

Treasures in the Presence of the Father

Matthew 6:19-24

Introduction – This chapter has focused on our life in the presence of our Father in heaven. The first half instructed us particularly with regard to our personal piety, our lived-out faith. This second half will address our relationship as creatures to creaturely comforts. One man said this passage could be summed up this way - God does not mind His people having things; He forbids things having His people. Christ attacks two great temptations. The first temptation is to give your love and loyalty to the things of this world (vv 19-24). The second is to depend upon the gifts rather than the Giver to supply your needs (vv 25-34). Today, we examine the first.

Investing in the Right Treasures (vv 19-21) –

Jesus is not against investment – He is against bad investment. We are built to give ourselves to certain ends. The problem ultimately, is not that our desires for happiness are too strong, but that they are too weak, settling for the fleeting pleasures of sin which never satisfy the soul and eventually destroy us. As C. S. Lewis said, we are far too easily pleased.

Thieves – So, we have no choice; we will lay up treasure. The only question is where. We must be very aware that the vast majority of our culture is bent to make it their supreme aim in life to acquire as much as possible of worldly wealth. If you live like Esau (Heb 12:16) or the man building barns (Luke 12:13ff), you are an idolater (Col 3:5). If you live like Abraham (Gen 15:1), who was a rich man, you will lay up for yourself incorruptible treasure (1 Pet 1:4) and the benefits in this life of those treasures.

The Measure – The problem is not having earthly riches, but before the rich breathe a sigh of relief, remember the warnings (Matt 9:23f), and the exhortations (1 Tim 6:17-19). The measure is your heart. How do you know if you really are laying treasures in heaven? Simple. Where is your heart, that is, the center of your being, your desires, your love, your affections, your imagination? Where is the center of all your plans, and is this obvious to all around you?

The Lamp of the Body (vv 22-23) – Jesus is not changing the subject, but is using Hebrew idioms as illustrations for identifying the location of your heart. “The lamp of the body is the eye.” This proverb simply is describing what we experience. If we are blind, it is as though our whole body walks in darkness. If we can see, the eye acts as a lamp for the rest of the body. “...if your eye is good (single)” meant generosity, and “...if your eye is evil” meant miserliness or stinginess (see Prov 28:22). Your life is full of light when you are full of generosity and an open-handedness with your earthly goods. Notice that this is not a command, but a description. You cannot do this mechanically, rather, just like the Beatitudes, this is the work of God’s gracious Spirit in you.

Serving the Right Master (v 24) –

Serve – This verb, *douleuo*, means “to be a slave unto”. That is why the term ‘master’ is being used. You are going to serve somebody, this is something else we cannot escape.

Mammon – Some translations may say ‘money’, but the word is broader. It is anything connected with the world; it is the temporary things. It can be used to describe wealth or property, but with an emphasis on worldly things.

No Third Way – Christ is being very clear. You cannot serve two masters. When commands come from two contradicting authorities, the one you obey is lord. John makes this clear in his epistle – “*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*” (1 John 2:15-17) God has always hated middle-of-the-road hypocrisy – “*They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; With flattering lips and a double heart they speak.*” (Psalm 12:2).

Holy Honesty – This passage has been full of radical opposites, with no room for third options or fence-sitting. Your treasure is in heaven or it is here. Your eye is good or it is evil. You are either a slave to God or to this world. Men will object, “but no one is perfect. We all sin in many ways.” That is not the point. The point is, right now, are you serving God or Mammon, and where is your treasure. The regenerate heart repents when the Spirit convicts.

If you think that the most important thing is comfort, wealth, enjoyment, or power here on earth – that is what you will be driven by. But the man who has treasures on earth will not be honest with himself. Where is your heart?

And who is your Master? Is there a desire to comply with the total demands of Christ? He is either Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all. You must give your master complete obedience (Deut 6:5). He must be given your supreme devotion over everything else (Luke 14:25-33). Your devotion must be total (Matt 16:24-27).

And you must remember – There is no better Master than Christ alone. There are no better treasures than those laid up in heaven. This is not about being an ascetic. This is about eternal joy in the glory of God. “*God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.*” – John Piper