keep us stable, and that leads to a lifetime of heartburn. 15 years ago Martha and I saw what our hearts were tethered to and what we were counting on. She was staying home with babies, my business was tanking, and our funds were being depleted, and God was shining a giant light on where our security lay. He also showed himself to be faithful and that we had nothing to worry about. **He** sustained us, brought us through, and set us free from the mastery money and stuff had over us.

Jesus is inviting all of us into that freedom in this passage. He says our anxiety is a lack of faith in him. Worry is practical atheism, that God is real, but God is uninvolved, uninterested, or unable to take care of me. And it's completely unproductive. Anxiety is worry about tomorrow and experiencing it today. We can't worry ourselves to another second of life, but we can worry ourselves to death. And that will eat you up spiritually and take you out of your Kingdom assignment. So Jesus wants to reassure us here. He knows anxiety will come. He's showing us what to do with it. He points to birds and lilies of the field, says look how God takes care of them, and reminds us we are infinitely more important than they are, so believe he is going to take care of you. **If you can trust God with your eternal destiny, you can trust him with your daily needs.** If he loves you enough to send his Son to die for you, he loves you enough to feed you today. So then where should we focus?

[Matthew 6:33-34] ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Our priority, our value, our treasure, is to be God's Kingdom and living the righteous life he calls us to. He asks us to let go of all these earthly concerns, whether it's abundance or just getting by, and serve him. That may make you anxious, letting go like that, but that's the daily dance of dependence, and Jesus has shown us how we can set our hearts right. "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread." Kingdom first, trust in God, today, and again tomorrow, and again the next day, etc. After a while, you'll be ending your days free of worry and by saying "He did it again!"

Take inventory and get an eye exam. Would you spend some time this week taking a look at what you've stored up? Getting ready for this message I've begun to look at each of my possessions differently. I may not call them superfluous or unnecessary, but I may say they need to be redeemed for Kingdom purposes. God is the giver of good gifts. He's given you what you have to enjoy. But Jesus is asking you to offer them back to him in order to advance his Kingdom. God often provides for his people through his people. What needs is God asking you to meet? God's people fund the ministry of his church. What is God asking of you as we go into the end of the year? If you own a business, how can you make that an outpost of the Kingdom? Ask God to show you what you treasure and if anything needs to change.

And as you look at your stuff, assess what catches your eye and why. Notice what stirs your heart. Is it more stuff, newer stuff, higher amounts? Or is it practical needs, opportunities to advance the Kingdom, ways to use your stuff to love people and show them Jesus even if you don't say his name? Both of those exercises will show you who you serve and if a course correction needs to be made. There is freedom and joy and purpose and gratitude on the other side of this if you let God take you there.

Close with communion. Jesus devoted his life to his Father and used all his resources, most importantly his life, for Kingdom purposes. He is our example.