

WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE? – MATTHEW 6:19-24

INTRO.:

1. ILLUST.: The story is told of a very wealthy man who was near death:
 - a. He had repeatedly heard the phrase, "You can't take it with you." but he vowed to do it anyway.
 - b. So he sold all his possessions and had all of his money converted into gold bars and put them in a big sack and left instructions that when he was buried that sack would be placed around his neck.
 - c. Well he died and arrived at the pearly gates with this sack of gold around his neck.
 - d. Peter met him and told him he would have to leave that sack behind.
 - e. But the man insisted and said, "No, I'm taking this in with me!"
 - f. Peter said, "You cannot take this with you into heaven. If you won't leave it behind then I have no choice but to send you to hell."
 - g. The man said, "Well, okay...I'll go to hell because I will not enter heaven without the contents of this sack."
 - h. Peter said, "Well, okay.... but before you head off to hell, could I look in the bag to see what is so precious to you that you would be willing to give up heaven for it?"
 - i. Reluctantly the man allowed him to do look inside his sack and when Peter looked in the bag he exclaimed, "You gave up Heaven for pavement?"
2. As Jesus continues to talk about the righteousness that exceeds, he now gets into an area that hits home to each one of us – Our possessions.
 - a. It seems that there is nothing more revealing in a Christian's life than looking at their attitude toward their material possessions.
 - b. Whether we have a lot, or very little, our attitude toward our material possessions is a revealing barometer of our spiritual condition.
 - c. The simple fact is that we all struggle with materialism.
 - 1) Money magazine has declared that money is now the #1 obsession of Americans.
 - 2) Problems over finances is the #1 reason listed for people getting a divorce.
 - 3) Newsweek reported that we have achieved a new plane of consciousness called "transcendental acquisition."
 - a) In one of their cover stories (8/27/01) they told of a woman who is saddled with debt.
 - i This woman from Dallas rather than trying to break free from the "credit drug," charged a diving trip to the French East Indies on her credit card.
 - ii When asked about it she responded: "I've spoiled myself and I can't change my habits now."
 - b) By the way, did you know that the average credit cardholder has over \$8,100 in credit-card debt?
 - 4) John Stott stated the problem this way: "We cannot maintain a life of extravagance and a good conscience simultaneously. One or the other has to be sacrificed. Either we keep our conscience and reduce our affluence by giving generously and helping those in need, or we keep our affluence and smother our conscience. We have to choose between God and money."
3. I feel that the reason Jesus included this section in the Sermon on the Mount is that He knew that if our heart is not right concerning our possessions, then our heart is not right toward God.
 - a. If we are not obedient to God in the area of our possessions, then God is not pleased with our life.
 - b. If we are unwilling to give up anything that comes between us and God, then we are not fit to be citizens in His kingdom.
4. Thus, in Matt. 6:19-24, Jesus begins, as usual, by presenting a great spiritual principle and then expanding on it: (Read).
5. The AM let us look at what Jesus taught regarding true wealth.

LESSON:

- I. Jesus began this section by contrasting two types of treasures, or wealth.
- A. As we go through this passage there are a couple of key points we need to remember.
1. 1st: What was Jesus referring to when he spoke of “*treasures*?”
 - a. Immediately when we hear the word treasure our mind begins to thinking in terms of money.
 - b. While the word “*treasure*” can includes money; it can also refer to much more than money.
 - c. Our “*treasure*” may be a home, it may be a person, it may be our children or grandchildren, or it may be a position that we hold or seek after.
 - d. Simply, anything that means everything to you - that is your treasure...anything you find of great importance to you - that is your treasure.
 2. 2nd: The key to understanding this passage is found in the words, “*laying up*.”
 - a. The “*laying up*” is something that we are doing right now!
 - b. Right now we are laying up treasures either “*upon earth*” or “*in heaven*”.
 - c. Right now we are showing what is really important to us.
- B. With these thoughts in mind let us now go back to our text and notice how Jesus said that everything we value in life can be divided into one of two baskets.
1. One basket is labeled “*treasure on earth*” and the other is labeled “*treasure in heaven*.”
 2. Everyday we are making choices about which treasure we are going to seek after as we invest the finite resources we have available to us.
 3. The question is: Which basket is going to get priority? Which basket will get our treasures?
 - a. Is it going to be treasures on earth or treasure in heaven?
 - b. Daily we make the choice!
- C. Notice the two baskets and what each contains:
1. 1st: There is the basket of earthly treasures.
 - a. These are tangible, material values, which we expect to enjoy now.
 - b. These include material things like money, houses, cars, clothes, stock portfolios, education and the like.
 - c. It can also include less tangible things like the praise of men, achieving “success”, gaining professional credentials, reaching career goals, and so on.
 - d. These are all the things that Jesus referred to in Matt. 6:32: (Read).
 2. 2nd: There is the basket of heavenly treasures:
 - a. These are the intangible, the immaterial: 1 Tim. 6:17-19: (Read).
 - b. These treasures involve actions and deeds, not physical possessions.
 - c. They are things we are doing now, but will enjoy the benefits of later: Mt. 25:34-40: (Read).
 - d. These are treasures that are within the reach of every individual regardless of their position in life.
 - 1) These treasures deal with our attitudes and deeds.
 - 2) They deal with how we respond to the needs of others.
- D. Finally, as we look at these two baskets, let us notice what Jesus said about their ability to last.
1. 1st: The basket of earthly treasures is short-lived.
 - a. Earthly treasures will not last.
 - 1) Jesus said there were three specific problems with earthly treasures: Moths, rust, and thieves.
 - a) Moths - In ancient times, wealth was measured in part by clothing.
 - i. Garments represented a considerable investment.
 - ii. The best clothes were made of wool.
 - iii. No matter how beautiful the clothing, moths would often attack and chew right through the garments ruining its value.

- b) Rust - Coupled with the attack of the moths, rust would corrode and consume things of value.
 - i. How many tools have you lost to rust?
 - ii. How many cars which were once the pride and joy of their owner - are now just piles of rust in some junk yard?
- c) Thieves – In ancient times valuables were often buried out in the field or hidden in a brick wall.
 - i. Back then, thieves would literally break into the walls and dig up the yard as they searched for valuables.
 - ii. Today, we find that things have not changed much, as there are people out there who are always trying to take what you have, whether scammers or the government.
- 2) Jesus simply tells us that if our treasures are upon this earth we can be sure of one thing: We will lose them!
- 3) There is no way that we can preserve them for ourselves.
 - a) What the moths and the rust do not destroy, thieves will steal!
 - b) "*For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*" (1 Tim. 6:7).
- 4) And even if we manage to hold on to them till we die, someone else will get them and enjoy them.
- b. Earthly treasures will not satisfy.
 - 1) Somehow we believe that if we can just get enough stuff, we will be happy.
 - 2) We crave something, and the moment we get it there is a sense of disappointment.
 - 3) You want verification of that?
 - a) Look in your closet...
 - b) Look in your children's toy box...
 - c) Look in your attic, or storage shed....
 - d) Look at the number of garage sales (auctions, etc.)...
 - 4) ILLUST.: A man sat across from a woman who was a chain smoker.
 - a) She lit one cigarette after another until the entire pack was gone.
 - b) When she finished she crumpled the package and tossed it on the ground.
 - c) The man happened to notice that across the front of the package it read: "The Taste That Satisfies!"
- c. The problem with earthly treasures is that they do not last and that they only bring temporary satisfaction, at best!
- 2. 2nd: The basket of heavenly treasures lasts eternally.
 - a. Jesus said heavenly treasures never lose their value and can never be lost to such things as moths, rust, or thieves.
 - b. Heavenly treasures, will last forever, never fading: 1 Pet. 1:3-4: (Read).
 - c. The storms and disappointments of life will never be able to separate you from these treasures (Rom. 8:28-39).
- 3. The issue is not whether we will store up wealth – That is a given.
 - a. The only question is where we will do our banking.
 - b. Since earthly treasures are unstable and insecure, Jesus challenges us to make long-term investments that are permanent and guaranteed.
 - c. Deposits made in the First National Bank of Heaven will not decay or disappear.
 - d. They are protected and insured by God Himself.

II. Coming back to our text we find Jesus now reveals a grave danger to us: The possession of our treasure is something that will involve every part of our being:

A. 1st: It involves the heart: Vs. 21: (Read).

- 1. Our treasures will grip us whether they are of earth or of heaven.
- 2. To put it plainly, it is not that our treasures follow our heart, but that our hearts follow our treasures.

- a. ILLUST.:
- 1) Every Friday night a young man would get off work and get in his car to drive a hundred and fifty miles down a desolate road to another town where he would stay overnight, spend all day Saturday, and then drive back a hundred and fifty miles to his own home.
 - 2) He did this week after week for about two years.
 - 3) Why? Because he had a girl friend in that city.
 - 4) His treasure was there and it drew him like a magnet and he committed himself to all that was involved in driving a three hundred mile round trip every weekend, in order to be with her.
 - 5) That is the power of a treasure.
3. So we can see the great danger involved if our treasures are earthly (material).
- a. If our affections are centered on things we begin to love things and use people, rather than love people and use things.
 - b. We discover that we are ready to fight for those things that we love...they have claimed our affections.
 - c. We become bitter and angry when someone attempts to take away what we have set up as our treasures.
 - d. So we find that our treasures reveal where our heart actually is.
 - e. You will never be able to get your heart focused on heaven as long as your attention is on material things.
- B. It involves our mind: Vs. 22-23: (Read).
1. Jesus is saying that there are only two ways to look at things:
 - a. Single-eyed: With a spiritual mind, which properly evaluates treasure and therefore can see everything clearly and truly.
 - b. Evil-eyed: With a carnal, material mind, which blurs and distorts the vision and clouds our perception of what is truly valuable.
 2. What the heart seizes upon or treasures, the mind begins to justify its acquisition.
 - a. We are experts at explaining our extravagances.
 - b. "My car needed a new muffler, the tires are just about shot, it will cost nearly \$500 to fix it up...so I go out and buy a new one. Payments are only \$300 a month for the next seven years!"
 3. Jesus said, "*...if therefore the light that is in thee is darkness, how great is that darkness!*"
 4. Our sense of value is often darkened by our desire for things.
- C. 3rd: It involves our will: Vs. 24: (Read).
1. When we use the word "serve" we move from the realm of actions and choice, to that of decision.
 2. When wealth or the things of this world are coveted, they become the priority in our lives; they become our "god" or "master."
 - a. They become a false god that pushes us farther and father away from the one True God.
 - b. It is a god that says "Get, get, get;" while the true God says, "Give, give, give."
 - c. It leads us to invest our time, talents, etc. into things that really are not important in life.
 - d. And when we make our possessions our god, it will not be long until they begin to possess us.
 3. There is no middle ground: We either serve God or mammon (money).
 - a. These are two exclusive absolutes.
 - b. In this text Jesus views money as a rival for preeminence with God.
 - 1) If you are serving the Money Master, Jesus says you will not be able to fully serve God.
 - a) He does not say, "You better not" or "it would be unwise to serve both."
 - b) He says, "You cannot serve both God and money."
 - 2) As a result, how we handle our money has a lot to do with how serious we are about obeying God.
 - a) If you love money, you will end up hating God.
 - b) If you are devoted to the pursuit of possessions and the making of money, you will find yourself despising the things of God.
 - c. Thus, each one of us must decide whom we will serve.

- d. We may talk about God all the time, but if materialism controls us we are actually serving the wrong god.
 - 4. This brings us back to the beginning where Jesus commanded us not to lay up treasures on earth, but in heaven.
 - 5. The choice is ours: Christianity is not so much what we say, as it is what we do! What we treasure the most in life!
- D. Looking at these three areas we can ask ourselves some serious questions by which we can test ourselves to see who, or what, really is our God:
1. 1st: The realm of the heart.
 - a. Ask yourself, "What are my feelings toward material things, material values?
 - 1) Do I find them very important to me?
 - 2) Am I deeply disturbed if there is something I want but I cannot have it, or that I have and lose?
 - 3) Does it upset me?
 - b. Or, do I think of myself as a pilgrim, a sojourner passing through this earthly life?
 - c. Can I regard these things with a kind of detachment, an objectivity that allows me to use them but not to be bound to them?
 - d. What excites me the most – earth or heaven?
 - e. Which place makes my heart beat faster?"
 2. 2nd: The realm of the mind.
 - a. Ask yourself, "Do I find it necessary to explain why I have things or want things?"
 - b. Do I act on impulse and justify it later?
 - c. Do I desire something and then seek the reasons why I should have it?
 - d. Is my mind, in other words, engaged in the task of rationalizing and justifying that which my emotions desire?
 - e. Do I operate according to God's priorities, or my own?"
 3. 3rd: The realm of the will.
 - a. This is perhaps the most revealing of all, because if we answer this honestly it will show us whether we have been deceiving ourselves in the other two areas.
 - b. "Would I honestly exert the same effort to snatch up a spiritual opportunity as I would to take advantage of material one?"
 - c. Would I exert the same effort to find a lost soul, as I do for finding a treasure in an antique store?"

CONC.:

1. In this passage Jesus issues a challenge to each one of us: Where really is your treasure?
 - a. Is your treasure in the things here on earth?
 - 1) Do you live for, long for, and work for the things that will perish with using?
 - 2) Do you worry and fret that something may happen to take all that you have worked so hard for away in an instant?
 - 3) And have you allowed that attitude to keep you from putting God and His kingdom first in your life?
 - b. Or, is your treasure being stored up in heaven?
 - 1) Have you truly put God and His kingdom first in your life?
 - 2) Are you living each day so that no matter what the "storms of life" may bring your way, you can look confidently ahead?
 - 3) Do you live daily with the confidence that no matter what happens in this world nothing can take away the treasures God has stored up for you in heaven?
2. Simply, what are you really seeking in life?