

EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY TREASURES

Matthew 6:19-24

Intro: The Apostle Paul made a very revealing statement about money in his first letter to Timothy. You will find it in 1 Timothy 6, verses 9 and 10. Most of you are very familiar with what Paul said. This is his statement:

9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Notice that he did not say that *money is the root of all evil*, but that “the love of money is the root of all evil,” *all kinds of evil*. That is a most amazing statement, and we all can cite illustrations of what Paul said.

By the standards of life which characterized the life of our Lord as well as His disciples, most of us would be considered wealthy. One of our biggest problems in America is our high standard of living. None of us can consider ourselves exempt from the danger of making money the major part of our lives. In fact, from what the Apostle Paul said in the verses which I have just read to you, money was a great problem to those who professed to know the Lord in Bible times. In the latter part of verse 10 the Apostle Paul said, “Which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

When money is anyone’s chief object in life, this can lead to all kinds of evil, as the Apostle Paul said. His words were written originally as a warning to Timothy not to be deceived by “the love of money.” So we all need to be careful. This is not an indictment of rich people because you don’t have to be wealthy by our standards today, to be gripped by a love for money. The love of money has led to the commission of practically every crime in the books.

Even in the situation that we face in our country today, if the polls mean anything, they indicate that a majority of Americans will close their eyes to many things that are sinful in God’s sight as long as our economy gives them the things that they want. A decline in the stock market is big news, but who cares that we are a nation that has turned away from God and all that is holy and good and righteous in His sight. Those of us who know the Lord need to be on our guard constantly against this great evil: “the love of money.”

Now, as always is the case, the Lord not only pointed out the danger of just laying up for ourselves treasures upon earth, but He also told us the remedy if we have fallen into this trap, and the same words give us the truth that will keep us from being destroyed by it. So let us turn to our text, and examine the words which our Lord gave to His disciples almost two thousand years ago, words which are just as true and just as needy today as they were then.

He spoke of:

I. EARTHLY TREASURES (Matt. 6:19).

When the Lord spoke of laying up treasures, He was not condemning thriftiness, nor was He saying that it was wrong to make money. Even some of the Lord's parables encouraged the proper investment of money. It is good to make plans for the future as long as those plans are not extravagant.

But what our Lord was condemning was the person who lives for the purpose of making money. Money is necessary for all of us. However, the desire for money, and more money, and more money, has ruined many a life. Divorces are often the result of a man's desire to make money. He will neglect his wife and his children for the sake of money, not realizing when he does that he is paying a great price for the way he has chosen to go. And often he has to number his children among the casualties in his life.

Besides, there is nothing secure about money. Solomon had a word about riches, and we need to remember that he was one of the richest men who ever lived. Listen to his words found in Prov. 23:4-5:

4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.

5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

He also said,

A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent (Prov. 28:20).

When two brothers were having trouble over an inheritance, and one of them came wanting the Lord to settle their differences, the Lord said to him,

14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetous-

ness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:14-15).

The tragedy with most people today is that they know practically nothing about the Scriptures. All of us could be spared a lot of experiences that bring us unhappiness instead of happiness if we only paid closer attention to the Word of God.

In our Lord's words in our text He pointed out a couple of reasons why riches alone do not bring happiness. First, because things get old, and sometimes are ruined just by the passing of time. Moths and rust do their damage. And if not, "thieves break through and steal." So you never know how many different ways you can lose what you have.

Much more could be said about following earthly treasures, but now let us look at what the Lord said by way of protecting us from making such tragic mistakes.

II. HEAVENLY TREASURES (Matt. 6:20-21).

I don't believe I am underestimating the need for these verses in our society today when I say that the majority of people do not give a single thought about the possibility of heavenly treasures. They live just for this life, and make no preparation for life after death. Parents will do all that they can to give their children security for the future, but the same parents will never talk to their children about God, or righteousness, or heaven. And the reason is because they don't know anything about heavenly treasures, and if they do, those things are just not important for them.

Perhaps one reason the Lord got into this subject in His Sermon on the Mount was because He had just spoken about rewards – rewards for giving alms, or rewards for praying, or rewards for fasting. One reason that people are not interested in the things of the Lord, is because they don't want the trouble which often goes with it. And yet earlier in this sermon our Lord had this to say. You will find these words in Matthew 5, verses 10-12. (Read.) Notice the words in verse 12 especially.

Let me give you some other passages in which we are encouraged to seek heavenly treasures. One of these is found in 2 Cor. 4:17 and continuing on through 5:1:

- 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;
18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the

things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 4:17-5:1).

Paul actually contrasted the lives of those who are concerned only about earthly things with those whose concern is for heavenly things when he wrote to the believers in Philippi. Listen to his words:

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Phil. 3:17-21).

And then let me remind you of Col. 3:1-4:

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Going back to the words of our Savior, you will remember that He spoke these words:

34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:34-37).

The biggest mistake a person can make is this life is to be so concerned about this life that he fails to make preparation for the life to come.

We don't hear much about worldliness in our churches any more. And yet this is the cause for the lack of power in our lives and the lack of power in our churches. Too many of us are trying to straddle the fence between the church and the world. Again quoting Bishop Ryle where he said in his commentary on Matthew's Gospel,

Worldliness is one of the greatest dangers that beset man's soul. It is no wonder that we find our Lord speaking strongly about it: it is an insidious, specious, plausible enemy; it seems so innocent to pay close attention to our business! It seems so harmless to seek our happiness in this world, so long as we keep clear of open sins!—Yet here is a rock on which many make shipwreck to all eternity. They “lay up treasure on earth,” and forget to “lay up treasure in heaven.” May we all remember this! Where are our hearts? What do we love best? Are our chiefest affections on thing in earth, things in heaven? Life or death depends on the answer we can give to these questions. If our treasure is earthly, our hearts will be earthly also. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be” (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Matthew*, p. 56).

A few moments ago I read to you about two brothers who were having trouble over their inheritance. The Lord warned them by telling them that their lives did not consist in the abundance of things which they possessed. And then the Lord told them a parable which I read also to you in a recent message, and I want to read it to you again, noting especially what the Lord said in conclusion. Here is the parable:

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:16-21).

On the other hand, the one who is rich toward God, the one to whom the

riches of earth are as nothing compared with the riches we have in God in heaven, will have heaven in his heart. This is the way Alexander Mac-laren expressed it, “If our hearts are in heaven, then heaven will be in our hearts” (Vol. 4, p. 309).

But now notice what the Lord said about our eyes.

III. OUR EYES ARE GAUGES OF OUR SPIRITUAL STATE (Matt. 6:22-23).

When the Lord began to speak about the eye, it was as though He was asking His disciples, “Where are you looking?” They would be looking where their hearts were – either upon earth, or upon heavenly things. You will remember, I trust, that a few minutes ago I read to you from 2 Cor. 4 where the Apostle Paul said in verse 18,

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Obviously if we are talking about earthly things, our hearts are upon them, but so are our eyes. If we are laying up treasure in heaven, we look at them with the eye of faith, guided by the Word of God. The person who has clear, healthy vision (the meaning of “single”), his whole body is full of light. It puts everything else in perspective. But the person who only has an eye for earthly treasures, is a person who has an “evil” eye, meaning either diseased or altogether blind. And consequently his whole body is full of darkness. Everything is wrong; nothing is right! And if he happens to be a person who has had some exposure to the light of the Word of God, and then turns from it, his light becomes greater darkness than if he had never had the light.

Every child of God who is seeking those things which are above, who has set his heart on heavenly treasure, seeking to be rich toward God, can say, “Once I was blind but now I see.” On the other hand, the person who lives only for earthly treasure is a person who is spiritually blinded, meaning that he cannot see. And that is the state of countless millions in the world today. And unfortunately, many are in our churches.

Our text for today concludes with a statement from our Lord which we can call:

IV. TWO TOTALLY INCOMPATIBLE MASTERS: GOD AND MAMMON (Matt. 6:24).

“Mammon” is an Aramaic word for wealth, and it is usually related to greed, avarice. No person can live for money and still be living for God. A person can have a lot of money and still live for God but it is only because God is first in his life, not making money. The person who tries to serve both will soon find that he is the servant of mammon. It is only when God is given first place in all things, that “the love of money” goes away.

Here is another wonderful revelation from God. And how blessed we will be if we take the Lord at His Word instead of finding out that He was right only after we have spent our lives in pursuit of that which will rob us of heaven and salvation.

Concl: The big question for each one of us to answer is, Which direction are we headed? Are we headed after earthly things, or do we have healthy spiritual sight so that our hearts are set on things above where Christ sits today at the right hand of the Father? Don't try to straddle the fence between the Lord and the world. It is inevitable that you will fall on the world's side if your heart does not really belong to the Lord.