

Matthew 6:19 ¶ Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.<sup>20</sup> "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;<sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.<sup>22</sup> "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.<sup>23</sup> "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!<sup>24</sup> "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

The entire course of the Sermon on the Mount has been set by Jesus to address everything that we do as a matter of the heart. The beatitudes are given to us as the norms of the Christian life and each requires a heart condition that is in agreement with God's purposes for His kingdom people.

After the beatitudes Jesus addressed a number of misunderstood commands from the Law of Moses and told the people that He was the fulfillment of all the Law and the Prophets and He said "but I say unto you". In doing so He established himself as the New Covenant Lawgiver and all the Law of God was now to be interpreted by His words and by His example. The righteousness of Christ's disciples in the kingdom age is to exceed that of the Pharisees in quality.

Then Jesus addressed a number of religious practices and the external shows of piety that were meant to prove how righteousness a person was and Jesus declared it all to be hypocrisy and nothing but a theater of piety. These were the giving of alms, praying and fasting.

Following this Jesus taught how His disciples should pray by giving a model for prayer and the way that God should be truly honored in prayer.

All of these things are meant to teach that God looks at the heart, the spiritual condition of the inner man and that God requires a right attitude of heart in every part of His people's lives.

In our text this morning, the heart is again the target for teaching only now rather than looking to externals that are wrong because the heart is not right Jesus takes on the heart directly by questioning motives and the condition of the heart of those who would be His disciples.

His first statement concerns the accumulation of wealth: the motivation for it and the use of it.

Let's begin by noticing what Jesus does not say.

He does not say do not work for a living. He does not say do not save or invest any of your money. He does not say that we must take a vow of poverty to serve God in an honorable way.

None of these things contradicts trusting God for our daily bread.

Jesus is saying do not hoard what I provide for you by grace and by your labors the way a selfish and greedy miser hoards all for himself without any consideration of anyone else. This is the idea of storing and laying up treasures on the earth.

Doing this is earthly, it is worldly, it is not heavenly in its purpose. It is not a reflection of seeking God and His righteousness. It is not acknowledging that God is the one who has prospered you in the material realm. It is selfish and says I have earned this and I have all claim and right to it. Jesus expects this of those who are not his disciples but it is not the attitude of the heart that is to be found in Jesus' kingdom dwellers.

Jesus is not saying that material wealth in and of itself is evil. But Paul echoes Jesus' thoughts when he writes to Timothy 1Ti 6:10\* **For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.**

Jesus warns that when it is hoarded it gives opportunity for rust to destroy it and for moths to eat it and for thieves to steal it.

Treasures, or wealth, among the ancients, consisted in clothes, or changes of raiment, as well as in gold, silver, gems, wine, lands, and oil. It meant an abundance of anything that was held to be conducive to the ornament or comfort of life. As the Orientalists delighted much in display, in splendid equipage, and costly garments, their treasures, in fact, consisted much in beautiful and richly ornamented articles of apparel. When a Hebrew or an Orientalist spoke of wealth, he thought *first* of what would make *display*, and included, as an essential part; splendid articles of dress.

We are warned that hoarding material wealth leads to corruption of the heart.

Jesus is teaching that the motives of the heart and doing things in a manner that honors God is what is most important, not the treasure itself. The heart is the concern here because the heart is so deceptive. The integrity of the heart, the direction of the heart needs to be for God, not the treasure. The treasure, gained by right means is God's provision and must be used in a godly manner. This does not mean that you cannot buy clothes but are you buying them to clothe yourself to make a deliberate display of your clothing if it has been costly. This does not mean you cannot purchase books or some form of entertainment or improve something in your home or take a vacation to think in modern terms of how we may spend some of our material gain. But are you doing any of it to display your wealth, or to keep up with the Joneses and show off that you are climbing the corporate ladder and gaining financially?

If you have purchased a larger home, do you really need it? Are you using the extra room for missionary guests or even to help someone in need, under the right circumstances?

We all know that there is a natural grief that comes to us when we are too attached to any material things even if we are not being miserly. I lost all of my possessions in a fire before I was a believer. My wife and I have had one car completely ruined after being hit by drunk teens, my home broken into more than once, with much loss of property, and another car broken into since I have been a believer. Sometimes the grief is more for sentimental reasons than for the things in and of themselves but we grieve in some sense for a period of time. It may be expressed by anger, sadness or frustration.

Memories are attached to many of our possessions and we do not want to lose those things that bring back precious memories. There is nothing wrong with that as long as we do not let it lead to bitterness or sadness or fear that it may occur again. That takes us away from a godly mindset.

The moths can destroy the clothes even today but so may other things. The rust can be anything that eats away, or corrodes like mold or damage from other vermin like rats and each is destructive in its own way.

"In 1923, a very important meeting was held at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Attending this meeting were nine of the world's most successful financiers. Those present were: The president of the largest independent steel company; the president of the largest utility company; the president of the largest gas company; the greatest wheat speculator; the president of the New York Stock Exchange; a member of the president's cabinet; the greatest "bear" in Wall Street; head of the world's greatest monopoly; president of the Bank of International Settlements. Certainly we must admit that here were gathered a group of the world's most successful men. At least, men who had found the secret of "making money." Twenty-five years later in 1948, let's see where these men were: The president of the largest independent steel company -- Charles Schwab -- died bankrupt and lived on borrowed money for five years before his death; the president of the largest utility company -- Samuel Insull -- died a fugitive from justice and penniless in a foreign land; the president of the largest gas company -- Howard Hospson -- is now insane; the greatest wheat speculator -- Arthur Cutten -- died abroad -insolvent; the president of the New York Stock Exchange -Richard Whitney -- was being released from Sing Sing Penitentiary; the member of the president's cabinet -- Albert Fall -- suicide; the president of the Bank of International Settlements -- Leon Fraser -- died a suicide." "All of these men learned well the art of making money but not one of them learned how to live." --S K. Evans

Jesus says that we are to store up our treasures in heaven, where these things will not be destroyed. The things we have and can have can be enjoyed and used well but neither they nor the desire for having them is to have first place in our hearts. Even a hobby can become a form of idolatry if it takes the place of God in your life. What we have is for our benefit, but what is the condition of our heart when we are blessed with material gain?

Jesus next teaches about the eye being a direct channel to the heart.

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.<sup>23</sup> "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

The use of eye here is significant in that when the eye is clear it has a single object of focus that is beneficial to the body. If you attempt to even walk when your eyes are dimming or are afflicted in some manner that clouds your vision and there is not enough light you may seriously injure yourself by falling or walking into an object that could hurt you. When your peripheral vision is impaired you can easily be in jeopardy at times because of a narrow pathway of vision. People who train in gymnastics and figure skating and in dancing learn to pick a fixed mark somewhere to keep them from getting dizzy or losing their balance when turning or spinning.

So Jesus says in order for our living to be right we are to fix the focus of our affections on heaven.

The gaze of our spiritual eyes, the eyes of faith if you will are to be set on the things that bring light to us, the things that are the truth, the things that teach us of Christ. Having the affections there--having the eye of faith *single*, steady, unwavering brings our conduct our actions in order with Christ's commands.

**23 "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"**

If the eye of faith is not functioning properly then we will not be walking in the light nor acting as we should. If the light in us is really darkness, because we are deceived into believing it is light, then the darkness is great indeed. When our spiritual lives and our morality are not in harmony with what God's word says it should be, then we must take heed and be concerned and cry out for the mercy of God and ask him to search our hearts and see if there be any wicked way in us and ask Him to convict us of our sin. This is again talking about our motives and desires, If they are corrupt and not confessed as sin they will prove that we are condemned and not of Christ.

This is spiritual blindness.

All Christians are spiritual beings. There is no such thing as a carnal Christian. Christians at times can be tempted with the allurements of the world and sin. Christians can embrace false doctrines that lead one toward self-esteem and away from glorifying God.

Christians can lie to the Holy Spirit like Annanias and Sapphira. Christians can be wrong and confused about fundamental doctrines like those in Corinth where some were questioning the resurrection. Christians can lose their first love like the Ephesians did. And yet, once a true Christian recognizes what is occurring and repents, there may be consequences that will result from the poor decisions that were made but all sin is forgivable when we come to the Father with a broken and a contrite heart.

One thing a true believer cannot do is continue in rebellion against God. That is the sin of Satan and it condemns one to an eternity in hell.

4 ¶ Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

Continuous rebellion against God as part of your character proves you are not a Christian.

If the body is filled with darkness and rejects the light it is as John's Gospel says,

19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

If our heart treasures the beauty of Christ above all things, if it treasures the things of Christ, the commands of Christ, if it treasures the word of God which Scripture says brings forth the entrance of light then the body will be filled with light and we will be the light of the world as Jesus commands us to be.

Jesus finishes this section of his sermon with an absolute statement:

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth

Jesus is not saying you cannot work two different jobs or have more than one career simultaneously or Paul would have been chastised by Jesus for being an apostle and a tentmaker.

The word used here for serve means to belong wholly and be entirely under command to someone.

You cannot serve the Lord and wealth. You can serve the Lord and work in the world and you may acquire some wealth but the wealth cannot become your master if you expect to serve God. And if you are a believer, you are called to serve God.

Contrary to the false teachings of prosperity preachers, wealth is not necessarily a sign of God's blessing. It can be a curse, it can be a display of pride. The wealthy can say, look at what I have accomplished with no reference to God and in one sense rightly so. A man who works diligently can have a fruitful harvest. He may work hard and sacrifice much to gain wealth, but if in the end all it is worldly gain, then it is nothing but chaff and dross and it is worthless. When was the last time you ever saw a u-haul truck following behind a hearse on the way to the graveyard.

“The orders of these two masters are diametrically opposed. The one commands you to walk by faith, the other to walk by sight; the one to be humble, the other to be proud; the one to set your affections on things above, the other to set them on the things of the earth; the one to look at the things unseen and eternal, the other to look at the things seen and temporal; the one to have your conversation in heaven, the other to cleave to the dust; the one to be careful for nothing, the other to be all anxiety. They are diametrically opposed -- you can't serve them both.” John MacArthur

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones the respected Welsh preacher tells the story of a farmer who one day went happily and with great joy in his heart to report to his wife and family that their best cow had given birth to twin calves, one brown and one white. And he said, "You know I suddenly had a feeling and impulse that we must dedicate one of these calves to the Lord. We will bring them up together, and when the time comes we will sell one and keep the proceeds, and we will sell the other and give the proceeds to

the Lord's work." His wife asked him which he was going to dedicate to the Lord.

"There is no need to bother about that now," he replied, "we will treat them both in the same way, and when the time comes we will do as I say." And off he went. In a few months the man entered his kitchen looking very miserable and unhappy. When his wife asked him what was troubling him, he answered, "I have bad news to give you. The Lord's calf is dead."

Why is it always the Lord's calf that dies?

Where is the treasure of your heart?

Where is the safest place to put your treasure? Where you will have the clearest spiritual sight and where you will be able to serve the right Master. The possession of wealth is not a sin, but it is a great responsibility. John Calvin said, "Where riches hold the dominion of the heart, God has lost His authority."

Once verse from an ancient Irish hymn says it this way:

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,  
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:  
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,  
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.