



Matthew: The King and His Kingdom

Series: The Manifesto of the King, Part 21: Loyalty---Who's got yours, God or the world?

Matthew 6:19-24

July 10, 2011

Pastor Eddie Strickland

Let's review for just a minute. Where have we been so far in chapter 6? In verse 1 Jesus gave us an overall warning to not practice our righteousness to be seen by others or else we will have no reward from the Father in heaven. That's pretty simple and that deals with our hearts and our motives. Don't do what you do to impress others to make them think you are spiritual but Jesus says to practice your righteousness in secret and receive the reward. And don't be legalistic here and think that everything just has to be done in secret and everything is ok. No, we can try to impress ourselves even in private. Remember, the public nature is not the problem but the heart to be seen by others is the issue.

So, Jesus exposes this hypocrisy with the illustrations of giving to the needy, praying, and fasting. In this first section of chapter six Jesus has dealt with our personal devotion and the motive of our heart and the consideration for us as true followers of Christ is to know that God's eye is always upon us. He is sovereign and we can't hide from Him. And these illustrations will reveal our heart toward the Father and our relationship to Him.

But now, in this passage we are looking at today, Jesus moves to looking at a true follower of His and how his life will be lived out in the world and our heart toward that as it concerns our relationship to Him. And these words will speak to us if we allow them. Because we all have to live in this world and we all are affected by what goes on in this world. Guard your hearts beloved against trying to reduce these words to a set of rules or regulations. Again this week, Jesus is going to deal with our hearts in this matter.

Now, what do we mean when we say world? Is it just the physical creation and just a collection of people---is that it? No, when we speak of the world we are speaking of an outlook and a mentality. We are talking about a way of looking at things of life---all of life. And if we are honest with ourselves, this is a battle that we all must fight no matter how subtle or fierce it may be. Our relationship with the world and the things of the world has to be dealt with on a daily basis.

Attacks come upon us in private---there is no disputing that fact. But as soon as we walk out of our doors into this world attacks come our way also. This world will try to tear you down and it's a battle. Think about VBS this year---we need to armor up and put on the full armor of God because we are in a fierce battle. And our preparation in private is crucial for what we face in this world.

So in verses 19-24, Jesus deals with the love of the world and our relationship to the Father and this too beloved, is a heart issue. Jesus has not only shunned hypocrisy but now we are going to see that all of life is to be lived and all of our attitudes are to be formed according to God's Word and His values and the perspectives of His kingdom.

1 – We need to see the instruction (verse 19-20)

We need to make note of the command here. Jesus says "do not lay up treasures on earth" but "lay up treasures in heaven." Do not lay up and lay up are imperatives which means they are commands. Beloved for us, that means that we don't have an option here. And we must avoid thinking that Jesus is only talking about money here. This is larger than just money but it's all inclusive. Jesus is more concerned with our attitudes toward possessions than possessions themselves.

Treasures on earth:

It's not what we have that is wrong but what can be very wrong is our relationship to what we have and that applies to everything. Scripture doesn't forbid possessions.

Just think of the 10 commandments---Thou shall not steal. That presupposes that we will have possessions to steal. Saving for a rainy day is not forbidden. Scripture commends the ant for storing up food. God said that His creation was good and we are to enjoy those things but our heart is foolish if we think that life consists only in the abundance of those good things---in possessions.

We must take this further though. We have to take this to our attitudes. The Lord is dealing here with people who get their main (or total) satisfaction in this life from things that belong to this world only in the final analysis. He is dealing here with people who have confined their ambition, interests, and hope in this life in this world and this is much bigger than just money.

These treasures in and of themselves are not evil but they can become evil if our attitude values them as the ultimate treasure and they usurp God's place in our lives. And we all have treasures in some shape or form and not just in the form of money. It can be our husband, our wife, or our children. It can be a gift that in the scheme of things is of insignificant financial value. It can be a house, or our position or our status and power. It can be our work. It is anything that stops with this life or this world. If it's everything to you and it's what you are living for then it is your treasure.

Well, how do we lay up treasures on this earth? If we are seeking to amass wealth as just that, wealth then we are laying up treasures on earth. If we are centering our lives on something of this world then we are laying up treasures on earth. If we think most about our homes, cars, vacations, bank accounts, clothes, investment portfolios or anything such as these then we are most likely seeking to lay up treasures on this earth.

And beloved, we must guard our hearts as to our thinking that this will not and can't happen to me. There have been many that have made a shipwreck of their faith by their attraction to the world. We think of Solomon's attraction to money and women, we think of Achan who took the plunder and hid it in his tent and it cost him and his family their lives. We think of Ananias and Sapphira who kept back proceeds of a property sale and lied to the Holy Spirit and were struck dead. And we think of Demas

who was striving side by side with Paul for the gospel, who Paul described as a fellow worker but later wrote this about him.

“For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. ” (2 Timothy 4:10, ESV)

Beloved, don't think that you are above being caught up in the things of the world, being gripped by it's appetites and don't think that the things of the world cannot subtly sneak in and replace your allegiance to Christ. Don't deceive yourselves but fight the battle. Put on the armor and the means of grace that God has provided and engage in the spiritual battle that rages in this world. If you are not engaged then it is probable that you are losing and don't even know it. Don't be Demas beloved. Heed the words of our Savior---Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.

Treasures in heaven:

Ok, we have some knowledge of treasures on earth but what can we say about treasures in heaven. Well, when Jesus mentions not laying up treasures on earth but laying up treasures in heaven He does not advocate poverty as a means to spirituality--that's a false gospel because it bases your standing before God on what you don't have. And Jesus does not mean that you can somehow achieve your own salvation or earn it and lay that up in heaven. That totally goes against other Scripture and Scripture must interpret Scripture. So what is Jesus getting at here?

I can't say it any better than God already has in His word.

“As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is

truly life. " (1 Timothy 6:17–19, ESV)

-If you have been blessed with resources then use them for eternal things with your eternal destiny in view and not for treasures now but for eternity. This is truly life in this present world!

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ ” (Matthew 25:31–40, ESV)

-By doing these kinds of things we are laying up treasures in heaven where we will receive our reward from the Father and enter into the joy of His presence.

“When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” ” (John 6:25–27, ESV)

-Here these people are pursuing just another meal, they are seeking to get what they can for themselves---not to be in the presence of Jesus. And Jesus calls them out on it and then He tells them---don't labor for the things that do not last but labor for what endures to eternal life---treasures in heaven which can only be found in Christ. Seek first the kingdom of God because it will never perish.

This is the principle that Jesus is emphasizing---not in some legalistic selfish way but rooted in the grace and glory of the Father---rooted in Christ. It is not the treasures of the earth that are fatal but the trusting in them with confidence.

So how do we lay up treasures in heaven?

-We have a biblical worldview which means that we look at everything through the eyes of God's Word and His grace in the gospel of Christ.

-We realize that we are only pilgrims in this world and that this world is not our home but that we are children of God in Christ and we are going to our Father.

-We think of ourselves as only stewards of what belongs to God and we are stewards that must give an account---a heavenly audit so to speak.

-We say to ourselves that we are not the possessors of these earthly treasures but have them on lease and so we don't cling to them but we hold them loosely so that we are not governed by them.

-We root everything we do and say and have in the grace of God in what Christ has already done in our place.

-We lay up treasures in heaven by investing in God's causes and His people.

-We lay up treasures in heaven by worshiping Him and growing in the grace and knowledge and love of Christ.

And we realize that our ultimate treasure is God Himself and like last week we long and ache and anticipate being in His presence because He is our heart's desire and the ultimate treasure and our eternal inheritance. Rooting everything in this is laying up treasures in heaven.

What's the reason why we should obey this instruction? Jesus is gracious enough to explain.

Why not lay up treasures on earth---It's because treasures on earth do not last. However wonderful and beautiful things may be, they will perish.

Moth---a sign of wealth in ancient times was the accumulation of wealthy clothing. And people would try to hoard this wealth of clothing by storing them. Well, what happens when you store cloths---moths eat holes in them and they become worthless. And who wants to wear clothes that smell like moth balls---really. James, addressing the rich in chapter 5 of his book, tells them that their riches have rotted and your garments are moth eaten. In other words, if you trust in these things you will be disappointed because they do not last and trust in them on the day of judgment is worthless and hopeless.

Rust---when we think of rust we normally think only of corrosion dealing with metals. But the Greek word carries the meaning of eating---anything that will eat away and not just metal but it carried the meaning of eating grain or seeds. This could refer to any pest or vermin. This is why in the ESV you see the translation can also be "worm." Again, James addresses this with the rich and tells them that their gold and silver have corroded---that their wealth does not last. Well, how can gold or silver rust? They do only if they have impurities in them but that is not the point. The point is that if we place our trust in these things that on the day of judgment, they will be as worthless as if they are rusted and corroded. Not only that but they will be evidence against us on the day of judgment and eat our flesh like fire. Trusting in these things is useless.

Thieves---Well, we know what a thief is right. Someone who steals what does not belong to them but what belongs to us. Well beloved that is true but there are many thieves in the world. Yes we have real thieves that break in and steal but what about illness, inflation, a business loss, an industrial collapse, war and death itself. I know a lot of people who were going to change at the eleventh hour but they died at 10:30. And these thieves cannot be regulated or controlled.

Beloved, happiness cannot be purchased and treasures on earth don't last and they never satisfy. That's why we are always talking about and seeking the next new thing--because if we seek our satisfaction in earthly things we will never be satisfied---it will never be enough.

"And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun. "
(Ecclesiastes 2:10–11, ESV)

"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. "
(Ecclesiastes 5:10, ESV)

Earthly treasures do not last and they do not satisfy. But what about treasures in heaven---why lay those up?

Because treasures in heaven last forever. There are no impurities there, no sin and no wrong worldviews. Heaven is the realm of life, light and purity. There are no moths, rust or thieves that can touch or eat away at treasures in heaven. Why? Because God Himself is the protector and preserver of them.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ” (1 Peter 1:3–4, ESV)

It is a poor bargain for us to exchange the eternal for the temporal no matter how much bling is used to make the temporal attractive.

Beloved there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God---lay up treasures in heaven. Why is this important?

2 – Because where your treasure is there your heart will be also (21).

Beloved, worldliness is very powerful and it controls many, many lives. Why is this so? Because where your treasure is there your heart is also. The things we treasure actually govern our lives. What we value tugs at our minds, emotions and our will. What we value consumes our time with planning and our effort to achieve. We think about our treasures, worry about them, we are drawn to them and we measure other things and even people based on them. We tend to move toward the object on which we fix our gaze (driving illustration). Our lives drift relentlessly toward the spot where our treasures are stored because that is where our heart is and that’s where our heart will take us.

Here is where we need to guard against legalism and reducing these words to just a set of rules. Jesus is not saying that if we put our treasure in the right place that our heart will be ok because it will then be in the right place. What Jesus is saying is that the location of our treasures indicates where our heart already is! Where is your heart this morning beloved? Well, just look at what you treasure and you will find the answer! And there you will find your outlook on the world and that brings us to the issue of perspective and we need to ask the question.

3 – What is my perspective? (22-23)

The eye here is a picture of our perspective on things---sort of our mentality of things and our mind toward them. And there are two ways of seeing things:

- 1 – We can see clearly with single purpose and focus
- 2 – We can see unclearly, with blurred and cloudy vision

Here when it speaks of a healthy eye it speaks of being of single purpose, to be focused. Jesus is referring to the person whose eye is fixed upon God and looks at life through the lens of God's Word. And the result of that is that the entire person is full of light and they love God's truth and seek to live it out.

The bad eye (evil eye) sees through a lens that is not clear, that is not focused, that is void of truth and purity and is not focused upon God with a single purpose and therefore, is full of darkness and is selfishly indulgent. Think about a literal illustration with a window. If you are in a room during the day when the sun is shining brightly and the room has a clear window how much light is going to enter that room---a lot. But if you are in the same room with the same conditions but with a cloudy window or a window that is not clear but dark, how much light will enter---not very much. Its simple right.

Well, the eye illumines what the body does through its hands and feet. Just as the clear seeing healthy eye gives light to the body, a single minded ambition to serve God adds meaning to all of life and sheds light on all we do---so our entire person is full of light and the opposite is true of the bad eye. If we have clear physical vision then we are able to see what we are doing and where we are going. It's the same with spiritual vision and perspective. If we see with a clear spiritual vision then our life will be filled with purpose and drive that is molded and shaped with an eternal perspective.

It's that simple. But be careful not to be deceived. Jesus says that "If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" If you think you have light but that light is

actually darkness then how awful is the deception in you. In other words if you think you are saved and serving God but in fact you are actually serving the world and looking at life through the bad eye thinking it is the good eye, how great is the darkness in you because you have no true light.

D. Martin Lloyd Jones put it this way---“Materialism that thinks it is godly but is not and the light found in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness. The man who thinks he is godly because he talks about God, and says he believes in God, and goes to a place of worship occasionally, but is really living for certain earthly things, how great is that man’s darkness.”

Beloved, what is our outlook and perspective on life? Is our vision clouded with an unhealthy preoccupation with worldly things? Do we have an eternal perspective on this world? This is an issue of the our hearts. James Montgomery Boice said this speaking of an unhealthy preoccupation with the world and this is sobering to me.

“I am convinced that this is true for many Christians, particularly those living in the midst of Western affluence. Now and then people like this complain to me that they cannot understand the Bible, or that God seems far away. Sometimes they are confused about the Christian life or about God’s will for them. Well, it is not suprising. And, what is more, it always will be this way for one who knows his way around a supermarket or a brokerage house more than he knows his way around the New Testament. Although Jesus did not direct us away from possessions themselves, he did warn us against losing our spiritual vision because of them.”

Beloved, how is your spiritual vision this morning? There are only two options: is it clear or clouded? This leads us to our last question today.

4 – Who are you serving? (24)

Beloved, just as we can't have our treasures both in earth and in heaven or our bodies in both light and in darkness, we cannot serve two masters. The word masters in the Greek is often translated lord and refers to a slave owner. The idea does not point to the idea of an employer but the idea is a master of slaves.

And slaves serve and slave is the word the New Testament uses most to speak of Christians. And a slave can serve only one master as the slave owner has total control of the slave. There is no such thing as partial or part-time obligation of a slave to his master. A slave gives full-time service to his master and he is fully owned and totally controlled by his master. To give anything else to another would make his master less than a master. It is impossible for a slave to serve two masters.

But we think we can. We think we can serve God and serve the world and the things we love of it at the same time. Well, I can have all these things and indulge myself and serve God at the same time. Beloved, if we try to divide our allegiance between God and this world then we have already given our allegiance to the world because we can't serve two masters. Serving God is all inclusive of life and exclusive to any other allegiance. To try and share our allegiance is nothing more than idolatry. We cannot claim Christ as Lord if our allegiance is to anything or anyone else and that includes ourselves.

We simply cannot serve God and money. Money is translated mammon and originally meant material possessions but came into Hebrew from a root word meaning to entrust your possessions to someone for keeping but has come to mean possessions that you trust in. But we can't serve both. The orders commanded of the two masters are opposed and cannot coexist. Think about it.

God commands us to walk by faith and the love of money commands us to walk by sight. God commands us to be humble but the love of money commands pride. God commands us to set our sights on the things above but the love of money wants us to set our minds on things below. God calls us to love light but the love of money calls us to love darkness. God tells us to look toward things unseen and eternal but the love of money tells us to look at things seen and the temporal.

We simply cannot serve both! Ask yourself this---Can anything be more insulting to God, who has redeemed us from the slavery of sin, made us alive in Christ, and given us all things richly to enjoy especially to take the name of God upon us as His child by grace and then to demonstrate by our every action and decision that we serve money and not Him. May God have mercy on us if that is true of us.

The person whose master is Jesus Christ can say from a true heart that he does all, whether he eats or drinks or whatever he does, he does all for the glory of God and he can say with Caleb when he was 85 years old, "I have followed my God fully."

Application:

Simple: Three questions.

1 – Where am I laying up my treasure because there I will find my heart?

2 – What is my perspective on this world and how is my spiritual vision---clear or cloudy?

3 – Who am I serving---God or this world?

© West Salem Baptist Church, 2011

Permissions: You are free to reproduce and distribute this material but you may not alter its contents in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. If you are posting online, a link back to this original document is preferred. Anything beyond these guidelines will require prior approval by West Salem Baptist Church.