

**SERMON ON THE MOUNT #9 – MATTHEW 6:19-24**

<sup>19</sup> **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, your heart will be also. <sup>22</sup> “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup> 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! <sup>24</sup> “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 6:19-24.**

Jesus taught more about wealth and money than any other social issue. More than marriage, politics, work, sex or power. His teaching about money stands in a discussion of discipleship and loyalty to God. Few people set out to live for money. Yet the love of money can gradually take control of our hearts. This is the danger, the false god that Jesus addresses.

I like this challenging quote from The Unshakeable Kingdom of God and the Unchanging Person by E. Stanley Jones, **Good news to the poor means that every person has a right to as much of the material things as will make them mentally, spiritually and physically fit for the purposes of the Kingdom of God. The rest belongs to the Lord.**

We must remember that nowhere does the Bible teach that money itself is evil. It's not money that is at fault but those who use it. In our text this morning Jesus is not speaking against possessions. He was speaking against ruinous preoccupation with them. Jesus does not forbid us to use goods. Jesus was human. He ate and drank just like his disciples. We give thanks for all our daily needs that are provided.

You may be thinking but isn't wealth a blessing from God? I see wealth is not so much a blessing which of course it may be but a test. A test to see how generous a wealthy person may be. The accumulation of wealth for its own sake is deceptive because we might find in material treasure a sense of security or an inaccurate assessment of our spirituality. It's wrong to think that wealth is somehow a final determination of one's spiritual standing before God.

<sup>20</sup> **But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. Matthew 6:20.** In verse twenty, Jesus says that we ought to store up treasures in heaven rather than on earth. King Solomon learned this lesson the hard way. <sup>10</sup> **I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. <sup>11</sup> Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. Ecclesiastes 2:10-11.**

Now, someone will ask, "Didn't the Lord Jesus instruct the rich young ruler that he was to sell all that he had and give it to the poor?" Yes, he did. He said this because Jesus knew that his chief obstruction to a life following Jesus lay in his possessions. He proved that as the rich young ruler turned away. This does not mean, however, that possessions in themselves are wrong.

The true solution regarding possessions and wealth lies in the proper use of everything that God has given to us. The reason is that one day all our possessions and wealth will be gone and we will all stand in front of God giving an account of our lives. Everything has eternal consequences. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, **<sup>12</sup> If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup> their work will be shown for what it is, because the day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. <sup>14</sup> If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.** This means that it is only as we use our possessions for spiritual ends that we can accumulate true treasure stored in heaven.

Jesus told a parable that also helps us this morning, **The Rich Man and Lazarus.** <sup>19</sup> "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. <sup>20</sup> At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores <sup>21</sup> and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. <sup>22</sup> "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup> So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

<sup>25</sup> "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' <sup>27</sup> "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' <sup>29</sup> "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' <sup>30</sup> "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' <sup>31</sup> "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" Luke 16:19-31.

In his parable one of the things Jesus teaches is that how we use our resources to help those less fortunate has eternal consequences. In our teaching this morning, Jesus is saying that the safest place to store up our treasures is in heaven. <sup>19</sup> "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for

**yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21.**

We lay up treasures in heaven by investing in God's causes and God's people. The effects of such investments will last forever. We store treasures in heaven by worshipping God, growing in knowledge and grace and growing in love for God and our neighbours. Financially, we store treasures in heaven by using money for Kingdom causes by giving money to the church, to missions and the poor. When we store treasures in heaven by investing money in this way, our investments will bear dividends for eternity. I will let King Solomon have the final word, <sup>10</sup> **Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. Ecclesiastes 5:10.**

In the next verses Jesus shifts the question from where we shall put our treasure to where we shall fix our eyes. <sup>22</sup> **"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup> 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! Matthew 6:22-23.**

Here, Jesus says that an unhealthy preoccupation with wealth and possessions can create a distorted spiritual vision. Jesus says that the eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. If your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. A healthy eye gives direction to all of life. The eye affects the whole body just as the heart directs all of life. Ambition to serve God throws light on everything. Ambition to serve oneself plunges all into darkness. It creates pride, makes us self-indulgent, and crushes generosity.

I believe that Christ is teaching that the single eye is the generous eye. So, this means that Jesus is promoting a generous spirit regarding our money. If you have any worries about this then follow the advice of James, <sup>5</sup> **If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. James 1:5.**

In Christ we have a good, clear generous eye. The child of God, renewed by the spirit has no divided loyalties or ulterior motives. When Jesus commends the clear eye, he urges his disciples to live out their true identity. First, we can do this by examining our hearts. Second, by setting our eyes on the right things. Setting them on the possessions of others or enviously salivating at the graphic displays of affluence can harm our souls. Rather, let us be content with what we have. <sup>4</sup> **"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.** Jesus makes this claim in an undeniable way. It should be a heart-searching question for all Christians.

<sup>25</sup> "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothes? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup> Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? <sup>28</sup> "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you — you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **Matthew 6: 25-32.**

Constant worry will hurt your soul. We seem to live in an era that some are calling the anxious generation. To be sure there is always plenty to worry about. Our personal circumstances or what is happening in our country or around the world. The apostle Paul writing from prison and a very uncertain future said this to the church at Phillipi, <sup>5</sup> **Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

<sup>11</sup> **I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. Philippians 4: 5-7, 11.**

Whether we are weak or strong, poor or rich, Jesus' teaching on wealth and worry is rooted firmly in what he has done for us. He is our master and provider, the one who has given us kingdom life, kingdom priorities and kingdom values by which we can truly say, "Thank You".

The key thing for all disciples is to have no other god, whether it is success, money or self. We are to live out Matthew 6:33, <sup>33</sup> **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6: 33.** If we base our security in earthly things, they will never satisfy and may consume us with their hunger for more. If we place our security in our heavenly father, he will take care of all our needs.