

# Storing Up Treasures

Sermon by Susan Davis

Matthew 6 : 19-24 Treasures in Heaven

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy,[c] your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are unhealthy,[d] your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 “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.

let us pray - our father and our God as always we look to you as the source of all truth as the source of all grace and the source of all strength knowing that without you we can do nothing and we come to you this day as people who tend to place our treasures in this world and so these words of Jesus are jarring to us and we need an extra measure of grace to be able to hear them as we should , we ask it in Jesus name Amen

Just coming off of the Christmas Holiday, It is kind of tough to preach or to be spoken to about not storing up treasures. We all Had our Christmas lists of things we wanted to receive or treat ourselves to. And now we have to find places for all the earthly goods we received. Perhaps we even had to add home security to our home to protect these treasures lest thieves break in and rob us of them.

So, to be told “do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and rust destroy where thieves break in and steal” is a bit of a buzz kill.

Some translations read “where moth and vermin destroy” and that is because in the ancient world the Jewish people didn't have banks or safety deposit boxes or iron vaults in which to keep their valuables. Many of the people kept their valuables hidden under the dirt floors of their houses and the houses themselves were basically made of mud bricks and there were various types of vermin that could nibble or gnaw their way through and get to valuables that were stored in the home and destroy them.

Also, one of the distinguishing signs of somebody in the upper class of the Jewish nation was the fine and stylish clothes that they wore. They didn't keep their clothes in cedar chests or cedar closets, and these wonderful examples of finery were always exposed to the destruction wrought by moths and so Jesus borrows from this everyday problem that people faced with their most cherished possessions. He tells them “be careful that you don't become caught up in treasuring up, storing up or amassing worldly goods. Goods that are perishable, even the metal that can be subjected to rust or even those things that do not disintegrate that are protected from the vermin can still be carried off by thieves who break in and steal what you have.

Have you ever had any important possession that you owned, stolen? I have . When we were dating Larry built a fancy Muscle car for me and put a fancy stereo in it a kenwood. It had great sound quality. I worked on North st at the time and back then, All the stores stayed open late on Thursday nights. One night I went to my car and got in. Before I shut my door the interior lights revealed that someone had been in my car and the stereo was  $\frac{3}{4}$  the way removed from the dashboard. It terrified me. I felt Violated and I no longer wanted that fancy car that drew thieves to it like honey. I wanted a used plain Jane car that no one would bother with.

The event changed me and how I viewed my world. I asked myself what kind of a person could look at themselves in the mirror at night and say I took what belonged to somebody else I took what somebody else worked to achieve or to acquire and with no labor of my own I just stole it ?

That's why Paul writes to the Christians and says let him who steals steal no more but we live in a world where anything that we own can be lost and can be stolen from us.

So, Jesus here really turns the values of the world upside down it's not about how much you have it's not about the treasures that you amass in this world but it's about the treasures that you have in heaven.

Isn't that a radically different set of guidelines and values from everything the world tells us to do? On the other hand the Bible tells us that we ought to be diligent providing for our family and the apostle says he who fails to provide for his own household is worse than an infidel. And the Bible doesn't teach that anybody who's wealthy must therefore be evil no but Jesus is talking about where our hearts are. What really ignites our passion? Where is our deepest level of concern and commitment?

There are 2 things you can store up in heaven. In Paul's letter to the Romans we see that portion where the apostle warned about another kind of storing up where he warned sinners about treasuring up wrath

Romans 2:5 New International Version

*5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.*

What the apostle is saying is that on the day of judgment it's not just the question of whether you will get a yes or no from God, but as our Lord indicated every idle word that we have ever uttered will come into judgment.

Every offense that we've committed against God will be on the docket. So, Paul warns us against making new deposits every day into the wrath that is being built up for us, waiting for us on the judgment day.

So we are either left storing up treasure or storing up wrath. I would like you to ask yourself what are you storing up? Are you storing up treasure in heaven or are you storing up wrath in heaven? I am sure you are familiar with the principle of delayed gratification. The importance of not consuming everything that you make , but rather

investing. Not just spending but investing and investing some more. Now if you are talented enough to be able to make your own investment choices, you might ask yourself, “what is the best investment I can be in?” Because you want that investment to grow huge so you can have the best outcome for your future self, right?

I honestly believe the best investment anybody can ever be in, is the Kingdom of God and I'll tell you why. There aren't any moths in heaven, and there aren't any vermin in heaven, and the only thieves are saved, and healed of their need to steal. There is no better investment that anybody can ever make than in God's Kingdom. And so Jesus says store up treasure in heaven.

Now how do you store up treasures in heaven? Some commentators believe that what Jesus is talking about is by your good works, and that may strike you as somewhat strange. Maybe even offensive because we learn that justification is by faith alone and not by works but let me say it again justification is by faith alone but your reward in heaven will be according to your works. There are at least 25 times in a New Testament that we are taught that the distribution of rewards that we get in heaven will be based upon our good works. Our good works are never good enough to get us into heaven, our good works are never good enough to deserve any reward. The rewards themselves are rewards of grace, they're what Saint Augustine called God's crowning his own gifts, and yet at the same time we are called over and over again in scripture to bring forth the fruits of righteousness to bring forth the fruits of obedience, and when we are obedient to Christ, we are storing up treasures in heaven.

There's nothing more valuable in the Kingdom of God for you than your obedience.

And the value of it is eternal. The market in heaven is never a bear market. There are no recessions. The glory of the Kingdom of God is from everlasting to everlasting if only we believe. Now we have to believe that, that is the place to store up treasures. To invest our time and energy doing so. listen to the reason Jesus gives... “for where your treasure is there your heart will be also”. That's a heavy thing that Jesus says here, that wherever your treasure lives, that's where your heart is. And we can reverse it, where your heart is, that's where your treasure is.

The question that we have to ask ourselves on a regular basis is, where's your treasure? where's your heart ? where is that point of ultimate concern that grips your life? Are you just playing at being a Christian or is this thing for keeps? Did you hear the words of the song that we sang just a few moments ago? He demands our life our love our all. **When I survey the wondrous cross**

There is a love song in the Disney movie Moulan Rouge and there's a line in there "you're close to me now but where is your heart?"

That's the question that Jesus is asking, he's saying where's your heart? where is your ultimate commitment? is it to prestige? Is it to success? Is it to wealth? Is it to my Kingdom? Do I have your heart? That is what he's saying, cause nothing less will do. He wants us to give him our hearts. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Our treasurer is in what we cherish. That's one of the reasons I love the classical and traditional marriage ceremony because in the portion of the ceremony of the pledging of the troth there's not just the pledging of love and honor and all of that, but, "do you promise to cherish her and do you promise to cherish him"

If we could just keep that promise that we make to each other on our wedding day, we would never wound each other the way that we do. Most people never intentionally damage what they cherish. To Cherish something, is to assign a high value to it. To esteem it. When we get married, that's what we promise, that I am going to esteem you, I am going to cherish you, I'm going to value you above any other person in this world. I pray that everyone one here has been cherished by somebody. To be their all in all.

Jesus goes on to say the lamp of the body is the eye. Interesting metaphor, isn't it? It's just like the lamp is that which gives you the ability to see what's in front of you, so our eyes are what opens the Vista of the world to us. To be consigned to blindness is to be consigned to darkness.

I remember hearing a report of a man who had lost his eyesight and was blind for 31 years he had not seen his wife in 31 years, he had never seen his children, and then had a corneal transplant and after 31 years was able to see his wife for the first time. Was able to

see his children. I can't imagine what it'd be like to be blind. That no light gets in, because the way the light gets into us is through the eye, and Jesus says that the eye is the lamp of the body and he says that if the eye is bad the whole body will be full of darkness. If the eyes are good your whole body will be full of light. So, with this different metaphor first of treasure now of light and darkness, he's asking them the question what's in our souls? if our souls are filled with darkness, how great is that darkness?

This metaphor is on almost every page of the New Testament. That when a person comes to Christ when the person's soul is quickened by the Holy Ghost, all of a sudden they quote "I see the light" In the past they didn't see anything special about Jesus, or about the gospel, and they know people who are religious who have seen the light, but all they know in their souls is darkness, and if the light of Christ has not come into your eye, then your soul is in darkness, and Jesus says "how great is that darkness?"

It's the most dreadful darkness that anybody could ever have to endure, so then he concludes this section by saying no one can serve 2 masters, either he will hate the one, and love the other, be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon you cannot serve God and riches, Jesus is not saying you can't be wealthy and be a child of God. Jesus knew about Abraham, Jesus knew about Job, Jesus knew that he would be buried in the tomb of a wealthy man. But Abraham was not a slave of riches, nor was Job a slave to riches, because when he lost everything he said "though he slay me yet will I serve him". Joseph of Arimathea was not a slave to wealth, but you are a slave to that which you serve, and if your whole life is consumed by the acquisition of mammon then you're a slave. And if you're a slave of man you can't be a servant of God. The two are absolutely incompatible, and so we have to get a wakeup call. Because how easy it is to get caught up with the pursuit of everything else, but the Kingdom of God.

Through this metaphor we have had a glimpse of that heavenly treasure. Anyone who is a Christian, possesses a Pearl of great price. So let us seek this heavenly treasure. Let us seek it with passion knowing the X the treasure map marks is heaven.

let's pray.... father we thank you that you have provided a treasury in heaven that you have protected and that you have held in trust for that moment when you will say to your people come my beloved inherit the Kingdom which I have prepared for you from the foundation of the world give us the grace to let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also. Amen.