

## The Problem with Treasure (Matthew 6:19-24)

When was the last time you gave away a large sum of money or something of great value? (Been a while?)

- We will give away: Hearts, bodies, integrity, each other (never money)

### Perhaps not surprisingly then, the Bible has a lot to say about money

- 16 of 38 parables found in the gospels deal with money
- 1/10 verses in the NT deal with the topic
- Scripture contains about 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 on faith, and over 2k that deal with \$

### Why do you suppose that is?

- God loves money and is super into it and wants all of yours... no. We love... super into it... want it all
- God loves us, and we love money... often more than Him—**so he goes after it (like any other idol)**
  - Grounding of our text: **Exodus 20:1-4a and 5a, NASB**
  - What do we mean by "idol"? (any lesser thing that we treat like an ultimate thing)
  - Why does God go after idols?
  - God goes after them because lesser things can never deliver ultimately
    - We will ultimately be disappointed if we pursue lesser things too much
    - Because they never satisfy, they become **masters** to which we become enslaved
      - **Verse 24** says that **mammon** is a **master** (think about it... we sacrifice for this)
    - What is it like to sacrifice to a false god?
      - At best they are absent—at worst they are demons (OT; prophets of baal)
      - In ultimate disappointment and despair people were driven to ultimate sacrifice(s)
    - **That is the way money works today when it become an idol/master/God**
      - We will sacrifice anything and everything for more—kids, marriage, integrity

### Jesus goes after this idol... it is really an issue of the heart

- Affections and passions—desire
- What we really want and where we look for happiness
- = **Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also** (v. 21)
- Jesus is not telling us to live without passion or **treasure**
  - He is **redirecting** our passions to a more true way (a better **treasure**)
  - He is telling us that we actually **aim too low** in our pursuits, passions and desires (**cf. v. 33**)
  - This is a **loving appeal** for His followers to aim better/higher/rightly

### Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth (v. 19)

- This sometimes sounds mean because we like **treasures**
- God made **treasures—for us to enjoy**—but not to **lay up** (☹ mean no savings)
  - **Lay up** = revealing that this is where we find **security, identity, meaning** (issue = heart)
  - **Don't do that = moth, rust, thieves**
    - I.e. they are **fleeting, fragile**, they **falter**, they're **perishable & not secure**
  - If that is where your **heart** is then you will end up with a **crumbling, broken, ripped-off heart**
  - Jesus is saying: **I have something better for you my beloved**
  - **1 Peter 1:3-4, NLT**

### If you are going to lay something up, let it be treasure in heaven (**better treasure that lasts**)

- What lasts? What is **treasure in heaven**? How do we **lay it up**?
  - Heaven not so much as a place (it is that too), but as an alternate, present reality
  - Living in the **Kingdom of Heaven** = going God's way
- Pursue going God's way
  - **Ephesians 2:10, NLT** (the concept of reward; **1 Corinthians 3:8, 9a, 13-15, NASB**)
  - **Generosity, prayer, forgiveness, fasting** (things centered on Jesus—not stuff)
  - Neglecting these sorts of things **impoverishes** us as it pertains to God's way (kingdom)
    - We think the opposite (but see **Psalms 34:8-10, NASB**)
  - **1 Timothy 6:17-19, NASB**

- Who's rich? More than 1 billion people in the world live on less than \$1 a day (3 bill/\$2 per day)
  - It's okay to be rich—but its not okay to be ungenerous and not rich toward God

Jesus uses an ancient idiom to remind them of the **deceitfulness of lusting** after riches (Matthew 6:22-23, NASB)

- **Bad/evil<sup>1</sup> eye** = saying for being greedy (Proverbs 28:22, NASB; then back to Matthew 6:22-23, NASB)
- **Good or clear eye** = saying for being generous
- **The lamp of the body is the eye** = whichever way your **eye** tends is the way your whole self (**body**) goes
- If your eye (perception/way of being) tends toward **generosity** your life will be full of **light**
- If your eye (perception/way of being) tends toward **greed/lust** your whole life will be **darkened**
- Then he warns them of the deceitfulness of riches: **If therefore the light that is in you is actually darkness, how great is that darkness**
  - I.e. **you have been pursuing passions that you thought were light, but compared to what God has for you they are darkness and you have been fooled and the darkness has deepened—how deep is that darkness!?**
  - Cf. 1 Timothy 6:9-10, NIV

Jesus was not so much against wealth as he was an **overvaluing of wealth** and its accouterments (**treasure**) and living in a way that said **"This is all there is"**

- We tend to do that... Jesus knew the danger of doing such (Cf. Exodus 20)
- Money and stuff can become like **Gollum's ring**
  - Something we cannot do without (so it becomes our **master**)
  - Something that becomes the **focus** of our **attention** and **source** of our **security and joy**
  - That creates **darkness** (the evil of idolatry)
    - Never delivers (John D. Rockefeller) -- Riches are fleeting (Proverbs 23:4-5, NLT)

Jesus is trying to save us from this (**verse 24**)

**Jesus pushes us here to His main point and a decision on our part:**

- There are 2 masters—and you cannot serve both (**master** = supreme controller)
- **Mammon** = possessions (personified here to emphasize their spiritual force)

**Mammonolatry defined:**

"This sin may be defined as the spirit of grasping greed and acquisitiveness, the insatiable longing for more of material possessions and a consequent lack of contentment and absence of trust in God our Father who has promised to supply all needful things to His children." – Ralph P. Martin<sup>2</sup>

- There is self examination to be done and a decision to be made
  - Hard truth: **You cannot serve 2 masters**

How do we know if we are **serving Mammon** and too concerned with **treasure on earth**?

- **Are you able to give away large sums of money joyfully?**
  - A litmus test
- **Have you ever written a check or given something away that hurt a little?**
  - If not, you probably serve **mammon**
- **Do you give regularly (practice generosity)?**
  - If not, you serve **mammon**
- **Do you make decisions in life based primarily on money?**
  - If so, then **mammon** is your **master** (supreme controller and controlling logic)

**A false god has to be repented of and torn down**

- Tear it down this week by doing something extravagantly generous
- This all connects to the idea of **fasting** and self-denial (in order to gain something better)

<sup>1</sup> Greek = Ponerous = Evil in a moral or spiritual sense

<sup>2</sup> Scot McKnight, *The Story of God Bible Commentary: Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 212.