

STUDY ON THE TEACHING OF JESUS

TEACHING ON THE HEART!

Read Matthew 6:19-24

“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)

We must guard our hearts and watch over them so that our heart follows hard after the things of God and is not distracted by the things of this world. In this study, I ask three questions:

- Where is our treasure and where is our heart? because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- Where is our focus? What are our eyes focused on? Are they focused on the seen or the unseen?
- Who, or what, are you serving?” Here Jesus is surrounded by religious people, Sadducees and Pharisees, men who look very religious on the outside, but who in their hearts are serving money and themselves rather than God.

Jesus is also surrounded by people who have never heard this kind of radical teaching. Jesus is asking us to repent, to change our minds about these things, to live a life of faith, and to serve the one true God.

Where is your treasure? (vv19-21)

The ancient Greek more literally says do not treasure for yourself treasures on earth. The idea is that earthly treasure is temporary and fading away (where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal), but heavenly treasure is secure. Jesus did not say it is wrong to possess earthly treasure. He does say it is wrong to lay it up for self. We are to hold it as stewards for Him.

In contrast, heavenly treasures are everlasting and incorruptible. Treasures in heaven give enjoyment now, in the contentment and sense of well-being that comes from being a giver. But their ultimate enjoyment comes on the other side of eternity. It has been wisely observed that a moving truck full of possessions never follows a hearse. Everything one might take with them to the world beyond is left behind. The pharaohs of Egypt were buried with gold and treasures to take into the afterlife, but they left it all behind. Even further, though gold is a precious thing on earth, God uses it to pave the streets of heaven.

When Paul used the phrase “love of money”, he is buttressing the same point Jesus is making here.

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” (1 Timothy 6:10)

Some Examples of wrongly placed treasure and heart.

Example 1 – The story of Achan (Joshua 6:17-18, 7:1-26). In verse 18, God instructs the children of Israel to attack Jericho, to abstain from the accursed things, and to bring all the silver, gold, and vessels of bronze and iron to be consecrated to the Lord into the treasury of the Lord. Now as they attack Jericho, one of the men disobeys the command of the Lord and keeps for himself a beautiful Babylonian garment, 200 shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing 50 pounds. Because of this man’s sin, Israel is defeated at the battle of Ai, and this man is put to death because his heart coveted after these riches instead of honouring the Lord and doing as He had asked.

This example will easily apply to those who will not pay their tithe as the Lord has directed nor will they give an honourable offering.

Example 2 – The Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:16-22). In this story, a rich young ruler comes to ask Jesus a question. The question he asks is how he might have eternal life. Jesus answers the man by telling him that he needs to obey the commandments, and the rich young ruler responds, “Which ones?” Jesus responds, “‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal, etc.’” The young ruler responds that he has kept all these things and asks, “What do I still lack?” This is where Jesus drops the bomb on the rich young ruler. He says, “Go, sell what you have and give to the poor” and “follow Me.” Where was this young man’s heart? You can tell by his reaction. His heart is controlled by his wealth and riches. This young ruler is wealthy and supposedly has a lot going for him, but he is not willing to let those things go to follow Jesus. He is willing to love his neighbour and do the commands that pertain to his fellow man, but when it comes down to loving the Father and having no other gods before Him, he is not willing to let go of the wealth he obtained here on earth.

Where is your treasure? So many things come to mind when I think of what Jesus is saying in these three verses that begin our passage. Are you earthly-minded or heavenly-minded? Are you investing in the future eternity to come, or are you investing in the here and now? Are you enthralled with the temporary versus the permanent? Now obviously all of these are asking the same thing, but it is very important that we fully grasp this thought.

How do we lay treasure in heaven?

Jesus drew the conclusion that you can only have your treasure (and your heart) in one place; we cannot store up treasure on earth and on heaven at the same time.

How is your vision? (vv22-23)

The idea behind having a good eye is either being generous or being single minded. Both principles apply to the disciple’s attitude towards material things.

Being generous brings light to our lives. We are happier and more content when we have God’s heart of generosity. But if we are not generous, it is as if your whole body will be full of darkness. Our selfish, miserly ways cast darkness over everything that we think or do.

Being single minded brings light to our lives, and we are also happier and more content when we focus on the kingdom of God and His righteousness, knowing that all the material things will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). But when we are double-minded, it is as if your whole body is full of darkness. We try to live for two masters at the same time, and it puts a dark shadow over everything in our life.

In any case, Jesus tells us that either our eye is directed at heavenly things (and therefore full of light) or it is directed at earthly things (and therefore full of darkness).

Below are examples that pertain to our passage. Gathering up riches here on the earth blurs our vision. It causes us not to see the truth, the will of God, correctly. It distorts our vision, causing us to not see God as clearly as maybe we once did.

Example 1 – The Story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). In this story, a man and his wife sold a possession, brought the money to the apostles, and laid it at their feet. This occurred a lot in the early church. This story is a little different though. When they brought their money to the apostles, Ananias and Sapphira lied, saying they had brought all the money they had made from selling this possession. But in fact, they had kept back some for themselves. Peter accuses Ananias of lying to God, and at that moment, Ananias falls to his death. The same thing happens to his wife, who also lies to God about how

much they had received for the possession. Ananias and Sapphira had seen earlier the praise and acceptance others had received for selling their property; therefore, they sold this great possession for the sole purpose of being noticed, accepted, and looked upon as spiritual. Because of this, they lied to the Holy Spirit, and their lives ended as a result.

Example 2 – The Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21). In this parable, Jesus makes a profound statement we all should listen to very carefully. He states in verse 15 that **“one’s life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses.”** The parable of the rich fool suggests this very thing. This parable tells of a rich man who has yielded a great crop. He decides to tear down his old barns and build newer, bigger barns. Then after he is done, he decides to retire, so to speak, thinking that he has enough stored up to last many years. Now he can sit back, relax, and take it easy. What happens? God calls him a fool and says that his life is required of him that day. Jesus completes this parable by saying, **“So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”** So many of us long for the day we can sit back and enjoy our fortune we have been saving up for retirement and take the path of easiness. This man was ruled by his wealth, thinking of all he had accumulated, only to die that night and see his wealth squandered and split up. He was unable to take it with him.

Who are you serving? (v24)

Now we come to a very powerful and pivotal point in the passage at hand. This verse, in fact, is the climax of the study. This passage asks the all-important question, “Who are you serving?” People often think they can have the best of both worlds – both here on earth serving themselves with riches and living it up, and later down the road in the future, which would be heaven. In this passage, Jesus states: **“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon”** (Matthew 6:24). Jesus tells us here that we cannot serve two masters.

We cannot serve money and God; we cannot serve popularity and God; we cannot serve ourselves and God; we cannot serve our families and God. We can have only one master.

I would like to point to an example of someone who had the right perspective on what this meant.

“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:7-8)

The Apostle Paul was in the religious sense a man who had it all. He was circumcised the eighth day; he was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. Concerning the law, he was a Pharisee; concerning zeal, he persecuted the church. Concerning righteousness, which is in the law, he was blameless. Paul had it all, but he gave all that up because he saw all this as rubbish, as “dung,” so that he might know Christ and the power of His resurrection. He was serving one Master, and that Master was Jesus Christ, and Him alone.

What about us? What is Christ asking of us? He is asking us to do the same – we are not to serve two masters, but to serve Christ and Christ alone.

We conclude by asking ourselves the same three questions:

- Where is your treasure and your heart?
- How is your vision?
- Who are you serving?

This would be a perfect time to re-align your heart with the Lord, repent of your wrong-doings, and accept only one Lord over your life – who is Jesus Christ.