

“WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE”

I was thinking about how I might speak to both children and adults at the beginning of this message and I came across something in a book I am reading I thought I would share with you. The book is titled, *Gentle and Lowly, The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers* by Dane Ortlund. It was highly recommended, and I am definitely enjoying it.

In this book I read about a pastor who preached a sermon to children in his church 280 years ago. It was in the summer of the year, and the preacher was the famous Jonathan Edwards. The sermon filled twelve handwritten pages of notes. At the top of the first page, he wrote: *To the children, Aug. 1740*. What do you think was his main point? It was this: *Children Ought to love the Lord Jesus Christ above all things in the world*. In the sermon, the preacher gave six reasons children should love Jesus more than anything else in life. It might be good to try to find this and read it if you can or have your mom or dad read it. They might like to read it because the same reasons children should love Jesus most of all apply to us all young and old alike.

I'm just going to share the first reason. I'll paraphrase a little. He said:

There is no love so great and so wonderful as that which is in the heart of Christ. He delights in mercy; he is ready to pity those that are in suffering and sorrowful circumstances. He is one who delights in the happiness of his creatures. The love and grace Christ has shown us is so much greater than all the love that is in this world – that his love is like the sun and all other loves are like a candle. Parents are often full of kindness toward their children, but there is no kindness like the kindness of Jesus Christ. ¹

So the first thing he points out in encouraging children to love Jesus more than anything else in the world is the *heart* of Christ. There is a beauty, a grace, a true and eternal treasure in his love for us. Of course, that's true not just for children but for all of us. What do you adults love the most? What is your most dearly loved treasure? As we continue in *The Sermon on the Mount*, we come to the place where Jesus says, *where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*. It's a passage about your heart and about what you treasure.

Jesus actually begins by telling us there is something we should not love so much and treasure so dearly. What is it? He says...

I. DO NOT LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES ON EARTH.

What he is telling you is ...

A. Don't set your heart on earthly things.

Verse 19, literally says; *"Don't treasure up for yourself treasure upon the earth."*² Jesus isn't condemning hard work or financial wisdom. That phrase "treasuring up treasures" suggests his warning is about looking for life, security, status, and happiness in the wrong places.

Alexander MacLaren, an old Scottish Preacher, I like put it well.

Your treasure is probably not the same as your neighbor's. It is yours, whether you possess it or not, because you love it. For what our Lord means here by 'treasure' is not merely money or material goods, but whatever each man thinks best, that which he most eagerly strives to attain, that which he most dreads to lose, that which, if he has it, he thinks he will be blessed, that which, if he has it not, he knows he is discontented.³

Ask yourself, "Are my hopes, my significance, security, my happiness tied up in earthly things? If so, Jesus says, don't live like that. Why not?"

B. Earthly treasures will always ultimately fail you.

In **verse 19**, Jesus speaks of *moths and rust that destroy and thieves that break in and steal*. He could have mentioned other things also. If there is anything we've learned this year, it is that you can't count on life unfolding according to your plan or past patterns. We're in this pandemic with the financial, and emotional distress it brings and in the pandemic, personal tragedies and setbacks still occur. There are many things that are fine in themselves. You can pray and work for those things and treasure them as blessings when they come but don't live for them, trust in them, or try to find ultimate security in them. People make plans and get new clothes, houses and spouses. They get promotions and titles. They fill their bank account and their life-bucket with a bucket list of amazing experiences, but as long as the treasures they treasure are treasured *for themselves on the earth*, they will never outwit or elude the law of the moth and the rust and the thieves of life.

It will all fail. It's the way of things. They don't reach deep enough or last long enough

*It is because Jesus knows all this that he directs you to a completely different way of life when he says in **verse 20**...*

II. LAY UP TREASURES FOR YOURSELF IN HEAVEN.

Verse 20 *but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal*
²¹ *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* The first thing that confronts us here is the conviction and clarity with which Jesus calls us to take heaven seriously. For Jesus, earthly life is real, but heaven is just as real, and while earthly life is brief and uncertain, like a vapor, heaven is forever and as certain as the sky above us.

A. Everything hinges on what you chose to believe.

Either there is a God who made us for a purpose, or we are here by a chance and unguided accidents. If there is no god, nothing ultimately matters. All the moral outrage, whether from the left or the right, is meaningless in that case because we're all in a biological rat race, an evolutionary competition without a larger plan or moral meaning. We have no more value than a virus. It's all dark, futile, and empty.

If there is a God who created us, it makes sense to think he would want to communicate with us. Of all the historical claims or options for how he might have done that Jesus stands alone above and way beyond any other. The historical evidence for the Bible's unique inspiration, fulfilled prophecies, all of it culminating in the life of Jesus, his impact for good on the world and his resurrection from the dead, leaves us with a stunning, historically credible, emotionally moving revelation of God.

It's not enough to understand the teaching of Jesus and draw some inspiration from it. You have to come to the point of a decision to believe in him. That is critical because it is only through faith in Jesus that we are saved and are promised heaven. When Jesus talks about *laying up treasure in heaven*, he is not telling you how to get *into* heaven. Don't make the mistake of thinking the way we get into heaven is by giving money or doing good works. Very early in his ministry, **John 3** tells how Nicodemus, a very moral and religious man, came to Jesus one night. What did Jesus tell him? **John 3:3** Jesus answered him, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he*

cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus is clearly saying what we need for salvation is God's grace and a new birth.

He says you won't see the kingdom of God, or heaven, unless you are spiritually reborn. You will be blind to its reality and its appeal. In the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus explains the way you gain eternal life, is by believing in Jesus as your Savior. In **verses 14-15** of the same chapter Jesus says, *the Son of Man must be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.* Jesus was foretelling how he would be lifted up to die on the cross to pay for our sins. It is after this one of the Bible's most famous verses comes. **John 3:16** *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* Jesus told the people in his day what he tells you right now, if you come to him he will give you eternal life. No one is excluded. Everyone is invited. But you have to come to him. You have to be born again, you have to receive and believe in Jesus as your Savior. That's how you get in.

What Jesus is telling us in the Sermon on the Mount is that having been born again, believing in him, and belonging to His kingdom, we *now* need to live in light of the reality of heaven. Jesus teaches us this earthly life is under the curse. As such, it is transient, vulnerable, perishable, and unpredictable. That is okay, it doesn't matter so much because heaven and eternity are real. To fully invest your heart and hopes in this present world is foolish. Set your heart on things above.

B. We lay up treasure in heaven by the way we live on earth.

Now, Jesus is *not* saying live miserably now but be comforted by the fact that one day when you go to heaven God will pay you back for your misery. Listen to how **1 Timothy 6:18-19** puts it. It says Christians are *to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,* ¹⁹ *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."* That last phrase is essential! Not only will there one day be rewards in heaven, but when you live generously and in light of eternity, you are even now choosing to *"take hold of that which is truly life."* What he is saying is there is a different way of life you can live, which will provide the greatest satisfaction and joy now and will *also* provide rewards that will follow you into eternity itself.

When you recognize the goodness of God's grace to you and, at the same time, the simple truth that earthly treasures in a transient world

will never bring lasting fulfillment, it frees you. When you choose then to live like a trusting, giving child of God and because of that, write a check to meet someone's pressing need, or to support a faithful ministry, or set up online giving for the church, in all that you are not only giving generously you are taking hold of *that which is truly life*.

It's not just about money and giving it! When you set aside your treasured pride and your plans, and you give yourself to helping and encouraging others in many different ways, you are often in a sense setting aside earthly and selfish treasures to lay up treasures in heaven and to lay hold of that which is truly life!

*And notice what Jesus says in **verse 21***

C. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

"The heart" in the Bible is the innermost source and center of your life. Choose what you treasure well, for whatever your heart longs for your life will drift toward.

When you are driving down the street or scrolling online, and you see an advertisement from some lending company that says; *"We lend happiness at 18 locations"*. You are tempted to believe that and to start thinking the key to your happiness is somehow related to your access to money. If you choose in that moment to use that as an occasion to confess your faith you can guard your heart. You can say, *"Lord, this foolish world tries to seduce me daily. But I know my true life, peace and joy is not found here. I thank you that through Christ, I have the true treasure of eternal life and I have your presence and care in this life as well.* Your heart is kept healthy by lots of little decisions that you have to make day by day. Every day you are bombarded with a false message that says everything depends on this material world. It is a lie. Keep renewing your vision for a life that is rich in relation to God.

The last thing Jesus tells us to do is to this, He says,

III. KEEP YOUR EYES ON GOD AND YOUR HEART FOR GOD.

Verse 22-24 *"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light,²³ 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!"²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be*

devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

I want to look at the last part first. Verse 24...

A. You cannot serve two masters, you cannot serve God and money.

That is ultimately the issue. We can not soften it. I like how one pastor put it in a sermon I read titled: "Right on the Money." He said,

There is no easy coexistence between God and money. They coexist, no doubt. You walked into this room today with money in your pocket and a Bible under your arm. But if they are going to coexist together, there are going to have to be some strict parameters on the relationship. God is going to have to be firmly enthroned in the center of your household, and money is going to have to live out back tethered to a short leash.

God wants you to know, trust, and love him as your gracious God and your loving Father. And he also tells you this...

B. If your trust in God is not greater than your materialism, you are blinded and in darkness.

What do you think Jesus means when he says, "*the eye is the lamp of the body*"? It's an illustration, of course. Your entire body's ability to accurately perceive and safely navigate the world depends on your eyes. You can be in a world filled with light, but if your eyes don't let the light in, then you are effectively in darkness even when you are surrounded by light.

Jesus is saying if you do not see the supremacy of the spiritual reality, you will actually be blinded by the material world. A materialistic mindset clouds your vision so that you do not see clearly what matters most. The unstated underlying thinking is: "*I'd rather go on vacation, or buy a bigger house, or redecorate, or freshen up my wardrobe, or leave a more impressive inheritance, or have more discretionary money than to take heaven seriously and lay up treasure there.*" When material things fill your vision, you don't see yourself as greedy or stingy or ungrateful or unfaithful, but you are.

Conclusion

I once heard a father talk about taking his son to a fast-food restaurant. He bought his boy fries. He did think he wanted any, but as he began to smell them, he decided he'd reach over to taste one.

As soon as his hand touched the fries, his little boy pushed it back, said, *Dad don't take my fries*. The dad said he was hurt and disappointed. He said to himself, *My son doesn't realize where these fries come from. He doesn't realize that about five minutes ago, I walked up to the counter, pulled out my money, and bought those fries for him, and I am the source of those fries. And, he doesn't understand that if I want to, I can take those fries away from him. He also doesn't understand that if I want to, I can go back to the counter and order a dozen more orders of fries. I could bury this kid in fries. In other words, what he didn't understand is that I didn't need his fries. But what I needed was his willingness to share what I had already previously given Him back with me because he loves me.*

Do you know what the height of ingratitude and spiritual blindness is? It's for God to give you something or to give me something and then for us to put a fence around it and act as if it is ours and not want to share and not want to give back to be possessive with it and to treasure it more than we treasure the God from whom all blessings flow.

God himself is the great treasure. Jesus knows that, and he is also the proof of it. Do you realize how much God loves and cares for you? I started with Jonathon Edward's sermon to the 6, and 8, and 10 year-olds in his church. He told them, *There is no love so great so wonderful, as that which is in the heart of Christ.*" There's a place in the Bible that sums up the sacrifice of Jesus this way. It says *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake, he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich.*⁴

The Bible talks about the riches of our inheritance in Christ. It describes the riches of what we have been given and will be given in Him as unsearchable riches. These riches are not only unsearchable but also imperishable and eternal. Jesus treasures you so much that he gave up his treasure so you could be treasured. You are way less worthy – way more sinful than you really understand but so much more deeply loved and treasured than you can ever imagine. It's true. Let that loosen your fearful grip on false gods. Let the Holy Spirit draw you to embrace Jesus and the love of the Father in him.

Amen

Prayer of Response

Our Father in heaven, We turn to you now and place our faith, or renew our faith, in Jesus as our Savior and Lord. Thank you for treasuring us so much that you gave your son to die and rise again for our salvation. We turn to him, receive him, trust him, and enthrone him as our Lord. We turn to worship you alone as God of our lives and our hearts. Free us from the blindness of materialism and help us to lay hold of that which is truly life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

¹ Quoted by Dane Ortlund in, *Gentle and Lowly, The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*, Wheaton, Crossway, 2020, pp 95-96. I have paraphrased it pretty significantly for our children as they are listening to the sermon Livestream, I hope, during the pandemic.

² *Thesaurizo* and *Thesauros*

³ Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Grand Rapids, Baker, volume 6. Pp 302-303

⁴ 2 Corinthians 8:9