

XIV. Contending and Defending the Faith in Biblical Perspective  
*Contending and Contenders—Defending and Defenders*  
“Giving to His Hands from our Hearts”  
Matthew 6:19–21  
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November 2, 2014 – Morning Sermon

We will start by looking at Matthew 6:19-21. Before I read God’s Word I want to encourage you to be at our next study on contending and defending the faith as we resume our series. The other day I was given a survey that the number one category in the state of Alabama when asked ‘what is your religion?’ the answer was ‘none.’ First of all that ought to be alerting to us but secondly, that statement is false. As you and I studied the other week everybody has a religion. In the next study I want to share with you what the real religion of America is today.

This is God’s Word. It’s the truth, infallible and inerrant. Matthew 6:19-21 says [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.* The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

We have been preparing for this Sunday for the last few weeks which is our Every Member Commitment Sunday. This isn’t just a family time to anticipate how we’re going to do ministry in the coming year but if you listen carefully you’ll not only hear something about the heartbeat of this congregation and its leadership but you’ll also hear something I think is very important from God’s Word. That is why we call upon every member to commit. It is not simply how and what but why for that is a crucial thing. Our deacons with their stewardship team have set us on a journey with this theme of ‘His Hands our heart.’

As soon as I read that theme I knew the text I would be preaching from. It is the text where our Lord brings us to our heart as to what, how and why we put what we put in His hands for His purposes. Our commitment card talks about time, treasure and talents and the reason it does that is because the whole notion of treasure goes way beyond finances. God has entrusted many things to us. He has entrusted experiences in life to you whereby He is framing you and forming you. He has entrusted to you not only parents but children for your children are a treasure that God has given to you that you must never treasure above Him but to see as a treasure from Him. He has entrusted to you not only finances but positions. He has entrusted to every single Christian a spiritual gift designed to accomplish a ministry for His glory.

So that is why we put down the treasure of time. There is a treasure God has given to each of us. All of us have different amounts of time that has been given to us as we come into this world and time is one of those treasures that is non-renewable. Once you “spend a day” that day is gone. Spend ten dollars and you could get ten more but spend a day and that one is gone. How will I commit the treasure of the time, the sunrises and sunsets, God has given to me in life? What will I prioritize in my life? How

will I spend that time and why will I spend that time that way? God has entrusted to you your children, talents – physical and spiritual, and what are you going to do with them?

I love to see people with the gift of academics, athletics and others and see how they use them for the fulfillment of His glory and in that you find your fulfillment and not waste them on ‘personal’ fulfillment. I love to see that your fulfillment is the fulfillment of His glory with the platforms of life that He has given to you. So how do you do that and why do you do that?

I believe this text today sets us on a course. I am very grateful that as I enter into something like this I can do this with the wisdom of our founding pastor, elders and deacons because what we do today is going to give direction to our deacons as to how we are going to fulfill our mission’s statement. Recently in our convocation you got to see what God did last year with what was given and it was just a taste of what He did as we sought to fulfill our commit for God’s glory Briarwood is committed to equipping Christians who will worship God and reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ.

To reach the world for Christ we do that through the offerings that we call ‘faith promises’ around February. How do we reach Birmingham to reach North America for Christ? We do that through this Every Member Commitment as we pray about how we’ll marshal our time and use it for God’s glory. How will I command the presence of my talents to be used for the Kingdom of God? How will I use treasures of resources/finances that You have entrusted to me because I am not an owner but a steward? How will I be that steward of that time, talent and treasures so that we together in obedience to Your Word can fulfill that mission that You have given to us and see what You will do?

Our elders have made a couple of policy statements that are carried out by our deacons as you give them this information. Number one is that every dollar that comes in here 50 cents here. Fifty cents out of every dollar is extended for external works of evangelism, discipleship, mercy, benevolence, church planting and revitalization, sending our missionaries locally, regionally and nationally, working through our denomination in church planting and beyond our denomination in church planting and revitalization. Here is what Paul did. When Paul went to a city he did Gospel evangelism and discipleship, Gospel church planting and revitalization, Gospel deeds of love, mercy and justice and Paul did Gospel leadership, multiplication and mobilization. So all our commitments of our time, talent and treasures are to be funneled into that and fifty cents of that goes out of Briarwood beyond us into places like Fairfield, Alabama where you see a thrift store, Restoration Academy, Mama Lois’ home, the Grace home and the home for children at risk where homeschooling is taking place for them.

We are able to do all of that and more because our founding pastor with our founding elders and deacons said ‘here’s the course we’re going to take.’ It’s been maintained and by God’s grace we have been able to grow and develop it but we have maintained that focus into Biblical strategies funded by every member committing that which God has entrusted to them for the cause of the Kingdom. Now here is the big question. How and why do you do that? God loves to take all of our gifts and abilities and use each one of us. Some have more financial resources and some less but God still loves to use each one. We all start with that leveling gift that I call ‘training wheels’ of finance and that’s called the tithe. If you make \$100 then you tithe \$10. If you make

\$1,000 you tithe \$100. So God gives us these training wheels to get started. So how and why do I move forward? Where does that lead me?

I think this text matches not only the theme that we give from our hearts into His hands to see what He does but here's the problem. When I am giving from my heart into His hands actually everything I'm giving, His hands had previously given to me. By the way, I'm giving from heart what His hands gave to me, into His hands and then God says that you're going to be My hands. It's through you I'm going to plant and revitalize churches and win these people to Christ. It's through you that I will reach out in mercy, love and justice. All of us get to do it. We all get to participate. It is our every member commitment. So how and why do we do this?

I just want to unfold this text very briefly and then at the end we'll take up our commitment cards, pray and consecrate them into this coming year as we move forward. As I was praying through this text I'd like to give you some framework around this text before we get into it. Here is your framework. You and I everyday have a treasure test. We don't all have the same amount of treasures that God has given to us but every one of us have treasures – time, talents, finances, resources, etc. All of us have been entrusted with treasures and every day is a treasure test. The key to the treasure test is the location of your treasure chest. Now let's take a closer look at this passage in Matthew 6.

First of all He gives us two commands. This text is located in the Sermon on the Mount and in this sermon He is telling us how to live for the Kingdom because you love the King who saved you – Kingdom living. Here He goes through a series of things on how to live for the Kingdom. I want to be clear here. You live for the Kingdom because the King has died, given you life and rose again. You're not living for the King to get into the Kingdom but you're living for the King because He gave Himself and brought you to the Kingdom. Now, this is what you do in adoration, allegiance and affection to the King.

We won't be covering the whole Sermon on the Mount but just these three verses where He gives us two commands. One is a negative command and one is a positive command. The negative command is do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. Moths corrupt them. Rust destroys it and thieves can break in and steal it. Don't put your treasure chest here (on earth). A chest is a chest but what makes a treasure chest a treasure chest? It is when you put treasure in it. If you lay up your treasures on earth they will be temporal, destroyed, corrupted and they can be stolen in just a moment.

Why does He do the negative command first? You and I don't start off in neutral. We are sinners saved by grace but I'm saved so you're not living under the power of sin but you still have some powerful sin living in you. You have indwelling sin. He is telling us you can't put on until you put off. So you put off this – do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth and here are some reasons why. One is that is the worst investment you can possibly make. That is a treasure chest that will never make it. People can break in a steal it. Rust can destroy it. Moths will corrupt it. You don't want to put it there. That's you're default. It's all about me and all about now but do not do it. He doesn't stop with the negative.

The purpose of the negative is to get to the positive. When the Bible says do not murder it's not just saying not to murder but it's saying to commit life. When the Bible says not to commit adultery it's not just saying not to commit adultery but it's saying to

commit purity. When it says not to steal and take it is also saying to work and give. So now I move from the negative which is my starting point to the positive.

In contrast to a treasure chest on earth, the positive is to lay up your treasures in heaven. That heartbeat I've given you, that day I've given you, that month I've given you, that spiritual gift I've given you, that physical talent I've given you, that mind I've given you, those financial resources I've given you, all those experiences I've given you whereby I'm framing, forming, building, edifying you and helping you grow in grace, I want you to take all those treasures and put them all in heaven, because He knows you give the way you live and you live for what or whom you love. Do not intentionally, thoughtfully and purposefully lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth but do lay up for yourselves the treasures in heaven.

Then the next thing He says is very interesting. Matthew 6:21 says [21] *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* Where do your treasures go? They go in your treasure chest. Where is your treasure chest? The treasure chest is what is going to get your treasures and wherever that is that is where your heart will go every day, thought after thought, decision after decision, and commitment after commitment in your life. Wherever that treasure is it will draw your heart to that point.

I want to give you the principle to that statement in Matthew 6:21. Corruptible or temporal earthly treasures can be transformed into incorruptible, heavenly, eternal treasures when Christ becomes the unrivaled treasure in your heart. There is the key. Here is this money God has given to me and here's the breath for I'm only going to have so many of them, here are my days that I'll only have so many of, here are the mental, spiritual and physical gifts that I only have for so long for all these earthly gifts that God has put into my life are all temporary and if I put them in an earthly treasure chest they can be corrupted, destroyed and stolen.

Hearing the previous testimony I noticed how your sacrificial giving put in place a facility to do a ministry intentionally to equip these young people to know Christ, love Christ, worship Christ and serve Him. One Sunday nights there are scores of our people doing life on life discipleship in the youth small groups and that's a commitment. That is where it is all working together and the financial commitment that is made because the facilities aren't going to do a single thing for these students. They just facilitate and facilitate what? That what they facilitate will be determined by who is there and what they are doing. That is what moves it forward.

I cannot tell you how grateful I am not only to have been able to follow a legacy ministry that attempts to do stewardship with a Kingdom mentality and generosity and not only receives the commitments of God's people but sends it out to Birmingham and beyond with intentionality in what we're going to do and the way it will be done. I only want to build with it and on it but I am also grateful for what I have seen in your lives. I am grateful that when we speak for that marvelous campaign 'for coming generations' where we are moving from the fifty years of celebration into the coming generations. I am so grateful for the way you committed even in those days so there are those facilities that are being used rightly. Why? Not only are they there because you committed with wisdom and personally, being focused upon Christ and the Scriptures but we have been able to add those facilities with no debt and not even bridge loans. That is because of the sacrifice and generosity of people with much and people with little giving.

One might say “pastor I just want to give the widow’s mite.” Hold on and realize that the widow’s mite was everything. It wasn’t just the tithe but it was everything. God takes all those things that He moves upon us and begins to put it together. He multiplies it so gloriously and I have had the privilege to see that. In the midst of you doing that we had the biggest faith promise at the World’s Mission Conference we have ever had. I was amazed at that. So I am amazed at the number of people that have gone into those facilities all around here to accomplish what needs to be done in evangelism, discipleship, leadership multiplication and mobilization. Then it has gone into Birmingham and beyond that.

I’m excited about the churches we will plant from this every member commitment. The church we planted in Detroit has already got a daughter church and now we have one in downtown Charleston where we are going to these cities to plant and revitalize churches where they desperately need the Gospel of saving grace in Christ. All of those things are coming out of this moment of commitment of giving today and they are being directed by the leadership and policies of our elders and the fastidiousness of our deacons and the graciousness of God’s people who say ‘here is my tithe, gifts and treasures and let’s invest it for the work of the Kingdom.’ Let’s see what the Lord will do in this and through this.

I am not here today to go to the whip or grind an axe or swing a hammer. I don’t have to for I’m just here as a pastor to share with you what Jesus said, with the vision of what it means not to be an owner but to be a steward and a vision of what it means out of gratefulness and love to Him who first loved us to put our treasure chest where it belongs. The treasure test is determined by the location of your treasure test. The treasure chest location is determined by who the supreme treasure is in your life. That’s why I have said that corruptible earthly treasures can be transformed into incorruptible heavenly treasures when Christ becomes the unrivaled treasure of our heart and lives. It is absolutely astounding to me that the placement of the treasure chest determines the longevity and the value of the treasures that have been given to me. The treasure chest is determined by the fact that Jesus is my treasure.

Remember this. Treasure can be both a noun and a verb. My treasures (noun) will be used according to what I treasure (as a verb) and when Christ is my supreme treasure then I will locate my treasures in my treasure chest in the Kingdom of heaven and then from my heart into His hands those treasures will go. So here are the takeaways that we’ll finish up with.

Here is the first takeaway. As we give from our hearts into His hands then the first takeaway is eradicates. Here is what happens. When we give our treasures from our hearts to His hands we eradicate the earthly treasure chest and we establish a heavenly treasure chest which can’t be destroyed because of Christ being the unrivaled treasure. We eradicate that which can be destroyed and needs to be destroyed (the earthly treasure chest) and we establish a heavenly treasure chest that cannot be destroyed. So the giving of our treasures becomes a statement of the true treasure of our life and it eradicates the worthless treasure chest. Then it establishes the everlasting treasure chest so that now my earthly treasures are used with the incorruptible glory for the Kingdom of God.

The second takeaway is when I give from my heart into His hands it indicates the treasure of my heart. Just look at your calendar, your finances, your budgeting process and all of those things and you’ll find out what is in your heart because it always reflects

our heart. So here is my heart Lord. My giving from my heart to His hands not only eradicates earthly treasure chests, establishes a heavenly treasure chest but it indicates what is or who is the treasure of my heart and my life.

Thirdly, it dictates or instructs my heart what to treasure. Every time I give it indicates and declares from my heart what to treasure. Tom Cheely and I had an interesting discussion at about 40,000 feet in the air one time about giving, coming back from a mission trip. Tom said "I want you to know that if people get their heart right then they will give their treasures. So we need to pray that people will get their heart right." I said "Tom, I agree but did you know that not only the giving of our treasures indicate to our hearts something but the giving of our hearts dictates to our heart." It instructs our heart. Look at that last verse again.

Matthew 6:21 says [21] *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* I would also say that like this; where your heart is, there will your treasure be also. I think that is true as well but Jesus says where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. So where my treasure is put, what chest I put it into, not only allows me to put the test of my treasures in the location of my treasure chest and it indicates my heart but it also instructs my heart every time I do it. I want to share this story with you.

My grandfather explained to me what it meant to be faithful with the tithe and then he took me to my dad and he explained it to me. I then remembered it but didn't observe it because I wasn't a believer and wasn't drawn to the tithe or the offerings or anything like that. Then I got married and saved and then it came time for me to give. So I'm a Christian and I'm going to give. I was working my way through school, had three jobs and brought home \$350 a week. We would go to church and I'd put \$10 in the offering plate. My wife (I love her patience and kindness with me) was constantly irritating me saying "Why don't we tithe?" I said "What do you mean tithe? What's a tithe?" She said "It's a tenth." I said "Ok, tithe, tenth, ten." She said "It ought to be \$35 because we're making \$350 a week." I said "It's the spirit of the thing, honey."

In the meantime, I lost two of my jobs and the one job I had left I made \$100 a week. So I got the message from the Lord when He said "Harry, if you want to call \$10 a tithe then I'll make it a tithe." Then I went down to \$75 a week and then I remember the wonderful moment in our life when we decided before the Lord "I surrender, I give, here we are from my heart You have taught me, instructed me and here is our \$7.50 tithe and our 25 cents for missions" and that's when we started. I cannot tell you how much I praise the Lord for that day and where that has led me since then. God had to get to my heart about what was important and the Lord would be my treasure.

I want to try and illustrate it two ways and then I'll close in prayer. When my son went to Austria as a missionary for a couple of years, other than where Austria was located and the little I knew about European history, I didn't know anything about Austria. Would you like to know how much I found out about Austria and the work of the Kingdom in those two years? I became a walking expert because I had a treasure there and it was my son. Austria became really important to my heart. I still pray for Austria because I know the work of the Gospel is there but I don't really know what's going on over there anymore because my son isn't there anymore. My heart is not as drawn there as it was before. Not only does our treasure placing indicate our heart but it also dictates and instructs our heart as to what to treasure and how to treasure.

I don't think I've ever experienced this anymore than in 1985 which was my first trip to Uganda. I went to preach in the killing fields of Idi Amin. Right before I arrived, Idi Amin had killed hundreds of Christians. He had taken their bodies and used them as road filler and they had broken up the road and pulled bodies out of your brothers and sisters which happened in 1983. I was there preaching to the pastors who were preaching to these people who had given their lives for Jesus. I was there for two days and at the end of each day standing in that hot, African sun I was just worn out. I got to the end of my trip and there was a deacon in the church there. He was a small man wearing ragged clothes and he would come up to me and say "Pastor, are you thirsty?" I'd say 'yes' through an interpreter and he'd say "Soda, soda?" I said "Yes, yes" and he would run two miles there and back to get me one.

We happen to become such good friends that when I left another man who was closer to his size took some of his stuff and I took some of my stuff and gave it to this deacon. His face lit up and through an interpreter he said "God, sent you from America to give me this. Now I have something to give to people who have needs." I said "No, it's for you." He said "No pastor, I'm a deacon. God gave this to me to give to people who have needs." I pleaded with him to keep them and said "I'll send more for them but I want you to take these." He finally agreed to take them and I turned to leave. As I walked out I looked back he had gone up to the front of the church, knelt at the pulpit in front of the communion table, he had placed the clothes there and with his hands held up in the Ugandan language began to sing the Doxology.

Where our treasure is there our heart will be also. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we can spend together in Your Word. Thank You for the great privilege to serve You among these people. Thank You for what You allow us to do in serving. Now Father, we from our hearts give to Your hands what Your hands have already given to us but we're just stewards, we're not the owners so we gladly give. Then we also give of ourselves to be Your hands. Take a few moments in silent prayer. Consecrate yourself. Lord, may Christ be the supreme treasure of my heart that my treasure chest is located in the Kingdom of heaven therefore the test of the treasure is merely the opportunity to lay up praise to Christ. We commit this with the sure knowledge of the compassion and the power of the Gospel, in Jesus' Name, for Your treasure whom You gave for us who is now the Treasure of our hearts, Amen.