



Treasure in Heaven

Matt. 6:19-24

This morning, we are continuing our journey through the Sermon on the Mount. Last week, you guys looked at seeking first the Kingdom of God and trusting in the provision of the Father. This week we are going to track backward in chapter 6. In verses 19-24, we find that Jesus is talking to his listeners about treasure and investment – particularly, investment in earthly treasure versus investment in the Kingdom of God. So, first question of the day – what are you investing in? If you added up and categorized all the money, time, and energy you expend on a daily basis, what do you think would be the focus of your investment? Into what, or whom, are you investing your life? And is it a worthy investment? As we look at this passage, we'll see that Jesus offers three truths concerning treasure and investment that then lead to one overarching question. Here are the three truths:

1. Treasures on earth will pass away, but the Kingdom of God endures forever.
2. Worship of God brings spiritual light, while worship of earthly treasure brings spiritual darkness.
3. You cannot serve both God and money.

This third point leads to the final question – who is the better master? I'm going to read the passage one more time, pray for us, and then we'll get going.

Treasure on Earth vs. Treasure in Heaven (v. 19-21)

The first truth that Jesus offers is that *treasures on earth will pass away, but the Kingdom of God endures forever*. In verses 19 and 20, we see that Jesus is calling his listeners to turn from laying up for themselves treasures on earth and to instead lay up treasures in heaven. What exactly does it mean to lay up treasures on earth? ***To lay up treasure on earth means to invest your life in the pursuit worldly wealth.*** This is more than just the love of money. None of us love money or wealth itself, but we all love what wealth affords. Materialism has different faces, and I think each of us is tempted to invest our lives in worldly wealth in one of three ways. First, many of us invest our lives in worldly wealth because we value stuff. We want the nicest homes in the most ideal neighborhoods, the slickest cars, and the hippest gadgets. We work hard at our businesses and jobs to acquire more and greater “things.” How do you know if you are a lover of stuff? What do you spend most of your money on? How often do you find yourself shopping? How often are you thinking about your next big purchase? The answers to these questions will give you an indication of your treasure. To this, Jesus gives a very clear warning: moth and rust will destroy things or thieves will break in and steal. Material things will not last and are not worth the investment of our lives. Second, some of us invest in worldly wealth because we value image and acceptance. Many of us, especially in Austin, don't really care about stuff in the most general sense. What we really care about is the *right* stuff that will help us build the *right* image. We invest in worldly wealth so that we can buy the right kind of hip jeans, a Prius, a record player, and anything else that will give us the image of the hip, cultured, and environmentally friendly Austinite. We are buying our way to acceptance into a particular community. What we truly treasure is acceptance. This is a caricature of the Austin hipster, but there are many other ways to pursue material wealth in order to build an image and gain acceptance into a particular

community. Maybe you invest in your image as the successful businessperson, as an artist, or even as a mom that has the perfect home environment for her kids and family. Do you treasure your image and acceptance into a particular community? Third, maybe you don't treasure stuff or your image as much as experience. Many of us are prone to invest in worldly wealth for the experiences it can afford. We want to travel, see shows, and have rich experiences. I often hear people frame this as the opposite of materialism – I think this is a misnomer. The investment in experiences can very much be a manifestation of materialism. The experiences we want cost money and it is all too easy to spend dollar after dollar on vacations, concerts, and festivals. How much time, money, and energy do you spend on the next great experience? How much money do you drop on shows every year? How much time do you spend thinking about your next family vacation? Do you spend more time on fun experiences than serving others? Are experiences your greatest treasure?

To be clear, Jesus is not attacking worldly wealth in itself. He is not saying to get rid of all your earthly stuff and to never enjoy experiences. ***He is arguing against an inordinate focus on those things – a preoccupation with temporal worldly wealth over the timeless wealth of the Kingdom of God.*** Jesus tells us not invest our lives into worldly wealth because all these things will be destroyed or stolen from us – they won't last! You might say, "Wait a second, your image doesn't rust and experiences can't be eaten away by moths, can they?" ***Material stuff breaks or gets stolen. Image is shallow and acceptance is fleeting. The high of an experience always fades. Essentially, Jesus is saying that pouring your life into worldly wealth is a bad investment because it will not last into God's Kingdom.***

Instead, Jesus says to lay up treasure in heaven. This does not mean "Be a good Christian so that you can have more rewards and more stuff in heaven." ***Laying up treasure in heaven means to invest in those things that are of value in the Kingdom of God.*** Heaven here is referring to God's space - that he resides in today - that in some mysterious way has interlocked with earth in the coming of Jesus and in his Spirit that fills the church. Heaven is the Kingdom of God that has already been launched and will one day be fulfilled. So, what then are the things that matter in the kingdom of God? How might you invest in those things that will last into God's future? First, God wants you to invest in his family – the church. The church matters to God, so she should also matter to you. He loves his family so much that he entered into his creation to suffer and die that we might be restored to him for eternity. If you are a Christian, you are part of that family. As a part of that family, you have a spiritual responsibility for the care and well being of the family. God's family will last into his great future. Are you investing in the family of God in practical ways? Are you a part of a City Group here at city life? Are you actively engaged in caring for folks and encouraging them? Are you serving the family on Sundays? Have you made a commitment to invest your time, energy, and money into the family of God? Second, God wants you to invest in his mission. God's mission is to redeem the world and fill it with his presence. A key part of this process is renewing people so that they are united to God and so they worship Christ. God has sent us out into our everyday lives on his mission to make disciples so that more people would know the love of God and more people could worship him. Are you committed to the work of making disciples? Does your investment of time, energy, and money reflect a commitment to the mission of God? What would need to change in your life this year to prioritize the mission of God? Maybe you are new to this. If so, I want to challenge you to join a city group and ask your leader to help you learn how to share the gospel and how to live on mission. Or maybe you know this should be a priority, but you have seen it slip out of your life. This morning you can repent of your failure to prioritize God's mission, receive grace, and think again about how you can practically commit to the great task God has invited us into. Finally, and most importantly, are you investing in your

relationship with God himself? Ultimately, this is what we have been rescued to - the joy of knowing the living God and walking with him daily. Are you listening to him through his Word? Are you meeting the Spirit in prayer daily? Are you committed to knowing God and growing in grace? If you are not daily investing in your relationship with God, then you are missing out on the greatest treasure of life. God is a perfect Father, who loves you, cares for you, and desires to know you. We have the opportunity to step into that each day.

What do you treasure? What are you investing your life into day-in and day-out? Jesus says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." The heart, in Jewish teaching, refers to the center of the entire person. It encompassed the will, the desires, and the emotions. Jesus is saying that whatever you treasure, whatever you are investing your time, energy, and money into is an indication of where your heart is. **Ultimately, what you invest in is where your heart is, and where your heart is, is what you worship.** If you worship God, then you'll invest in his kingdom that will last forever. If you worship stuff, your image, or experiences then you will pour your life into those things only to see them fade or be ripped away from you. *Treasure on earth will pass away, but the Kingdom of God will endure forever.*

Light vs. Darkness (v. 22-23)

The second truth we are given is this: *Worship of God brings spiritual light, while worship of earthly treasures brings spiritual darkness.* In verse 22, Jesus says, "**The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.**" The eye can be directly compared to the heart in verse 21. Where the eye is the window through which light enters the body, the heart is the spiritual window through which spiritual light enters. *Jesus is saying that if our hearts, and thus our worship, is directed toward God and his kingdom, then we will be spiritually healthy.* This spiritual health is not just an inner experience, but it is a health affects our entire lives. If we rightly treasure what God treasures, and rightly worship him, then we will become more like him – more loving, more patient, more generous, more just, and more filled with godly wisdom. As we invest in God's Kingdom – in his people, his mission, and his person – then we will begin to look more like God. We will be filled with his character and begin to radiate his image into the world as we were initially created to do.

In contrast, in verse 23, Jesus says, "**...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!**" *Here, Jesus is saying that if our hearts are directed toward earthly treasure – if we worship material stuff, our image, or experiences – then we will be spiritually dark.* If we wrongly treasure the wealth of the world over the Kingdom of God, then we become less like God. We will become self-absorbed, impatient, and greedy. If our hearts and our worship is directed toward worldly wealth then the light of God will burn in us less, and we will be less able share the love of God with those around us.

I think we have all experienced times in life where we have turned to worship earthly treasure and felt the darkness that Jesus is talking about. Let me just share an example from my life. When I moved to San Francisco, I had great intentions to be a part of what God is doing in that city. Because it is the technology center, I would argue that San Francisco is probably the most culturally influential city in the US today – yet, there are very few Christians. San Francisco is aesthetically beautiful, fun, and teeming with creativity, yet filled with the idolatry of careerism and experience of loneliness. I was excited about living on mission and serving the city so that people would find the hope of the Gospel. I wanted to devote myself to the mission of God in the city, but I also treasured experience. If I was fully honest, my intentions were split. I moved out to live on mission, but I also moved to experience life in SF and life in northern California. In my first

few months, I began to notice that the orientation of my heart, of my worship, began to shift from God and his kingdom to my own entertainment and experiences. I would forego opportunities to serve or volunteer in order to go out late with new friends or go hiking on weekends. I was giving less of my money to the mission of God in order to pay for trips and excursions. Also, in moments where it was clear that the Spirit was moving me to share the Gospel, I'd choose not to – afraid that my new friends would judge me. I felt myself becoming less generous, less content, and more selfish. I felt bored, disconnected, and I lacked joy. I was crippled in my ability to love others and was less able to radiate the light of God into the city and my relationships. In that time, worship of earthly treasure brought darkness in my life. Thankfully, in the later part of last fall God brought me into a rich community that helped me to repent and reorient my heart toward worship of God. ***A quick summation of this idea is that we become what we behold. If we behold God in worship and his kingdom in devotion, then we will be filled with his character and light. If we behold the treasures of the world and the promises of material wealth, then we will be filled with selfishness, greed, and spiritual darkness.***

You Cannot Serve Two Masters (v. 24)

The last truth we are given is this: *You cannot serve both God and money.* Verse 24 says, “**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 money.**” Again, Jesus is not advocating poverty as a means to spirituality. He is not even saying that it is sinful to be wealthy. Jesus is attacking a fascination with wealth - a worship of wealth - that prevents us from worshipping God. If we idolize worldly wealth then we cannot worship God. How can we know if we worship wealth over God? Here are a couple checks: How often do you deny yourself in order to invest in the people of God, his mission, or himself – with your finances or time? The fact is that we sacrifice all the time for what we value. You may deny yourself certain foods because you value fitness or health. You may deny yourself leisure because you value the success of your organization or business. You may deny yourself some fun weekends out with friends or your family because you are saving for that vacation. It is a simple principle. We deny ourselves for those other things we deem more worthy. If we deem God and his kingdom more worthy than worldly wealth, then we will deny ourselves of that wealth for God and his kingdom. So here is another check for us - is there anything that you would not be willing to part with for the sake of the Kingdom? Investing in the kingdom of God may require you to cut back on work hours, time in the gym, or other projects you may be working on. I can guarantee you that it will require you to deny yourself time surfing the Internet and watching Netflix. Investing in the kingdom of God requires you to invest hard-earned money as well. If you never or rarely have to deny yourself for the kingdom of God, then you are probably worshipping something else.

Further than this, Jesus is saying that whatever we worship is actually our master. We obey what we worship. If we worship material stuff, our image, or experiences, we will obey every desire we have to gain those things. The final question then, is this: who is the better master – Jesus or worldly wealth? Let's take a look at what the worship of worldly wealth offers us. In his famous commencement speech to Kenyon College in 2005, the late, post-modern novelist, David Foster Wallace comments that we all worship, and that the only choice we have is what to worship. Concerning treasures of the world, he says this, “*...If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And*

when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you. On one level, we all know this stuff already. It's been codified as myths, proverbs, clichés, epigrams, parables; the skeleton of every great story. The whole trick is keeping the truth up front in daily consciousness. Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out." David Foster Wallace is articulating this deep truth of human life: ***Wealth, and the things that wealth affords, is a poor master. Worship of earthly treasures will ruin us.*** Why then is Jesus a better Master? Briefly, I believe Jesus is a better master for 3 reasons. Jesus is a better Master because he is glorious. Paul's letter to the Colossians tells us that Jesus is the creator by which, through which, and for which all things were created. It is in him that all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. He is utterly glorious and a Master that is *worthy of our worship*. Earthly treasure – though it may be infatuating – is not worthy of the investment of our lives. Jesus is. Jesus is a better Master because he is good. Where material wealth, acceptance, and experiences fail to ultimately satisfy, Jesus promises us ultimate fulfillment. He says, ***"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."*** (John 10:10). Jesus promises us a fulfilled life. Earthly treasures may be temporarily enjoyable, but only Jesus is ultimately good and ultimately satisfying. Finally, Jesus is a better Master because he is gracious. What happens if we invest our life in material wealth and find ourselves in poverty? What happens if we fail to acquire the image and acceptance that we long for? What happens if life never allows us the experiences that we believe constitute a rich a full life? When we worship earthly treasure and our investment runs dry, we will be forever haunted by our failure to meet its demands of success. Money is cruel and unforgiving master. Jesus is better because he is full of grace. If you commit today to invest in the kingdom of God – to invest in the family of God, in his mission, and God himself – then I will be overjoyed. But I can promise you this – you will fail. Many times down the line you will fail to care for God's family and will instead choose selfishness. You will choose comfort and ease over the hard road of mission. You will choose trite and petty pleasures over the immeasurable joy of knowing God. In all of this, Jesus stands ready to forgive. Ready to receive you back again and again. He has already lived the life fully submitted to God, he has paid the penalty on the cross, and he has risen from the dead that you might receive his grace. Jesus is a better Master because he is glorious, good, and gracious. Only he is fully worthy of our worship. He is the chief of all treasures and compels our investment – in his family, his mission, and himself. My hope is that you will see Christ as the better master and chief treasure this morning, and that you will resolve to make the investment in his kingdom.