

Kingdom Perspectives

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Preacher: Hilary Roath

[0 : 00] A minister was entertained one evening at the home of a wealthy oil man in Texas. After the dinner, the man took him up to the roof of his house and he pointed to the large fields of oil derricks.

And he said to the minister, that's all mine. I came to this country 25 years ago penniless and now I own everything as far as you can see in that direction.

And then he turned to the opposite direction and he pointed to the waving fields of grain and said again, that's all mine. I own everything as far as you can see in that direction.

And then he turned to the east and pointed to the huge herds of cattle and said again, it's all mine. Everything as far as you can see in that direction is all mine.

And then one final time he turned towards the west and again said, he pointed to a huge forest and said, it's all mine.

[1 : 30] 25 years ago, 25 years ago, I was penniless, but I worked hard and I saved. And today I own everything as far as you can see in this direction, in that direction, in that direction and in this direction.

25 years ago, I was penniless, but I was penniless, but I was penniless.

26 years ago, I was penniless. 35 years ago, I had quite a few rooms. 36 years ago, it was all mine.

36 years ago, I had 6 time over 9 years ago, I had 7 years old and I have 17 years old and I was penniless and 9 years old, who was 45 years old and I have about 9 years old now.

36 years old. 36 years old when I was there in my life, old school.

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moss nor rust consume and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[3 : 10] Freedom from greed, freedom from anxiety. Freedom from greed, because the context of this story is the quest for esteem, not money.

And while it's true that one of the main ways which we seek esteem is by money, it's by no means the only way we seek treasure. But we want money because we want the esteem it wins for us.

And we saw this in that illustration about the man, the oil man from Texas. Treasures on earth either rot by nature or are taken away by history.

And we all know how fickle fame is. Last Saturday's hero is next season's nobody. This year's financial success is next year's bankrupt.

And it's not because Jesus is against us, or the way that we quest, the quest that we have for success.

[4 : 56] He's not against us. He's telling us these things because he loves us. He wants us to avoid that disappointment, to avoid that despair that comes when the glory disappears.

doing well professionally, doing well financially, socially, or personally, doesn't last eternally.

And Jesus doesn't want his disciples to be disappointed. But any high aspiration, if it seeks mainly human esteem, will go the way of the treasures of the earth.

Even the desire to preach the gospel can be an earthly treasure, if that desire is linked with earthly success.

Even missionary success, if it's linked with earthly success, goes that way. The purpose of evangelism must honor God and not, legitimate as it may seem, increase the number of converts.

[6 : 28] Jesus is saying, life lived to impress others is life misspent. And Jesus wants us to be free of this.

Instead, he says, make big investments in heaven. Store up your treasure in heaven. Store up your treasure for yourselves in heaven.

We see here that Jesus doesn't actually want to remove desire for success. He doesn't remove the desire.

He actually redirects it. He's saying, rather than uproot all human ambition, and passion, Jesus tells us, to make it our ambition to be a success before the Father.

To impress him. To accumulate his rewards and treasures. Jesus does not quash ambition.

[7 : 45] He elevates it here. He elevates it here. The Christian is to be ambitious, is to be passionate, is to be zealous for the treasure that the Father of the Father's approval.

we are to be able to do it. We are to be ambitious for God's well done, good and faithful servant. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where your investment is, there your heart will be also. Another way of saying this, is that where your goal is, there your heart will be also.

For our goal, if our goal is to impress others, our center of gravity will be people and their admiration of us. if our goal is to please the Father, our center of gravity will be the Father and his honor.

Goals determine action. And a person's goals are, in fact, very often, the person's gods. In verse 22, we read, the eye is the lamp of the body.

[9 : 23] So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness. If then that which is supposed to be light in you turns out to be darkness, what a great darkness that is.

And we can paraphrase that again by saying, the light of our life is our goal. If our goal is sound, our whole life will be full of light.

But if our goal is bad, then our whole life will be darkness. And so Jesus is saying in a second way, goals determine life.

And we can interpret this in another way. We can interpret this in an almost literally when we compare it to the human eye. Because the eye has a language that everyone, that everyone, everywhere understands.

[10 : 40] It's possible to detect in someone's eyes whether we give gladly or whether we give half-heartedly.

Where the eye reveals coldness or superiority or unreality.

That person is revealed as false. Because we see, we can see the intention of someone in their eyes.

the importance of a right heart in doing good.

A right heart in doing good. Otherwise, we ruin every good thing we do. No one can serve two masters, he says.

[11 : 46] For a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

And in the saying, the saying means that an attempt to win people's attention and God's is an impossibility.

It says, either human esteem or divine esteem will be your Lord. Human esteem or divine esteem will be your Lord.

There is a great danger here when the esteem of people rules your life. And if the esteem of people rules your life, then God is no longer Lord.

Aesop speaks in one of his fables about a time when the beasts and the birds were at war with each other. The bat, who tried to belong to both sides, and when the birds were victorious, he would wing round and tell the birds.

[13 : 09] And when the beasts won the fight, he would walk round and assure them that he was a beast. But soon, his hypocrisy was discovered and he was rejected by both the beasts and the birds.

he had to hide himself. And now, only by night can he appear openly.

By his teaching, Jesus is saving his people from spiritual schizophrenia. schizophrenia. Once again, the disciples are asked to give their faith either to God or to people.

To his praise or to theirs. To his rewards or society. And commentators have pointed out and Lusa too, who points out that the emphasis here on that little word to serve, we cannot serve, he says.

He says, it is no sin, according to Lusa, to have money, to have property, wife, or children, house, or home.

[14 : 32] But you must not let it be your master, says Lusa. You must let it serve you. You must be its master.

No one can serve two masters. And then we go on in verse 25.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will wear, what you will drink, about your body, what you will wear.

It is not life more than food and the body more than clothing. The Christian world in the West is a fat world.

It is a fat world. It is too concerned with food. it is also a superficial world, too occupied with clothes.

[15 : 42] And Jesus' intention is to free us, free us from this obsession and to lift our lives into things that matter.

our world must learn, says Jesus, that God's gift of life is much more important than eating well and that the gift of the body is much more important than dressing well.

and he who gave these more important gifts can be trusted to provide the less important gifts.

Look round at the birds of the sky. They don't sow, they don't harvest, they don't even put things aside for safekeeping and still your heavenly Father feeds them and you worth a lot more than they.

This is still one more call to faith in this chapter, a chapter that is full of calls to faith. Actually, the whole Sermon on the Mount is one long call to faith.

[17 : 12] Jesus is saying here with our natural needs as opposed to our so-called spiritual needs, it's easy for us to believe that God is irrelevant because it's in natural matters we are told or we actually tell ourselves that we must use our own head to meet our own needs here.

And God seems to be pushed to one side. but it is precisely this conviction, the conviction of the irrelevance of God in the realm of the natural that Jesus everywhere challenges because for Jesus God is God and as such God in the world of the natural is God.

God has made this world and God sustains it. we are asked by Jesus not to limit our faith to the Father to spiritual things.

We are asked to believe that the Father is active and alive to our physical needs and to provide food.

He's a provider of food no less than a provider of mercy and forgiveness. we are asked to believe that God is God and God is not only a redeemer but God is also creator.

[18 : 57] Jesus asks us to believe that the heavenly Father not only sees our private secret and spiritual lives by giving money and prayer and fasting but also that he watches over our public lives our natural lives as well.

The money the food the clothes and who of you he says by being anxious who of you by worrying can add one single day to your life and this must have been said with a tongue in cheek for the fact of the matter is that worrying or anxiety actually shortens our life because there's no disputing the fact that nine times out of ten worrying about the thing does more damage than to those who worry than the actual thing itself love and modern medical research has proved that worry actually breaks down resistance to disease and more than that it actually causes diseases particularly of our digestive systems and our heart and add to this the toll of unhappiness of sleepless nights and of days without peace and you have a glimpse of the work that this monster does in destroying the effectiveness of the human body.

So it's plain common sense that worry has no rightful place in the lives of most of us. Take clothes, says Jesus.

Why are you so worried about them? Study the flowers in the field sometime and notice how they grow. They don't agonise, they don't even weave.

But I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not decked out like one of these wild flowers. The Father, says Jesus, is not to be left out of a single concern, not a single one of our concerns.

[21 : 31] And least of all from the physical concerns, where we might think that he's too busy to be bothered or too spiritual to be. Our loving God lavishes every single wild flower in every distant field with the beauty of Solomon's court.

And this God has plenty of time left over for us. So do not worry, says Jesus.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote a little poem along these lines. And she writes, The little cares that fretted me, I lost them yesterday among the fields above the sea, among the winds at play.

The foolish fears of what may happen, I cast them all away amid the humming of the bees, amid the clover-scented hay.

If God so adorns the grass of the field that is here today and thrown in the fire tomorrow, won't he take much more care to clothe you, or you of little faith?

[23 : 05] The Father's concern for his people does not stop with our souls. It continues on down into our stomachs.

And it does not even stop at the inner person spiritually or nutritionally. It then extends even to the outer clothes.

God, who is the creator of body and soul, is God the provider for both. No one, no one must push God into a spiritual corner where there alone God is allowed to be God.

It's precisely this limiting of God's reach, this belittling of God's interests and abilities in the real world that Jesus calls little faith.

So don't get worried about what you're going to eat, what you're going to drink, what are we going to wear.

[24 : 19] Because it is all of these questions that obsess the secular world. That your Heavenly Father knows that you need these things.

All of them. So make your first care, your first care, his kingdom and his righteousness.

And all these other things will be added to you as well. He is not telling us to seek spiritual things instead of material things or inward things instead of outward things.

Jesus is telling us to seek God things rather than our own. Strive, he says, first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Righteousness as well as the kingdom belong to the Father and are his to give us. all these things, all these necessities will be added to you as well.

[25 : 37] Goods are to be received as gifts. For disciples, goods are a byproduct. They are not goals.

possessions are brought in the back door and deposited in the kitchen.

While disciples seek God's kingdom in the front of the living room of their lives, possessions are brought in the back door and deposited in the kitchen.

The Father has a special delivery service that brings to the back door the very things for which the secular world spends its whole time shopping.

And he doesn't say, your heavenly Father knows that you don't really need these earthly things.

[26 : 42] He doesn't say that. He says that he knows that you need all these things. So don't be obsessed by tomorrow.

Tomorrow will have its own worries. today has enough problems. The whole of the sixth chapter of Matthew has been a call to faith.

Jesus, in the Sermon of the Mount, is calling us all to faith. Asking us to make God God and to value only God's reward, only God's treasure.

And to stop flirting with the world. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.