

# Heaven's children chase Heaven's treasure

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[ 0 : 00 ] A reading from Matthew chapter 6 verses 19 to 34. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart is, it will be also. Your eye is the lamp of your body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. 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.

No one can serve two masters, free that he will hate the one and love the other. For who will be devoted to the one and despise the other, cannot serve God and money.

Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life. What you will eat and what you will drink. Nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and body more than clothing?

[ 1 : 07 ] Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you being anxious can add a single hour to this span of life?

And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field and how they grow. They neither spoil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all of his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not more clothe you? Are you of little faith?

Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat or what shall we drink? Well, what shall we wear? The Gentiles seek after all these things.

Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And all these things will be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow.

[ 2 : 10 ] But tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Over the years, I've used these verses lots for wedding sermon talks.

Because I think getting married is like setting off on a treasure hunt. Young couples deciding which principles to prioritize as they chase the good life of security, personal validation, happiness and satisfaction.

But in reality, every stage of life is in a sense the same search for elusive treasure of security and validation.

So we start even as children looking for these things in relationships with siblings and parents and friends. And a bit older in academic sporting career achievements. Perhaps even as teenagers being rebellious and different.

A bit older again, we look for it in sex and getting married. And even by collecting friends and likes on social media. And all the while we're doing these things, we're collecting and accumulating wealth and possessions.

[ 3 : 16 ] Because these are the things that people use to reassure themselves and to impress on others that we actually have achieved the good life. These are the markers. The more we have, the more we've arrived at that good life.

And these sort of things together mark or the defining mark of our world. It's really sad in our world that people generally do not care for God's approval. But they do want their wealth and possessions to be acknowledged by their friends around them, by people around them.

As treasure. They've arrived. They've got the good life. They've got the hunt they've been searching for. But all this accumulating and impressing is actually quite tiring as well.

We hope one day to have enough money. Things and relationships. And then we'll actually rest and enjoy the good life. But of course, that day never really comes.

And it never really comes because experience tells us that wealth and possessions are fragile. They're hard fought for, but then they're easily swept away. Natural disasters, war, economic collapse, theft, fraud, and even pandemics.

[ 4 : 33 ] And the hard work of accumulating in the hope of one day having enough to rest and enjoy the good life is just so exhausting. And the fear that comes with that exhaustion, the fear of losing everything they've worked so hard for, that causes stress and anxiety, depression.

And we see, you know, that just sweeping across our nation in epidemic proportions at the moment. But against that, since people have no other option, they just keep chasing the elusive treasure in that never-ending, perhaps even pointless treasure hunt of life.

They don't know any better. But there is a treasure which is real, which is attainable, which comes with real security, joy, satisfaction, and peace.

We've already looked at verse 33 several times. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. What's the treasure?

Well, as Marie just said, it's the treasure of God himself. Seeking to be like him as the priority in life.

Well, I'm going to say a bit more about that.

[ 5 : 44 ] But before I launch into the passage, I want to do some revision, starting back in Matthew 4, verse 17. The start of Jesus' ministry, his opening words were, repent, for the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God, same thing, is at hand.

So the question is, just by revision, what is the kingdom of God? Well, we're very familiar with the idea of the United Kingdom. And that's the people of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, collectively ruled by Queen Elizabeth.

The United Kingdom is somewhere you can go and observe it physically. You can see how it's similar and different from other kingdoms around the world. Well, it's just the same way with the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven.

It's a description of God's rule over his people. Way back at the start of time, God's authority was challenged and discredited by Satan and the determined rebellion of God's image bearer.

Jesus' mission was to reestablish God's rule. He would be the king of a vast spiritual kingdom.

[ 6 : 53 ] He would renew the hearts and minds of his people so they would live gladly under his rule as his loyal people and actually then enjoy the good life he meant them to have that he provided for them.

Now, how is this spiritual kingdom seen? Well, it's not a geographical form like Australia. But it does have specific form and definition.

And it's in sharp contrast to the kingdom of this world. The kingdom of this world, which continues in rebellion against God and continues to seek the good life apart from him. And that's where the Sermon on the Mount comes in, chapter 5 to 7 of Matthew, where Jesus is spelling out the thinking, the desires, the character, and the lifestyle of his kingdom people, which will shape and define the kingdom, which will make the kingdom visible in this world, this dark world, but which will also honor and reflect him as king.

And Jesus, in the rest of Matthew, leads on to say that this spiritual kingdom will be a truly global community of Christ's died for people.

We understand that now in reality. Each understanding, each understanding, each kingdom person, understanding that they cannot achieve God's standard of righteousness or obedience in their own resources.

[ 8 : 14 ] And so, thankfully, accepting his righteousness as a gift. Each will desire to serve King Jesus, to be like him in every way.

And as a result, be salt and light in this world, radically impact this world in darkness. So that God's name is praised far and wide.

That's how we'll see the kingdom of God. Person by person, in a sense. Person by person, in a sense.

Verses 19 through to 24. The command to seek God himself as the first priority is even more confronting when connected back into verses 1 to 18 that Dave took us through last week.

So often Christians put the wrong things on show. And this says heaps about what's really important to us. Last week, Dave took us through the ideas of giving, praying, and fasting.

[ 9 : 44 ] Each of them is an important pattern for worship or a whole-of-life response to God. And we saw last week that, as such, they should be done as privately as possible.

It's something between the person and God. And it's driven by the desire to honor the Lord. That's why it's done in private. Rather than seeking to impress others around us.

So some things need to be done privately and quietly. In contrast to that, verses 19 to 34, and equally part of our worship, it should be obvious to all that as kingdom people, we believe the good life of security, happiness, and satisfaction is to be found in Jesus and not the things of this world. Now, here's the point. Too often, Christians get it wrong. We make a big show of religious things we do, while our basic attitudes to the things of the world, the things the world values, like possessions and money, are attitudes that is almost indistinguishable from unbelievers around us.

So we're public in that we should be private so often, and so often we're very private in that we should be public. Well, Jesus challenges our attitudes and values with three really searching pictures in these verses 19 through to 24.

[ 11 : 11 ] Do not lay up treasures on earth. There's to be total investment in the priorities and promises of Christ and heaven.

Now, Jesus is really blunt here. There's no other way around it. He says, stop hoarding. And there's a word we recognize from our pandemic days. Stop hoarding the things of this world.

Instead, stockpile the things of heaven. That's pretty blunt, isn't it? Now, he's not condemning having money or saving money or budgeting carefully or having things that provide comfort or entertainment.

What he is condemning is the thinking that these things can be relied upon to deliver the good life, the life of security and validation. And then verse 21, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

See, if righteousness or relationship and acceptance with God, that's what righteousness is in simple terms. If righteousness, living as a loyal subject, displaying God's character to others, if that is the security and happiness we crave, if that's the treasure we're looking for, then all our dreams, plans, effort, physical resources will be invested to that end.

[ 12 : 37 ] Where your treasure is, that's where our hearts will be. Second picture then, verse 22 and 23, is a picture to do with eyes and lamp and light.

And I think it goes like this. Jesus is calling for single-minded spiritual perspective as to what is valuable. Now, just as what we take in through our eyes determines how and where we walk, so our spiritual perspective or vision determines what pathway we'll follow in life.

We've seen lots and lots of movies of thirsty people in desert following a mirage. They're convinced they can see water ahead, and so they go for it.

But ultimately, their eyes weren't being true to them. And ultimately, their perspective leads to their death. Jesus is saying kingdom people must have a single-minded focus on Jesus and the truth of God's word as the light by which we make choices, set our values, do our thinking, and navigate life.

Now, third thing in verse 24, no one can serve two masters. There's a call here by Jesus for undivided practical loyalty to God.

[ 14 : 11 ] Now, in the NIV or the ASV, the word translated money is better mammon. It's an old-fashioned word, but it's actually a better word. And mammon describes the things our world offers as of first importance.

A whole range of things could go into that word mammon, but mostly it will be to do with wealth and material possessions. So don't serve materialism.

No one can serve two masters. Don't serve materialism. Serve God. Now, again, here's the point. True loyalty cannot practically be split or shared, even though we think it can and insist that it can. See, God and mammon promise and demand completely opposing things. Materialism promises happiness and security through self-getting and self-centered living.

God promises the good life through self-forgetting, serving him and others, and sitting loosely to money and stuff. True.

[ 15 : 23 ] There can't be a split in that loyalty. One will be favored more than the other. We'll skew towards one rather than the other if we try to do both.

Now, friends, there's three searching pictures that Jesus launches into the talk that he's been given to his people. But they sort of come together in one searching question.

And it's a question I'm asking you now, as I've asked myself this week in preparation. And here it is. Are you totally convinced that seeking God himself and seeking to be like him is your daily priority? Are you totally convinced? Ask yourself that honestly. But here's a check and balance question to go with it. Would your friends, your Christian brothers and sisters, those who are in church with you, your small group with you, your youth group with you, would your friends form the same conclusion as they observe you daily?

They are searching questions, aren't they? Because oftentimes, as Dave said last week, the image we want to project is quite different from the reality that people see.

[16:43] J.C. Ryle, in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, says that materialism is the great sin of Christians.

He says it's the one we're all compromised by. And worse still, it's the one we all remain silent about. And even we're still the one we constantly allow one another to get away with.

And he goes on to say that Christians make a huge fuss about divorce, about sexual sin, about swearing and so many other things. And at the same time, they're pursuing worldliness in big time. And there's a sort of conspiracy of silence because we're all in it. We all love it. Jesus here gives us blunt choices.

But we believe we can have both in each of them. So we think we can serve God on Sundays and make him our treasure on Sundays, but put our confidence in other things for the rest of the week.

[17:47] We think we can serve God with our lips. While our eyes are captivated by the things of the world and delight in the things of the world and follow the things of the world.

We think that we happily commit to using a percentage of our time, our money and our ability for serving Jesus. But then we're just as adamant that the balance is applied to building security and wealth and possessions for the rest of our time and ability and money.

We always want to default back to both and when Jesus calls us to say it as either or.

Huge challenge. Huge challenge. But friends, here's one other thought. Just a very, very small thought in passing. We should be really thankful to Jesus for his absolutely blunt words here.

Why? Because we really need to hear them in those blunt terms. Second thing then, second display of what it will be looked like to seek God himself and seek to be like him is an opposite of the first.

[19:07] And that is a practical confidence and delight in your father's provision care. So there'll be a break from the things of the world. But a moving towards and a developing of a practical confidence and delight in our father's provision care.

Verses 25 through to 34. The tone of Jesus, I think, changes immensely here. So just as he is blunt in verses 19 to 24, so I think he becomes really empathetic and tender in verses 25 onwards.

Verse 25 begins, therefore, or that could actually be rendered for this reason, I say. In other words, he's following on. Jesus has demanded single-minded commitment in blunt terms.

He knows it's a huge, huge cost for us, but at the same time, tenderly and empathetically, he recognizes how easily we are distracted and entangled by anxiety and worrying over the details of daily living and necessities of life.

So he says, look, for this reason, I tell you, you don't need to be worried. You don't need to be anxious about clothes and food and the basics of life. Because Jesus knows that practically and daily, these worries eat into our loyalty.

[20:27] And they actually choke out our priority to seek God and the righteousness he longs to see in us. We can get up in the morning and that can be our intention, to seek God and his righteousness. But then we get distracted because of the things we need to do, the necessities of life that need to be taken care of, children to be dressed and disciplined, food to be cooked, houses to be cleaned, washing to be done and so on and so forth.

But Jesus goes on here to say in a very gentle way, listen, my people, worry is actually unreasonable. It's unnecessary and ultimately it's unfaithful.

But look at verse 27. Worry actually makes no sense. It's unreasonable because no amount of worrying will change anything. It won't add in positive into your day.

It just clouds it with negativity and robs you of energy. More importantly, verses 26 and 30. The illustrations there suggest that worry is unnecessary.

Why is worry unnecessary? Because of God's character. Because of God's commitment to care for his world. Because of who God is to you and who you are to God.

[ 21 : 46 ] You don't need to worry. You don't need to be anxious. Since God can be relied upon to provide for apparently insignificant parts of his creation. Then even more, he can be relied upon to care for his special people.

By providing everything they need to live well in his service. Ultimately then, worry is unfaithful. You look at verse 30. Why is it unfaithful? Well, there's several possible reasons. It's unfaithful either because it reflects a lack of understanding or a lack of trust in God's character and promise to care for his people.

Or it's unfaithful because it reveals a wrong commitment to finding security and happiness and satisfaction in earthly treasures. As I've said before, our experience tells us these things are unsatisfying, unreliable.

And so, if we put our trust in them, if we pin our hope to them, then anxiety and worry is inevitable. If that's where our hope for the future is, and we actually know at the start when we invest our hope in them that they're unreliable, then of course we have to worry and be anxious.

[ 23 : 04 ] Or thirdly, perhaps worry is unfaithful because it exposes a wrong belief that God has promised us a trouble-free existence.

That's a very common thing among Christians today. So, that would mean then if we believe that on any given day, and if then our circumstances are not what we expect and demand that God would deliver to us in terms of comfort and prosperity and relationships, then, again, there's no option but to worry that God's unhappy with you or has totally abandoned you.

At any point, in any one of those, roll them together, they will erode our ability and focus to seek God, to trust God, to enjoy God, to see God as our treasure.

And will inevitably make us start to look for other things. So, the final point then of verse 34, and it's a little bit hard to know how this fits in, but I think it does make a lot of sense very easily here.

So, the final point is then, live joyfully and at rest in your daily struggles. That's the opposite of being worried and anxious. Live joyfully and at rest in daily struggles.

[ 24 : 26 ] Now, I think Jesus, again, has been very realistic, very gentle and very empathetic. He's not urging us to be carefree or irresponsible about the future.

That would be in contrast and at odds with vast parts of the scripture. But he is telling us not to be distracted and consumed by what the future might bring, but just to be content, to live faithfully through today's challenges.

When we're on holidays, we listened to a book that hadn't read for 20 or 30 years, or 30, 40 years now. Corrie Ten Boom's *The Hiding Place* was an audio book we listened to while we're on holidays.

And she says at best, at one place, she says, and remember, she had plenty of time to reflect on this in concentration camps and all sorts of terrible deprivation.

She said, worry does nothing to empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but it empties today of its strength. I pondered that a fair bit, actually, while I was not really connecting at that stage to any preaching I'd be doing.

[ 25 : 40 ] And it's a brilliant statement. Worry does nothing to empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but it empties today of its strength. So, as I awake each morning, I need to remind myself, and I need to say it's enough to remind myself, that I've been saved by Christ through grace alone.

That I am loved and secure and valuable. That Jesus is my treasure, the good life I crave. That his spirit within me both gives me the desire and the ability to say yes to righteousness and no to sin. And that each time I do so, I both express the mind of Christ and impact the world and bring glory to the Lord.

Now, having made first things first, I can then launch into the day confident that the same Lord who has brought me into his kingdom by grace alone will provide me with everything I need to live well for him until I go home to heaven forever.

Whether that be today or next week or next week or next year or 20 years time. In the words of Romans chapter 8, having given me Christ is not going to hold back anything else that I need to serve him well.

[ 27 : 15 ] So, there it is. Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. I'll leave you then with one other searching question.

This particular question was posed by Joel Kelty. It was interesting. He was reading this morning. I only heard this question via Dave, but apparently Joel posed it to a small group on Wednesday

night after they'd been working through this passage.

And Joel said to the small group, okay, what difference will seeking God and his righteousness as the first priority make to the shape of your day tomorrow?

What difference will seeking God and his righteousness as the first priority make to the shape of your day tomorrow? Again, it's a searching question.

This is practical stuff. And the time is now to say, wow, if Jesus is my treasure, then tomorrow I need to reshape in line with that priority, that truth.

[ 28 : 26 ] So, how will you demonstrate that Jesus is your king and your treasure as you roll out of bed tomorrow morning into another chaotic, difficult, frightening, uncertain day?

Well, pray with me then as I conclude. Lord, each of us is exposed by these words. They cut us really deep.

And they show massive gaps between what we would like to think is true, the image we create, and the reality on a day-to-day basis. Lord, like your people, we're so often needing to hear the term, oh, you of little faith.

Help us, Lord. Help us to refocus on that which we know would be true. Help us to use the power that is ours in the Holy Spirit within us to say yes to righteousness.

Lord, we have that desire given to us by the renewal of your Spirit. We have that ability given to us by the renewal of your Spirit.

[ 29 : 39 ] So, help us, Lord, to say yes to righteousness, to say no to sin, and thereby impact the world with the changing power of the gospel and bring glory to you.

Help us, I pray, Lord. Help us not to be divided. Help us to be single-minded. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.