

The Sermon on the Mount. Real Treasure
(Matthew 6 v 19 – 34)

The Lord Jesus says a very insightful thing here. “Where your treasure is there your heart will be also”. He knows human nature. He knows our hearts tend to rest and linger on those things we treasure, whatever they are. They are what we love to think about, what we love to spend time on, what we take pride in, where we love to be, what we love to be doing or at least fantasizing about.

Jesus asks us to consider our treasures. Will they last or might moth or rust or some other destructive force be able to destroy them? Are they ours for keeps or might they somehow be taken from us? He urges us to set our hearts on ‘treasure’ that is indestructible and permanently secure or else we could find ourselves sorely disappointed and worse, bereft of all comfort.

Now the Lord blesses us for a time in this world with good things to enjoy. He gifts us and enables us to work so we can have somewhere to live and own some cool things. We have friends, perhaps we find romance, perhaps we have family. And we have a very natural affection for all such things. We enjoy our work and the sense of worth and fulfilment it gives us. We take pleasure in decorating our homes. Maybe we get to have some nice clothes, a good car, memorable holidays. We adore our family. We thank God for our blessings.

But none of these are completely secure. We may lose our jobs and have to move house. We may be the victim of an accident, get burgled or mugged or suffer ill health, and sooner or later we will be separated from those we love. So much of what we value can actually be lost. If we have made passing things our ‘treasure’ we inevitably end up losers!

Now we can have legitimate affection for our families and grateful enjoyment of God’s good gifts in this life but Jesus urges us to view

something else as our *ultimate* treasure. He urges us to set our hearts on what is indestructible and lasting and secure for all eternity. Something that is guaranteed with the stamp of Heaven.

This ultimate treasure is our relationship with Him.

This trusting friendship with Jesus as Saviour and Master, which saves us from sin and evil, transforms our hearts and lives for good and sets us apart as children of God and heirs of His eternal Kingdom.

This doesn't rust. It cannot be taken from us. It is given to us as a treasure to delight in for all time and eternity. The Apostle Paul in 2 Cor 4 describes this treasure as God making "His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ". This treasure is us coming to God admitting that we are sinful failures and seeing the forgiving smile of welcome on the face of the Son of God!

So real treasure according to Jesus and God's Word is not to be found in the possessions or comforts, or prestige or approval of this passing world. People who don't really know Jesus run after these things. They have a desperation, a dependency on such things to fill their sense of emptiness.

Scripture gently instructs Christians not to fret or worry, but to 'lay up treasure in heaven', to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. Our treasure is secure with Him for He is our treasure, knowing Him, trusting Him for each new day, experiencing His wise and generous provision through each new challenge. Real treasure then is above us and before us and even now within us, but not to be found in our purse or wallet!

Jesus continues in His Sermon on the Mount by cautioning us against two possible pitfalls while still living in the present world. One is greed, the other is worry. If the Lord is not in fact our treasure we will search for substitutes, lusting after money, possessions or worldly power, popularity, control. Be careful what you let your eyes feast

on, He says, for what you initially desire could easily become an addiction, a hard task-master which will make you miserable and compromise any joy you might have had in your faith in God.

One of the richest men in the world was once asked what he now wanted. His answer was one word – “more”. His wealth had not made him free but bound him in dissatisfaction and I would suspect made him blindly indifferent to the goodness and grace of God. We cannot serve two masters. Greed with the things of this world will quickly compromise any possibility of a meaningful relationship with the Lord.

Most of us are not in that category. We would not say our problem is too much money. Exactly the opposite! Sometimes we fear we will have too little – how are we going to make ends meet?

Again our Lord gives us words of wisdom and gentle reassurance. We are not to go running after the passing things of this world as substitutes for our relationship with God in Christ, Who is our real treasure. But God our loving Father in Heaven knows we have certain needs and like any good parent He delights in His children and loves to generously provide all we need and more.

Look at the birds and flowers, says Jesus. God knows how to take care of things. He will take care of you.

We are not to let covetous greed rule our hearts and lead us into dark selfish thinking. Nor should we let worry and fear rule our hearts and make us doubt God’s goodness or ability to provide.

Here’s the principle that steers us away from both extremes: Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, submitting our desires and resting our concerns on Him. He will ensure our needs are met in this life and more. He will be our treasure in Heaven.

Make it our first priority to trust and pray and work for the Lord and all that pleases Him and be assured He will look after us well.

It's an old cliché but a true one that none of us know what a day will bring. Usually a mix of 'highs' and 'lows', a share of trouble but also opportunities for fun and joyful service. We really don't know what tomorrow will bring. But our Father does. Our Saviour knows and He tells us not to worry.

We don't know yet if it will be green pastures and quiet waters or a valley of shadow but we know the Good Shepherd has gone ahead and is calling us each by name, and He will be with us and prepare a table for us whatever the circumstances, and stay the whole course with us until He brings us all home safe to the house of the Lord forever.

Amen