



**Saint John United Methodist Church**  
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**Message for July 12, 2020**  
**"From the Mount: Treasure in Heaven"**  
**Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb**  
**Scripture: Matthew 6:19-24**

In his Sermon on the Mount Christ's interest all along is in helping us know what it means to be a citizen of God's Kingdom. He wants us to be rightly related to God in all things.

In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus moves from a challenging discussion about how to fulfill the law to an even more challenging discussion about the life of piety. It's interesting that at the conclusion of that discussion Jesus launches into a discussion about money.

Jesus was not at all shy about talking about such things. In fact, nearly 15% of what Jesus talks about in the gospels has to do with either money or possessions. Jesus knew that how we view money and possessions is very much an indication of where the heart is. Let's hear then what Jesus has to say *From the Mount*.

#### **Matthew 6:19-24**

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, 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. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

*"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*

#### **More**

As we said earlier, Jesus was not at all shy in talking about money and possessions. In Luke 12:16-21, he tells the story of a man who was exceedingly well off. He had an abundant crop and didn't have enough room to store all that had been harvested.

He then did what most people would do. He tore down the barns he had and built bigger ones. He figured he had it made and could take it easy, that is, until he found out that his life was required of him that night.

*"This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."*  
(Luke 12:21)

Things always look different viewed in the light of eternity.

I like the story told of the man who, while walking on a beach, found a magic lamp. He rubbed the lamp and a genie appeared, inviting him to make a wish. The man thought for a moment and then came up with the bright idea of asking for the stock page from the local newspaper one year hence. The genie obliged and the man sat down to look over his spoils. Then it happened. He turned the page over and found the obituaries. To his surprise, his name was at the top of the list. Suddenly the stock market didn't seem all that important. He now had to look at things from an eternal perspective.

When it comes to things enough is never enough. We seem to always want more.

How about this question? Who is happier, the man with six children or the man with \$6 million dollars? Why, it's the man with six children because the man with \$6 million wants more.

I will never forget taking part in a men's small group some years ago when one of the fellows around the table shared about his next business venture. This fellow had already made a fortune and as we listened we all kind of shook our heads. In fact, one of the fellows in the group asked him point blank, "*How much is enough?*" My buddy didn't respond.

When it comes to things enough is never enough. We always want more.

### **Rich toward God**

Jesus cautions us about "*storing up treasure here on earth*" at the expense of "*storing up treasure in heaven.*" He goes so far as to say, "*No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*" (Matthew 6:24)

Let's face it, our stuff as a way of blinding us to the blessings of God. Our stuff can also blind us to what is our first responsibility, that of promoting God's Kingdom. When money is involved it is all too easy to lose focus.

Author John Paul Conn writes about noticing the name Church of God Grill while combing through the Yellow Pages for a restaurant. The name of the restaurant aroused his interest so he called to ask about that unusual name.

The man who answered the phone shared that they had once had a mission there and every Sunday after worship they would sell chicken dinners. The dinners were so popular that they began to cut back on the services, but kept serving the chicken. After a while they closed the mission all together.

As Conn puts it, "*You can put your treasure in God, or you can put your treasure in chicken. Once the chicken is eaten the treasure is gone. What you invest in God lasts forever.*"

Jesus is of the mind that it is much more important, in fact ultimately important, that we become rich toward God, even at the expense of becoming rich as the world defines it. That's simply the nature of God's economy.

The old adage is true, "*You can't take it with you.*" I had a good friend who was really quite well off and ran in some pretty high circles. He once said, "*I have a lot of friends who act like there'll be a Brink's truck in their funeral procession and they are going to be surprised.*"

Some are all about storing up treasure here on earth. Christ calls on us to be much more concerned with treasure of a different sort. In God's economy, real treasure isn't measured by how much we have, but by what we've done with what God has given. In God's economy, it's all about investing rightly.

Treasure comes not by a pre-occupation with things, but by a pre-occupation with God. That's why Jesus cautions us about *"storing up treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal."*

### **Nothing Lasts Forever**

Let's face it, there's a transient nature to stuff. Nothing on this earth lasts forever. Eventually even the strongest steel rusts away. Grain, if it is not eaten eventually spoils, or is devoured by vermin. And if those things aren't bad enough, thieves can take what we have in an instant.

I had a lady who was a member of my church in Owensboro who had every bit of jewelry taken from her house while she was working outside in the yard. The next day the paper described her as elderly. Let me tell you she was a lot more upset about that than the loss of her jewelry. Thieves can take what we have in an instant.

In this age of technology, we know all too well that our identities can be stolen in the blink of an eye. If there is anything we have learned during the Covid-19 Pandemic nothing is a sure thing. Jobs can be lost in an instant, the stock market can gyrate wildly, and things don't have nearly the same meaning when faced with serious illness.

### **Deciding How to Approach Things**

It comes to us to decide how we will approach such things.

Jesus knew that possessions have a way of possessing us, and because of that we will be far less likely to give our lives to God.

Dave Ramsey of *Total Money Makeover* fame talks a lot about financial freedom, particularly when it comes to debt. He will even have people come on his radio program to yell, *"We're debt free."* His premise comes from Proverbs 22:7 where it says, *"The borrower is slave to the lender."*

When our focus is on God we are freed from the hold money has on our lives. We are freed not only to love him, but those around us. *"In God We Trust"* will become a way of life and not just something printed on our money.

Jesus knew there is not a whole lot of gray area when it comes to such things. Let's hear one more time, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* (Matthew 6:21)

*"No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."* (Matthew 6:24)

Let's look at how serious Jesus he was about that. Consider his encounter with the Rich Young Ruler. Jesus was very much aware of the very thing that was keeping the Rich Young Ruler from signing on and Jesus called him on it.

Jesus knew that the young man's possessions were the very things keeping him from giving his life to God and because of that the young man turned his back on Christ. He simply couldn't quite bring himself to the place of abandoning the things of the world for the things of God.

The man in Christ's Parable of the Precious Pearl, on the other hand, was willing to sell everything for the surpassing worth of possessing the pearl that in his estimation was far more valuable than everything he had accumulated.

*"This," says Jesus "is what it's like to be a part of the Kingdom of God."*

It also comes to us to decide. Where's your heart when it comes to dealing with money? What are you *really* focusing on?

I will have to admit that my attention is all too often drawn away from where it needs to be. Instead of being stayed upon God the things of this world do have their appeal.

Jesus states in Matthew 16:26, *"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul."* (Matthew 16:26)

### ***The Lamp of the Body***

Interestingly, sandwiched in the midst of Christ's discussion about storing up treasure in heaven and asserting that no one can serve two masters, Jesus launches into a discussion about the eye and how it is *"the lamp of the body."* *"If your eye is healthy,"* he says, *"your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness."* (Matthew 6:22-23)

I am of the mind that Jesus is talking here about how to rightly *"see"* money and possessions. At first glance his discussion about the eye seems out of place. Upon further reflection though it seems that Jesus is challenging us to consider the ways we view money and the possessions we are blessed with. He wants us to view such things with a spiritual eye.

The Greek word translated *"healthy"* has its root in the word generosity. Conversely, the Greek word translated *"unhealthy"* has its root in the word stingy.

When we see things with a *"healthy eye"* we are simply more generous. Conversely, when we see things with an *"unhealthy eye"* we just come at them from a different perspective. We hold on more tightly, greed takes over, and eventually we lose sight of God.

We'd do well then to take care about where our wealth is stored. Everybody is all about that these days. We'd do well to see things Christ's way. To the end that:

- generosity trumps greed
- eternity trumps the temporal
- And allegiance to Almighty God trumps the almighty dollar every time.