

Matthew 6:19-24: What's Our Treasure?

[Paul Blackham, 18/02/2018, St. Crispin's Bitesize Matthew #13]

Readings: Matthew 13:44-46 & Matthew 6:19-24

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Matthew 6:19-24

People will do anything and sacrifice everything for the thing they treasure most.

What is the treasure that we will do anything to protect or acquire?

In the 1820s Thomas J Beale entrusted a sealed box to a man named Robert Morris in Bedford County, Virginia. Thomas Beale was heading east, but was never seen again.

Robert Morris waited 23 years before he eventually opened up the sealed box – and inside were three pieces of paper filled with numbers – and a note describing them as encrypted messages. He held onto these pieces of paper for several decades, unable to figure them out. Finally Robert Morris gave these three coded messages to a friend before he died.

That friend spent the next 20 years trying to figure out the key to unlock these codes – and he was able to solve only one of them.

The numbers in the second document referred to the numbers of words in the American Constitution.

The second message read as follows –

“I have deposited in the county of Bedford, about four miles from Buford's, in an excavation or vault, six feet below the surface of the ground, the following articles, belonging jointly to the parties whose names are given in number three, herewith:

The first deposit consisted of 1,014 pounds of gold, and 3,812 pounds of silver, deposited in November 1819. The second was made in December 1821, and consisted of 1,907 pounds of gold, and 1288 of silver. The above is securely packed in iron pots, with iron covers. The vault is roughly lined with stone, and the vessels rest on solid stone, and are covered with others. Paper number one describes the exact locality of the vault, so that no difficulty will be had in finding it.”

The man couldn't make any further progress with the other two messages so in the end he published all three coded texts in a pamphlet in the 1880's.

Since the Beale documents first came to light, thousands of man-hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent attempting to break the codes and find the legendary treasure – but up to now, nobody has been successful.

[PAUSE]

Why have people gone to so much trouble to solve that code?

BECAUSE the modern day value of that treasure would be around \$50 million!! They see the great value of that treasure and would do ANYTHING to get it.

Some people have spent thousands of hours carefully studying those bits of paper – because they believe they are the key to a very great treasure.... YET, how many spend so long reading the plain and simple words contained here in the Bible?

Jesus tells us plainly that His words are the key to a heavenly treasure that is far more valuable than all the earthly treasures in the world – and yet, most people ignore these pages completely!

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What is the treasure that we will do anything to protect or acquire?

Jesus tells us that we can tell exactly what a person values most by what they look at – in verses 22-23. If we are looking at treasure that is truly valuable – heavenly treasure that lasts for eternity – then we are letting light and glory into our souls... but if we become obsessed with earthly things that fade away and get stolen or lost, then we are letting darkness into our souls.

What do we obsess about? What do we spend our time staring at?

What do our eyes look at most of all?

Our eyes reveal what we value most...

Our eyes reveal the master we serve.

In the church of the 1st and 2nd centuries, when they wanted to assess a candidate for church service, instead of asking them what they believed, they would spend a week living with and watching that person. By seeing how they lived for a week and what they spent their time looking at and thinking about, they could find out what that person really believed.

What we value most is what we end up loving the most... and obsessing about.

People will do anything and sacrifice everything for the thing they treasure most.

What is the treasure that we will do anything to protect or acquire?

If we are gazing at the treasures and pleasures of this passing age, then that is what will capture our hearts and minds.

If we are merely looking for our next dose of retail therapy, we are staring into the void.

If we are sizing people up for sex or gazing at porn on the internet, then we are letting a deep

darkness into our hearts.

If we are spending our time and money looking at empty entertainment, then we are gazing into the darkness. There is nothing of lasting value in these things.

[PAUSE]

The thing is, we suspect that we can have it both ways; that we can follow Jesus **but also** invest in earthly treasure.

We think that there is room for both Jesus and all the other things.

I find myself thinking that I can still hold onto the other treasures and pleasures as long as I try to keep them in the right perspective.

Jesus addresses this head on.

No one can serve two masters – verse 24.

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 earthly treasure or pleasure.

Notice the intensity of this stark choice: You **cannot** serve both God and earthly treasure.

Jesus does not say that it is **difficult** to serve God and money.

That is what I always **think** He said.

In my mind I generally translate the words of Jesus into “You have to be quite careful about serving God and earthly treasure because it is easy to get them out of balance.”

Jesus never said that. He said – “You **CANNOT** serve both God and money.”

We have to face these deepest decisions about what life is really all about – and what matters most to us.

People will do anything and sacrifice everything for the thing they treasure most.

What is the treasure that we will do anything to protect or acquire?

Our whole life is determined by what we most value – because THAT shapes the deepest decisions we make – it determines what we hold onto in life and death.

People will do anything and sacrifice everything for the thing they treasure most.

In our addictions, we will sacrifice everything for the thing we crave...

Matthew 6:21 – “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Human beings will sacrifice enormous time and energy and money to get what we value most...

Jesus tells us to make sure we are investing in **heavenly** treasure – that we are getting hold of **heavenly** treasure rather than earthly treasures and pleasures that are here today and gone tomorrow.

In the little parables we read in Matthew 13 we saw two people find something they knew to be worth more than **everything they owned**. They were happy to give up everything they owned to get this one treasure they had found.

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”

The Kingdom of Heaven is a treasure that is more valuable than everything we own – and if we realise that basic truth then we will give up everything we have, gladly and with joy, in order to possess the Kingdom of Heaven.

Notice that the farmer stumbled on this treasure while he was ploughing – but then “in his joy” went and sold off **everything** he had in order to get that treasure. On the other hand, the pearl specialist was seeking for this great treasure and once he found it, he sold all his other pearls and everything else he had just to get this one perfect treasure, the perfect pearl.

So, it doesn't matter whether you are seeking for the Kingdom of Heaven or you just stumble into it... once you see the value of Jesus, the King of the Kingdom... THEN you will give up everything you have in order to get hold of Him... in order to enter HIS Kingdom.

THAT is why there are Christian martyrs. Authorities can take away everything we own in this life – even take away our family... our children... our wife or husband... and finally our own freedom or our life... YET in the end there is nothing so valuable to us as Jesus Christ, the Living God.

Jesus said something that has caused many people to walk away from Him.

Large crowds were following Him, but He challenged them to decide how much they valued Him – if they really understood who He was.

Luke 14:25-26 – “Large crowds were traveling with Jesus and turning to them he said: ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.’”

Can we see what He is saying?

In the end we must value Him so highly that we would give up everything we have in order to get Him – and do so with great joy.

We all know those love stories where a king or prince might give up his throne, with all his privilege and power, in order to marry the peasant girl who he loves so much. Yes, we all love

those stories because he has a love for her that is much stronger than his desire for any of the treasures and pleasures that his royal position can give him.

So, are we ready to give up, with joy, all we have and are in order to get this heavenly treasure – the Kingdom of Heaven – the LORD Jesus?

People will do anything and sacrifice everything for the thing they treasure most.

That is what verse 21 is all about.

We need to make very careful and radical decisions about we value most... because what we count as most valuable will utterly shape us in life.

We always end up loving what we value most – and our life is shaped by our loves.

All kinds of things in life seem valuable – but unless we find the one thing that is WORTH everything we have... then we are doomed to a life of anxiety and worry.

In these verses Jesus is teaching us to find a treasure that we never NEED to worry about – a treasure that CANNOT ever fade or grow old or be stolen or go out of date.

What is the ONE treasure that can never be taken from us? What is the one treasure that cannot be stolen, cannot grow old and cannot lost its value?

The thing that we treasure most will also give us the most anxiety... unless the thing we treasure most is the Living God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When Jesus, with His Father and Spirit, takes over our heart and mind **then** we are invested in the One who is the Rock, the Everlasting God, the Unchanging centre of the universe.

He is, was and always will be.

When He is our treasure then we have no worries: our treasure is completely safe and He can actually keep us safe too.

Life is slipping away from us until we find the Fountain of life, the Giver of ETERNAL life.

What are we looking at? What do we most value?

People will do anything and sacrifice everything for the thing they treasure most.

What is the treasure that we will do anything to protect or acquire?

If we treasure any earthly thing most then in the end we will turn away from Jesus in order to preserve our real treasure.

I end with a letter that I read every year.

In the 1950's when many young people gave their lives to serve the cause of Communism, the preacher Billy Graham shared a letter that a young American college student had written to his fiancé, explaining why he had to break their engagement:

"We Communists have a high casualty rate. We're the ones who get slandered and ridiculed and fired from our jobs and in every other way made as uncomfortable as possible. A certain percentage of us get killed or imprisoned. We live in virtual poverty. We turn back to our comrades every penny we make above what is absolutely necessary to keep us alive. We don't have time or the money for many movies or concerts or T-bone steaks or decent homes and new cars.

We've been described as fanatics. We are fanatics! Our lives are dominated by one great overshadowing factor, the struggle for Communism for the whole world. We have a philosophy of life which no amount of money could buy. We have a cause to fight for, a definite purpose in life. We subordinate our petty, personal selves into a great movement of humanity. And if our personal lives seem hard or our egos appear to suffer through subordination to our community then we are adequately compensated by the fact that each of us in his small way is contributing to something new and true and better for mankind.

Our cause is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife and mistress, my bread and meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night. Its hold on me grows, not lessens, as time goes on. Therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating it to this force which both guides and drives my life. I evaluate people, books, ideas and actions according to how they affect the cause of Communism and by their attitude toward it. I've already been in jail because of my ideas, and if necessary, I'm ready to go before a firing squad."

If that student valued Communism so highly, is the Living God worth any less?

If he was prepared to give up everything for a godless Communism, will we not give up everything for Jesus Christ and HIS Kingdom – a Kingdom that gives us eternal life and joy, a Kingdom that gives us heavenly treasure and resurrection life in the future?

Moses was part of Pharaoh's household 3,500 years ago. He had all the money and power that the ancient world had to offer but the Bible tells us this "Moses chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw HIM who is invisible."

Therefore, to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be ascribed all the praise, all the honour, all the glory, all the wonder and all the majesty, now and forever. AMEN.