

Two Common Dangers

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[0 : 00] Good morning, church. The scripture lesson is taken from Matthew chapter 6 verses 19 through 34.

! Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. For 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 will be also. The eye is the lamp of the 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, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

[1 : 06] Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on it.

Put on. It is not, it's not life more than food, and the body more than clothing. Look at the birds of the air.

They neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life?

And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Yet, I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothed the grass of the field, which today is alive, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

[2 : 16] Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after these things, and 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, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Thank you very much, Michelle.

All of God's word is important. But if I had to choose one section of the New Testament that I think that those who belong to Christ need to take seriously and live out faithfully, it would be the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew chapter 5, 6 and 7. And when you look at the Sermon on the Mount, the areas of the Christian life that it addresses are profound.

[3 : 43] Very profound. When you consider what Jesus addressed in that sermon. In the scripture reading this morning, Jesus addresses one of the important areas in the Sermon on the Mount.

That's the area of money and possessions. And it's an area that's relevant to all of us without exception. Even the smallest child. I think I would be right in saying that all of us have given some thought or we have some plans about this coming year.

Things that we want to accomplish. Goals we want to achieve. And all of them or at least some of them that we have in mind require money.

And they require resources to accomplish them. Jesus addresses those who come in dangers in the passage that is before us and I want us to consider what he says.

But let's pray before we do that. Father, would you speak now to our hearts through your word? Lord, you know where each one of us is and what each one of us needs to hear?

[5 : 18] And so speak, Lord, we pray. But Lord, more than that, would you help us to hear and obey? Would you help us, Lord, who belong to Christ to take seriously these words that have been read in our hearing and help us, Lord, to so align our lives for your glory and for our good?

We pray and ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. In these verses, it could appear that Jesus is addressing several topics.

But I believe that when we take them together, Jesus is warning us about two common dangers that we all face as we live life and as we necessarily engage with and handle money and material possessions.

And the two dangers are being preoccupied with securing our financial future and being preoccupied with meeting our daily needs.

Those two activities, securing our financial future and meeting our daily needs, they actually come with particular dangers that Jesus warns us about.

[6 : 55] And so, I believe that we can faithfully summarize this passage by saying that what Jesus is saying is that preoccupation with securing our financial future and meeting our daily needs will hinder us from serving God and prioritizing his kingdom.

If we are preoccupied with these realities, these necessities of life, securing our financial future, thinking ahead and dealing with the present, if they preoccupy us, if they engulf us, they will hinder us from serving God and prioritizing his kingdom.

And brothers and sisters, if we are going to take seriously what it means to serve God and to prioritize his kingdom, we need to take seriously this warning that he gives us.

We need to think seriously and honestly about our relationship with God and how we view and handle money and material possessions.

And I believe that on this first day of a new year is a wonderful time for us to think about these things. But it shouldn't be just confined to this year because this is an ongoing reality for all of us until the day that we die and we face these two dangers as we live life.

[8 : 41] And so in our remaining time, I want us to consider these two common dangers that Jesus warns us about. And the first danger lies in the area of how we approach securing our financial future.

Jesus addresses this danger in verses 19 to 24. Securing our financial future is something that we all think about. Those of us who are older, the biggest part we think about is retirement, that time when we are required to stop work or we choose to stop work and we need to have sufficient resources to take care of ourselves and to meet our needs.

And those who are a bit younger are probably thinking more along the lines of getting a house and taking care of children and preparing for their education and then eventual retirement.

And all these things require some planning and the need to save and invest so that these future obligations can be met. This kind of future forward thinking is necessary.

It's a part of life. It's wise. But there's a danger associated with it. And Jesus points out this danger starting in verses 19 to 21.

[10 : 15] Notice again how he expresses it. He says, 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 will be also.

Now in the face of it, it looks like Jesus is saying that we ought not to save and we ought not to store up money and material possessions. But he's not saying that at all.

Instead, Jesus is calling us to see money and material possessions for what they really are. And the key to grasp what Jesus is actually saying is in a word that he uses three times.

It's the word treasures. He says treasures twice and treasure once. And treasures whatever we consider valuable and whatever we attach our heart to and don't want to lose.

[11 : 32] Jesus is saying that we should not see our money and our material wealth as treasured possessions to secure our financial future.

That is the issue that Jesus is addressing. And he gives us two reasons for it. The first reason is practical. He tells us that material possessions are not certain.

In Jesus' day, the way that people had wealth was in more basic ways than we have today. It was in the clothing that they had. They had very rich clothing, some of them.

It was in the store of agricultural goods like grain. It was in precious metals, like gold and silver. It was in these kinds of stores of value that their wealth would have been accumulated.

And Jesus told his original audience that everything they accumulated was at risk of being destroyed by moth or rust and worms or stolen by thieves.

[12:56] He told them that it was all uncertain. Now, today, we have ways of protecting against all those things that Jesus warned them against in terms of what could destroy their possessions.

We can preserve things better. We have better means of security and so, you know, we can protect precious things more than they could in those days.

But you know what? Fortunes are still lost. Wealth is still lost. Fortunes are lost when businesses fail, when the stock market crashes.

And many businesses, we can remember, failed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Just recently, quite a number of people lost money in the FTX collapse.

And some people testified to losing their entire life savings. And so, even though we may have overcome the kinds of dangers to our wealth that people in Jesus' day couldn't have overcome, there's no absolute secure way of preserving the wealth and the material possessions that we store up and that we put away.

[14:30] So, the first reason he gives us is practical. The second reason he gives us is spiritual. Jesus tells us in verse 21 that our hearts will be attached to whatever we treasure.

It's a spiritual danger that he is addressing at this particular point. If we treasure money and material possessions, our hearts will be attached to them.

And Jesus makes the point clearer in verse 24. Look at what he says in verse 24 of Matthew 6. No one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. That's the spiritual danger that Jesus addresses. He says that our hearts will attach to whatever we value and be considered precious.

You ever wonder why? Some of the people who have lost fortunes have committed suicide because they died with their possessions that they lost.

[15:46] Their heart was attached to what they lost and life had no meaning when those things were lost. Some Bible translations like the King James Version and the New American Standard Bible and the Revised Standard Version, they don't use the word money, they use the word mammon instead of money.

And the word mammon was a term that was used to describe anything that you put your trust in, anything that you felt secure about.

And over time, money became known as mammon because that is our go-to to trust in. Over time, money just became mammon, so when they said mammon, it meant money.

And that is the danger that Jesus is addressing. He is saying that what we treasure is what our hearts will be attached to.

And notice that Jesus reduced his life down to two basic masters that will serve, either money or God.

[17:09] And the issue is that as we engage in the necessary activity of preparing for our future financial needs, we face the common danger of setting our hearts upon our savings and our investments, trusting in them to provide us with the security that only God can provide.

And when our hearts are engaged in this way, we are unable to serve God. We are unable to trust him as we should. We then have a substitute God that is taking and preoccupying our hearts that should be for the Lord and for the Lord alone.

And when the Bible talks about our hearts, what the Bible is referring to is that place, the seat of our emotions and desires, what causes us to tick, what attracts our hearts and what directs our lives.

It's where our affections are. And this is why, as we engage in this necessary activity of thinking about the future and planning for the future, we have to be so careful that we don't attach our hearts to it, that we don't allow that to really become like a God that we trust in believing, if I have enough, if I accumulate enough, all is going to be well with my future.

Jesus says no. It was no in his day, and brothers and sisters, it is no today. The practical reason is it will take on wings, it will fly away, and the spiritual reason is we will become a slave to it.

[19:00] We will live for it. We will seek to serve it rather than serving the Lord, and so we must guard against this.

So what is the alternative? Well, Jesus tells us the alternative in verse 20. The alternative is lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Jesus is saying that rather than treasuring and storing up the uncertain treasures of this earth, we should treasure and store up heavenly treasure that cannot be destroyed.

and what are heavenly treasures? Heavenly treasures are things that have eternal value that endure beyond this life.

Heavenly treasure is investing our time and our talents in serving Christ and in his cause in this life. You know, it struck me as I was preparing, Jesus said something to his disciples in Matthew 10, 42. [20 : 19] He said to them, he said, if anyone gives a cup of water to one of my disciples, because he is my disciple, in other words, you're doing it in my name, he says, you'll be rewarded for that.

In other words, something as mundane and as common as just giving a cup of water can have eternal value.

And so when Jesus is telling us about storing up treasure in heaven, he is speaking to us about this possibility that we can live our lives in such a way that the things that we do can endure beyond this life.

He's telling us that we can take common and mundane things and they can become of spiritual value. And that obviously means that we can do the same with our wealth and how we view them. And so I think really the point that he is making to us is if we are his servants, if we are serving God and not serving money, if we are truly serving God, then all that we do in God's service is of eternal value.

[21 : 43] The most basic and ordinary things that we do as God's servants, as men, as women, as boys and girls and husbands and wives and employees and employers and students and teachers and whatever the endeavor is, if we are living in service to God, our endeavors have eternal value.

And we're not just living with our eyes locked on this life, thinking about it, making more of it than we ought to make of it.

And here's the reality. You know what, even if a person were to store up their treasures and plan for the future, they don't lose any of it.

They're able to protect it. They have no catastrophe. You know what? It has no eternal value. It ends when their life on this earth ends.

But Jesus is telling us that if we live our lives in service to him all of our life, employing all of our talents and abilities, our time, our resources in his service, it has an eternal value, an enduring value beyond this life.

[23 : 16] And so what is clear as we consider these words of Jesus is that how we handle money and material possessions has eternal consequences.

Indeed, how we live now has eternal consequences. consequences. The British missionary Charles Stud famously said, only one life will soon be passed.

Only what's done for Christ will last. Brothers and sisters, let's think about that. As we are in this new year, let us think about, let us contemplate this.

Let us be this, let this be the conviction of our hearts. As we live our fleeting lives on this earth, only what is done for Christ will last. And so if we live all of our lives in his service, friends, whatever we're doing is going to endure.

You know, we can go to work on Tuesday morning and work as unto the Lord. It has eternal value. It'll last. But if Christ is not a part of it, if we're doing it all in a vacuum, if we're doing it for ourselves and notice how Jesus refers to it, he says, you lay up treasure for yourselves.

[24 : 40] You lay it up for ourselves, that's the end of it, that's the extent of it. It has no eternal value or consequence. this is true, and since it is true, why is it that in spite of these words of Jesus, in spite of the practical reasons that he gives us, in spite of the spiritual reasons that he gives us, why are people, including Christians, setting their hearts on material possessions?

Christians, why are Christians not endeavoring to lay up spiritual treasure in heaven? Why are we not, many of us, living our lives in such a way that what we're doing has enduring eternal consequences?

Why is that? Jesus tells us, he says, don't do that. Why do we still do that? Jesus tells us why we still do that.

He says, it's a matter of spiritual sight. And that's what he tells us in verses 22 and 23. Notice again what he says. The eye is the lamp of the 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.

[26 : 22] Jesus is telling us that our approach to these issues of earthly and spiritual treasures is a matter of spiritual sight.

life is bad. He's using figurative language and it's easy to miss what he's saying, but the point that he makes is this, he's saying, if your eye, if your spiritual eye is bad, if you're seeing spiritually wrong, your outlook on life is wrong, it will put your whole life in darkness and you will just stumble through this life with misplaced values.

if your eye is clouded by greed and materialism and selfish accumulation of material resources, then we will not see because we're blind and we will live with wrong and misplaced values.

We will be spending ourselves thinking something has some great consequence and it has no consequence, sometimes not even for the duration of our lives.

but if our eye is spiritually good and we can see the way God would have us to see, we're seeing life in the light of his light and we're not in bondage to things and we value and we treasure the things of God and the things of the life to come and we are in pursuit of those things.

[27 : 59] Then our lives are filled with light. Good eyes will put us in the light and we will see the true value of things and we will not make more of the things of this life.

We will not make more of what we store up for the future. We will see it for what it is, uncertain riches that's not worthy of our trust. trust. Our trust should only be in a certain God who is wise and perfect in all of his ways.

We do not set our hearts on the non-enduring earthly treasures but we set our hearts on the enduring heavenly ones.

Brothers and sisters, the reality is that far more people of this life are serving money than those who are willing to admit it.

And far less people are serving God than those who claim to be serving him. And sadly, if we're living our lives with this earth bound view of things, there's little consequence to our lives beyond this life.

[29 : 28] And there's much disappointment that will await us because we are putting our trust in that which is fleeting and that which is fickle and that which is uncertain.

And so I ask us this morning, what are you trusting and who are you trusting to secure your financial future? are you trusting in God?

Are you trusting in money and material possessions, believing that if you can store up enough of it, your financial future is secure?

And friends, these are questions that must be answered not just from our lips. us. We must look to our lives to see how these questions are being answered. Because they are being answered.

And I pray that by God's grace where we see that we're living and we're not mindful of eternal value, we're not mindful that we are to be living as Christ's servants, that he is our master and all that we do are to be in his name and for his glory.

[30 : 43] And by God's grace, let's make the adjustments and let's try to think of ourselves, all of us, who name the name of Christ as servants of Christ and if we are truly servants of Christ, all that we are and all that we have is to be employed in his service, for his glory, for his kingdom.

That's the first common danger that we all face. it's in the area of how we approach securing our financial future. The second danger lies in the area of how we approach meeting our daily needs. And that brings me to my second and final point. Jesus addresses this in verses 25 to 34. forth. And what he says to us is that this task of meeting daily needs can be so consuming and so preoccupying that it can lead to such anxiety that it engulfs our hearts and we do not seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

righteousness. Now this was very acute in the day of Jesus because in those days the overwhelming majority of people lived day to day.

They lived day to day. They were day laborers. It was one of the reasons that it was against the law to withhold a person's wages overnight because they needed it.

[32 : 33] And perhaps for many of us this morning this is not perhaps the big danger that we face. Maybe a lot of us are more in the first category of danger more so than this particular one.

But nonetheless this is a danger, a common danger for us in a general way. Especially right now where we have inflationary pressures all around.

There is the uncertainty about world economies. Some are going into recession. There's the war in Ukraine which is volatile and has implications on so many things.

There's even talk about COVID rising up again and all kinds of things associated with that. And it's so easy as we go day to day to allow these cares to weigh on us and we begin to ask and wonder whether we have what we need to take care of our daily needs.

And Jesus addressing his original audience, things. He told them, starting in verse 25, that life's common anxieties are rooted in an overestimation of the value of money and possessions and a misplaced trust in what they can truly do in meeting our daily needs.

[34 : 07] Essentially, he was saying to them, the reason you're anxious about those things is you're making more of them than you should. and he directed their attention to nature.

He said, look at nature, look at the birds and the lilies that I've created and you're much more valuable than them and I take care of them. And he called them to draw the conclusion that he would also take care of them.

And Jesus brings to the surface what the real issue is in verse 30. Look at what he says. He says, but if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothes you, O you of little faith?

It's a trust issue. And remember not trusting God to care for us day by day and instead we're trusting money, we will be engulfed in life's common anxieties.

How do we put food on the table? How do we put clothes on our back? How do we put a roof over our head? and all the other anxieties associated with living in a modern world?

[35 : 36] things need to What do we do we do we do we do we do we do we do we do we! shouldn't worry.

First he tells us in verse 27 he says worrying won't change anything. He says you worry and you can't even add an hour on to your life. So it's futile worrying.

In verse 32 the second thing he says he says that's what the Gentiles that's what unbelievers do. Unbelievers live that way. Unbelievers live with the daily anxieties of what am I going to eat and drink and wear because that's what life is all about for them.

That's what it's all about. For them it's just about survival it's just about day to day he says but that's not you. that's not you who belong to me.

Don't live like unbelievers because life is more than that. Life is more than food and clothing and what you are going to how you're going to live.

[36 : 48] Where you're going to live. Life is about so much more than that. And then 30 tells them in verse 32 he says and here's the other reason you shouldn't worry.

Your heavenly father knows that you need the daily necessities of this life and he will provide them for you just as he provides for his creation a far less value.

And therefore he says do not worry. He says instead of allowing your energies allowing your heart to be consumed with these day to day anxieties trust in me and seek my kingdom.

Seek my kingdom first. And I want us to see that Jesus again he's still talking about this whole issue of serving him serving him wholeheartedly serving him with all of our lives.

And he says to all of us who belong to him that instead of using your emotional energies and affections in that way use it to seek the kingdom.

[37 : 59] Use it to let the kingdom be your priority. He says in verse 33 he says seek the kingdom first. Seek the kingdom of God first and his righteousness and then all these things will be added to you as well.

Brothers and sisters this is not just written to pastors and those who are the more mature ones. if you name the name of Jesus Christ you are called to let God's kingdom and his righteousness being in right standing with him and a right relationship with him let that be your consuming priority. Does it mean we neglect all the other things? No we don't neglect them. We do our duties. We fulfill them. We have a job. You go there and you work. But we do it with God being the center of it all. And this is how he calls us to live. This is how we seek the kingdom first. It must be our first concern.

Our first priority. And may God give us wisdom in how we need to do this in the various circumstances in which we find ourselves.

[39 : 20] Because brothers and sisters if we do not God than observing our lives and observing those who don't belong to Christ there will be very little visible difference.

We will be as frantic as they are. We would be as worried as they are. We would have the same concerns that they have and no concern for the kingdom of God. God. The Lord Jesus cares for us and he doesn't want us to fall prey to this common danger that we face every single day as we seek to meet our needs and care for our families.

So when I asked you this morning what's preoccupying your heart? What's making your heart beat rapidly about this coming year?

What's really to the fore? If there was a way to x-ray all of our hearts and see where our affections are attached where would they be?

Where would they be? Where would they be attached to material things and life's common anxieties?

[40 : 43] Or will it be God's kingdom and his righteousness and thinking how can we serve him more and more faithfully this year? The only way that we're going to see God's kingdom and his righteousness the only way that we are not going to be consumed by the anxieties of day-to-day living is if we recognize that God is truly our source.

The jobs we have the businesses we own the means of income that come to us they are just that they are means they are channels that God uses but God is our source and ultimately he is the one to whom we need to look.

I know when you hear a sermon like this it's easy to be tracking in your head of all the different things that we need to do but here's what I want to remind us of that none of this is possible to do without the grace of God.

Without the grace of God working in our hearts and reordering our affections and our priorities and giving us light that we can live in the light of his light that we can see things for what they are that we can value spiritual treasure more than the vastness of this life and all that it offers and glitters before us it takes the grace of God to do that.

And so we need God's grace. We need God's grace to help us that as we go about doing the necessary things of planning for the future that we don't set our hearts on those things.

[42 : 36] And day by day as we live we guard our hearts that we're not going to be overcome by worry so much that we have no concern for the kingdom of God.

And so may the Lord help us. as we seek to live this way in this year especially but beyond. Let's pray.

Father we bow our hearts before you needing your grace, needing your grace to trust you with our futures and with all that we need.

knowing that we are only secure in you. You're the only certainty and as we sang this morning all we truly have in this life, all we truly have in this life is Christ.

He is the only lasting treasure. Everything else is uncertain and subject to fly away. And God you guard us as we live that we don't get overcome by the daily anxieties that come our way.

[43 : 54] But that we would instead pray and we would trust you and we would look to you. God give us grace to convert ordinary things like giving a cup of water in your name.

like working as unto you, like doing all that we do as your servants. Lord give us the grace to live that way that as we live in this life in an ongoing way we will be storing up treasure in heaven.

We ask that you would do this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Let's stand and sing.