

Treasures of the Heart
Matthew 6:19-24

Where do you look to measure your priorities as a Christian? Are your Christian priorities found from how much time you read your bible or how much time you pray? Very important things in our lives as followers of Jesus Christ, but do those demonstrate where our priorities are truly at? What about where you serve in the church? We are always asking for volunteers, and we need an army of volunteers to do what we do at RMBC, but is your volunteering, the areas where you serve the indicator of your priorities as a disciple of Jesus? Again, an important thing to do and a prime way in which God grows us as His people. As important as prayer, Bible reading and study, and service are, and please hear me, they are critically important in the life of a disciple of Jesus, Jesus says to us that it's where our treasure is, and Jesus is not speaking in an esoteric, obscure, or euphemistic way – when Jesus talks about our treasures, He's talking about our material resources, He's talking about how we use our money. Your checkbook or online bank statement, Jesus says, is a if not the key indicator of your true priorities as a follower of His. Jesus famously says in Matthew 6:21, a verse most of us could likely quote, but does the verse actually have sway in our lives, says, *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Friends, as we have been confronted with over and over in Matthew's gospel, with the breaking in of the kingdom of God in to our world in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the question that keeps being pressed upon is, as a disciple of Jesus Christ as a follower of Jesus Christ, as a Christian has the kingdom of God also penetrated into our hearts?

Having established the intent of God's Law in chapter 5, that the Law is a matter of internal change not mere external practice, in Chapter 6, Jesus moves to some practical examples of this heart change in our lives. For the last five weeks we've been looking at how Jesus' kingdom people are to live the kingdom life, to live their religious lives in a public setting. In the second half of chapter 6 which we'll look at this week and next week, Jesus turns His attention to an interior religious life. We've been looking mostly at the things that effect the heart, now we are looking at the things the heart has effect on. And it's not on accident that both of the examples Jesus will discuss in the second part of chapter 6 deals with the effect money has on our hearts. Look with me at Matthew 6:19; Jesus says, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 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! “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.”* As chapter 6 closes out, Jesus asks two questions about our discipleship as it relates to our money – Is God and His kingdom a priority with your money, and two, do you trust God or money for your security? We are going to look at the first question today, and Pastor Joel will be looking at the second question next Sunday.

The key question Jesus is asking in chapter 6:19-24 is if God and his kingdom or me and my kingdom hold priority as a disciple of the Lord Jesus. Jesus beings by contrasting two treasures. The first in verse 19 is earthly treasure. Three characteristics attend to all earthly treasures: **they can deteriorate** (the moth can come in and destroy), **they can decompose** (rust can also destroy our earthly treasures), **and we can be deprived of our earthly treasures** (because they can be stolen). We all know this, if you value clothing, they can get holes or stained or torn over time clothes wear out. Precious metals, gold, silver, even platinum can tarnish or take on a patina with age. And any earthly treasure runs the risk of being stolen by someone else.

But if we know that earthly treasures can deteriorate, decompose, and we can be deprived of them – why are they so alluring, why do we give so much of our time, attention, and material resources to procure, and protect them? Material possessions, money, wealth however you want to label it is alluring because of what it promises. Earthly treasures **promise security**. If I have this much then I'll be taken care of. Except when I've reached the goal of “this much” my security needs change and I need a little more. Earthly treasures also **promise personal worth**. If I

have this thing or have this size bank account then I'll be something, I'll be someone of value. Yet how often as quickly as the wealth and friends come, as the wealth goes so goes your friends.

Earthly treasures also **promise power**. He who has the gold makes the rules, we say, and there is some truth to it, in this life. But power predicated on earthly treasures lasts only as long as the treasures themselves. Earthly treasures also **promise independence**, often leading one to see themselves as their own god and others as unnecessary. Finally earthly treasures **promise pleasure**, with wealth and material resources we can indulge our every fantasy, the exotic vacation, the newest camper and dirt bikes, or a decadent home, but again this is for a time and often without thought to the added costs this will bring.

In contrast to this mentality, Jesus calls his followers to store treasures not on earth but in heaven, and the reason is the very things that cause problems for earthly treasures, have no effect on heavenly treasures. Three characteristics of heavenly treasures is that they don't deteriorate but **improve**. We improve when we invest in our growth as believers in Jesus, more than that, we can improve others when we invest in their growth as disciples and followers of Jesus. We may think this is merely an issue of time, but it takes treasure it takes money to bring improvement and growth to a disciple. Heavenly treasures also **increase** rather than decompose. The parable of the seeds, from Matthew 13, tells us that the seed that fell into good soil produced a crop 30, 60, or 100 times what was sown. Heavenly treasures return an increase. And, when we store up heavenly treasures, we can be assured of **true security**. The store houses of heaven cannot be broken into. God Himself is the keeper and one who will protect what is kept there.

And to drive the point home, verse 21, "...where your treasure is there your heart will be." Friends, Jesus does not sugar coat the demands of discipleship. If we want to know if our priorities are lining up with the values of the kingdom, **our treasures will tell us where our hearts are deposited.**

But Jesus has more to say, there are two treasures, and there are also two eyes. Verse 22, "*The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 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!*" At first glance, you might be thinking what in the world does this have to do with my money and my discipleship. Hang with me as we look at this because it has direct relevance. In verse 22 and 23 Jesus is using an ancient idiom. When Jesus speaks of **the healthy eye His audience understands that this is a person who gives a look of good will and kindness towards others**. This is a person who **wishes others well and rejoices in their prosperity**. The idea of a healthy eye bring light to your whole body means is talking about generosity towards another. Further, the light that the healthy eye produces deals not only with **what we see but how we see it, how we perceive it**. Jesus says when we are looking at someone or something with a healthy eye we are seeing it for the good value that it has or seeing it with an eye towards the benefit it might have for someone else. In the context of Jesus' teaching a healthy eye is one that is **generous towards God for the sake of His kingdom.**

The healthy eye is contrasted with the **bad eye**, or as we know it, the evil eye. This idiom Jesus uses is a reminder that the Bible was not written with western thinking in mind. The idea of the evil eye in the ancient world and even now in the modern Middle East is very real. To Jesus' audience, the evil eye, or the bad eye, was given from someone **who feels no joy for others, and may even feel distress at their fortune**. This is a person who can never rejoice in the fortune of another, or any time they see something you have it is looked at with a coveting intent. And what Jesus is wanting us to understand is that with the bad eye, the evil eye, is that our resources, my resources, my material things can cloud and distort my vision. In context, Jesus is saying that possessing the bad eye or the evil eye is to be **selfish towards God for the sake of my own kingdom**. What Jesus is saying is that **the eye reveals the character of the person.**

Jesus says there are two treasures that contrast with one another, the treasures of earth and the treasures of heaven. And there are two distinct eyes from one another, the healthy eye generous with our resources towards the kingdom of God, and the bad evil eye selfish with our resources and centered in our own kingdom.

Two treasures, two eyes, and Jesus says, there are two masters – but you can only serve one. Verse 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.” Older translations say, you cannot serve both God and mammon, with **mammon being a personification of wealth, riches, and prosperity**. And friends, Jesus’ message is exceedingly clear; **Jesus’ disciples cannot have divided loyalties**, and that’s often the problem when we come to a passage like this. We believe we are able to serve both. We believe we really can have both – we can have our kingdom and we can have God’s. But let me ask you, when we talk about money in church, how comfortable are you really with serving both your money and God? When you look at your checkbook, what would show as your true priorities? What would show as your true loyalties? The Bible does not teach us that every dollar we make is only God honoring if we give it to God, that is not what Jesus is teaching here and that is not what I am saying either. But friends, are our loyalties to God, are we about seeing God’s kingdom built or our own? Are we using our material wealth to expand God’s kingdom or our own? Do we give the first fruits of our material resources to God, or does God get what’s left over after we take care of me? Are you tithing from your income, maybe a tithe of 10% is just to much at this time in your life, but are you allowing God to be master of your money or has your money mastered you?

This is what Jesus is saying, we can either use our material wealth for God and His glory, or we can use our money for me and my glory – but we can’t do both, only one can be our master, only one will be our master. **We can serve God with our wealth, or we will serve our wealth as our god**. The Bible does not say that money is the root of all evil, but it is the love of money that is the root of all evil.

Jesus calls His followers to use their material resources for His kingdom and purposes. Christian, can you say you are using your material resources, your wealth, your money – and again the size of the bank account is not the issue, the issue is again one of the heart. Is my heart set on the things of God am I storing up my treasures in heaven, or is my heart set on the things of this earth? As a Christian am I using the material resources God has entrusted me to steward for momentary satisfaction or lasting satisfaction, for temporary purposes or eternal purposes? In the world, no matter how you slice it, money is the lord and all things are mastered by it. In the church, Jesus is Lord and we are to be mastered by Him. Jesus has more to say about money and our use of it as Christians, but for now His point is clear – where are your treasures stored, do you invest for temporary or eternal returns? With what eye do you view your treasures, a healthy generous eye, or an evil selfish eye? Who is your master, God or money – for there can only be one.