

Where Is Your Heart Set?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 July 2018

Preacher: Alex Macdonald

[0 : 00] Amen. Would you turn with me now to that passage that we read in Matthew chapter 6 and especially the words in verse 21.

Matthew 6 verse 21. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

So, what's your heart set on? Is your heart in the right place? What's your heart's treasure? What's the focus of your heart?

What's your heart's desire? These are the questions that are suggested to us by what Jesus says here. That's the challenge of his words. We can set our hearts on earthly treasure and be disappointed.

Or we can set our hearts on heavenly treasure and be ultimately fulfilled. So, first of all, we've got to ask, what does Jesus mean by heart?

[1 : 03] He says, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. When we hear the word heart and when we use the word heart today, particularly in the English language, we think of the emotions.

We think of love. We use the expression, a sweetheart. Or fear. His heart failed him. Or courage. The heart of a lion. Sadness.

Being heartbroken. And so on. We tend to think of heart in emotional terms. And we make an opposition between heart and head. The emotions and reason.

And we tend to exalt the heart over the head. The ancient Greeks made the same distinction between heart and head, but they drew the opposite conclusion.

The reason and the will were exalted over bodily passions. The body was not important so much for the Greeks. It was the mind. The Bible's attitude is very different from both of these.

[2 : 11] Because throughout the Bible, both Old Testament and New, and it really derives from the Old Testament, the heart is the centre of the person. And includes the mind, will, emotions and imagination.

Now, we're not to think of this as the physical heart, the pump that pumps the blood around our body. But it's the whole idea of the centre of the person.

And that includes, in biblical terms, the mind, the will, the emotions and imagination. Now, that's true to some extent in the present day usage of the word heart. You know, we talk about someone having a heart of gold, that what they really are inwardly as a person is so good.

Or we use the expression heart-searching, something that really probes our inner depth. We talk about having a heart-to-heart conversation, where it's a real person-to-person conversation.

Or we use the expression whole-hearted. That means throwing your whole self, all that you are, into whatever you're doing. And if that's true to some extent then in our English usage, it is clearly the case in the Bible.

[3 : 22] For instance, in Proverbs chapter 16 verse 9, In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

So here it's thinking about our will. You know, we're planning something, we're wanting to put something into operation, so we're willing it. So that again, in biblical terms, is part of the work of the heart.

Or in Matthew chapter 15 verse 19, Jesus says, For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander, and so on.

And there the focus is on thought and action. So, again, this is coming out of the heart, out of what we really are as people. Or going back to the Old Testament, in 1 Kings chapter 3 verse 12, God speaking to Solomon says, I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.

So the heart here is linked to wisdom and discernment. So again, it's kind of very different from our idea of the heart just being the out emotional part. Or in Deuteronomy chapter 28 verse 47, You did not serve the Lord your God joyfully and gladly, and literally that is, with gladness of heart, in the time of prosperity.

[4 : 56] So there, it's more akin to our normal usage of the word heart, the idea of the emotions, gladness of heart. So it's encompassing all these.

Or going back to Genesis chapter 6 verse 5, The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination or every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

So the whole idea of imagination, which is a huge part of our humanity, again, that is linked with the heart in biblical thought. So, what we love and trust and are really committed to in our hearts, our innermost being, is what we really are.

The heart really sums up what we really are in biblical terms. In Proverbs chapter 3 verse 5, Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

So it's the idea there that we've been called to have a wholehearted commitment to the Lord. All we are as human beings, that we should be committed to the Lord, trusting in the Lord with all our heart.

[6 : 09] And so therefore, the distinction is made between the way we may appear, and the way we really are. The famous verse in 1 Samuel chapter 16 verse 7, where Samuel has been sent to anoint a new king.

He looks at Jesse's fine sons, and he thinks, you know, one of these big men, they're going to be the next king.

But God says to him, man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. So, outwardly we can appear very differently from what we really are as human beings.

And this is reflected in the New Testament as well. In Mark chapter 7 verse 6, Jesus says, Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites, as it is written, these people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

You see what he's saying there? He's saying that the Pharisees and others, the religious people, they seem to be doing all the right things. They were honouring God with their lips, but Jesus was saying their hearts were far from God.

[7 : 27] What they really were internally, what they really were as human beings, was very opposed to God and his work, as was seen in their attitude to Jesus.

So that brings home to us that we can put on an act when we're around other people, but God isn't fooled by that. Other people see the outward appearance, but God sees our hearts.

So, what is our heart set on? What is the real inclination and commitment of your heart? What does your heart love? That's the challenge of these words of Jesus.

So secondly, we need to ask the question, what does Jesus mean by treasure in this verse? Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Well, the Greek word is the one from which we get our word thesaurus.

Thesaurus is a storehouse or treasury of words. And this word, thesaurus in Greek, it could mean both the treasure and the treasury, the place where the treasure was kept.

[8 : 34] But here it's very definitely referring to the treasure, because it's the heart really that's been viewed as the treasury, the place where this treasure is most valued. So, this is the thing that you most value, the thing or things that you've set your heart on.

That's what Jesus is talking about here. And so, it's instructive for us to ask ourselves, what's the one thing, maybe more than one thing, but what's the one thing that we can't give up?

Think of the story of the rich young ruler, Mark chapter 10, verse 21. Jesus looked at him and loved him. One thing you lack, he said, go sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven.

Then come, follow me. At this the man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth. In other words, when it came to the bit, his real treasure was shown to be his great wealth, his great possessions.

And he couldn't give that up. That's what he had set his heart on. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. So, what's the one thing, if we were asked to give it up, that we couldn't?

[9 : 54] That will tell you where your treasure is. Could be money or possessions, like the rich young ruler. It could be lustful thoughts.

Jesus in Matthew chapter 5, the previous chapter here, verse 28, says, But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Again, this emphasis on the heart. Or it could be certain beliefs that we have that we would refuse really to give up. A great example of this is, you know, how Spain at one time was under Muslim rule.

The Moors had invaded Spain. And there were a lot of mosques built in Spain. But then the Christians conquered again the whole of Spain.

And mosques, which were big solid buildings, were made use of. They were turned into churches. Well, there were workmen who were working on these buildings to turn them back into churches and removing anything that would be offensive to Christians.

[11 : 04] But these workmen were still Moorish. They were still Islamic. And there was one thing that they didn't remove.

Somewhere in the building, maybe high up somewhere, I don't know where it was, they wouldn't remove where it said, God neither begets nor is begotten.

Because that's the one great thing that sets Islam apart from Christianity. Because we believe, of course, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

He came into this world and this is the one thing that they would refuse to give up. Maybe today it's a very different kind of thing. Maybe today it's the idea that we save ourselves by being good.

That Jesus just gave us a good example and we would follow that. So many people believe that. And that's the one thing that people find so difficult to give up. To accept God's grace.

[12 : 02] That it's nothing to do with our good works. It's to do with God's grace. The problem is, with all of that, that it's laying up treasure on earth where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal, as Jesus says here.

And that's not only the material things that are vulnerable to deterioration and loss. Of course that's the case. If we just stop to think about it. You know, the car that you spent so much time and energy and money on, it's now a rusting heap somewhere.

You know, that's what happens in life. But everything in this world is temporary. And as Jesus said, what good is it if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul?

What good is it if you gain popularity or you achieve your worldly ambitions or you indulge your dreams if all these things are just going to perish?

Bruce Springsteen in one of his songs says, everybody's got a hungry heart. Or as St. Augustine put it, our hearts are restless.

[13 : 15] We try to fill our hearts. We try to satisfy our hearts. We set our hearts on various treasures. But usually with all the wrong things.

Why is it that our hearts are in the wrong place? Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Why are they set on the wrong things, our hearts? Well, basically the Bible says we have a heart condition. Not a physical heart condition, but a spiritual heart condition.

Jeremiah chapter 17 verse 9, The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure, or desperately wicked as it says in the authorised version.

Who can understand it? This is the problem. There's something corrupt in our hearts. And that's why Jesus said, it's out of the heart come evil thoughts and then all the evil deeds.

[14 : 13] And this is because our hearts naturally are far from God. As Jesus says, these people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

He's there quoting from the prophet Isaiah. So it's because we're estranged from God, we're removed from God because of our sin, that our hearts are all wrong with the wrong desires.

In addition, our hearts are hard. Think of Pharaoh in the Old Testament. He hardened his heart against what Moses was saying, against what God was demanding.

And God confirmed that hardening of his heart. That can be the case with ourselves, that we've set our hearts on a certain direction and we refuse to give it up because there's our own human pride involved in it.

God, you see, made us for himself, as Augustine says. God made us for himself. But our hearts are restless until we find rest in him. But of course, we try to fill our hearts with all sorts of God substitutes.

[15 : 31] We worship and serve created things rather than the creator, as Paul puts it in Romans chapter 1. Verse 25. So this is why our hearts are in the wrong place.

So is there no hope then? If that's the description that seems to be given in the Bible of the human predicament, well, of course, there is hope because the whole message of the Bible is, yes, pointing out what's wrong with us and what's wrong with the world, but it's also enabling us to discover the remedy.

In Ezekiel chapter 36, verse 26, we read, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. So, the cure for our condition of setting our hearts on the wrong kind of treasure is that we need a new heart.

We need to be made new creatures. We've got hearts of stone, as it were, and we need to be given a real, true human heart because we're created as human beings to worship God and have a relationship with Him.

[16 : 47] And we need, therefore, the Holy Spirit of God to change and transform us. In Acts chapter 2, verse 36, and what follows, we see something else.

And that is where we read, Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this. This is Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost. Let all Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? Peter replied, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When Peter preached in the power of the Holy Spirit that day at Pentecost, people were cut to the heart. In other words, the Word of God penetrated right to their hard hearts and broke their hearts.

They were cut to the core. Their conscience was aroused as they realized that this one that they had rejected was in fact the one that God had made Lord and Christ.

[18 : 00] In Psalm 51, verse 17, which we sung earlier, A broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. And we've got to ask ourselves, therefore, are our hearts broken because of what our sin has done?

Offense to God and required that Jesus should take those sins upon himself and to die on the cross in that darkness as the only way by which we could be saved.

Surely that should break our hard hearts and turn us to the Lord. The proclaimers have a song called Sunshine on Leith become quite famous.

My heart was broken. My heart was broken. You saw it. You claimed it. You touched it. You saved it. While I'm worth my room on this earth, I will be with you.

While the chief puts sunshine on leith, I'll thank him for his work and your birth and my birth. My heart was broken. But you saw it.

[19 : 08] You claimed it. You touched it. You saved it. Our hearts, broken by a sense of our own sinfulness, is the necessary way by which we come to know the grace of God.

And that's what turns us from having the wrong kind of treasure, the wrong kind of focus of our hearts, to having the right focus, to having the right treasure, the treasure of God's word, of God's grace, and of eternal life.

So we need to give up our small and paltry treasures, these things that rust and fade and disappoint. And we need to follow Jesus and therefore have treasure in heaven where Jesus is.

He's the fairest of 10,000. He's the greatest treasure that you could ever have. And in John chapter 14, verse 1, he says, Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Trust in God. Trust also in me. So we know if we are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation, then our treasure is in the right place and our hearts are in the right place.

[20 : 24] For where your treasure is, Jesus says, there your heart will be also. Is Jesus the one thing that you could never give up? That no matter what you would be offered, no matter what you would be threatened, that you would never give up Jesus?

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Let's pray. Our loving Heavenly Father, we have to confess that so often we treasure the things that disappoint and do not satisfy.

So often we spend our time on so many things that ultimately would be worthless. Oh Lord our God, forgive us. Enable us to have a new perspective.

Enable us to have our hearts set on the right thing and the right place. Enable our hearts to be set on Jesus. May he be our great treasure. More than all the gold of this world.

More than all the most expensive things we could have. More than all the popularity or all the ambition of this world. Lord enable us to treasure Jesus.

[21 : 36] To know how precious he is. May he continue to be precious to our souls. and enable us to share this treasure with others. We have this treasure in earthen vessels as Paul puts it.

This treasure of the good news about Jesus. We are so fragile and vulnerable and yet you have committed this amazing treasure to us.

Enable us by showing what our hearts desire is to communicate something of the greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus to others. So our loving heavenly Father we pray that you look upon us in mercy.

We pray that we might have forgiveness for our sins for we have an advocate with the Father Christ Jesus the righteous one. We thank you that he is the one who paid the price for our sins.

He is the propitiation for our sins. The one who took away the wrath of God. And so gracious Lord we pray that we might glorify the name of Jesus as day by day we know forgiveness and we know healing and we know his righteousness.

[22 : 48] So we ask these things in Jesus name and for his sake. Amen. Amen. Now we close by singing to God's praise a section from Psalm 119.

and we're singing there from verse 9 it's the second part of the psalm. How can the young keep their life pure by doing what your word demands?

I seek you with my heart and soul let me not stray from your commands. Psalm 119 verses 9 to 16 to God's praise. Amen. Amen.