

## 19-24

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Preacher: David Moser

[ 0 : 00 ] Hear the word of the Lord. Matthew chapter 6, 19. 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. 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 that 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 : 09 ] This is God's holy, inerrant, and enduring word to his people. Let's pray. Lord, will you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, make us alive to this text, this day.

To your glory, to our benefit, and as a light to the world. We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Why are children seemingly ready to smash their piggy bank for every shiny object they see?

Even if they aren't quite sure what it is. Even when it's junk, you know, cheaply made, and it won't last the day. Why are our kids willing to part with sometimes their life savings for a trinket that will soon be forgotten?

Well, how far off is tomorrow for a child? It's hard for a kid to wait for, well, anything, because tomorrow's in another universe when you're three feet tall.

[ 2 : 37 ] right? Children live very much in the present, so it's hard, sometimes impossible, for them to lift their eyes above the things that are right in front of them.

That shiny object, that trinket, that toy, that treat fills their entire gaze. They can't see past it. Now, if a toy or a treat fills your whole vision, if it has become the whole world to you, its value in your estimation skyrockets, doesn't it?

That's why children are willing to pay an astronomical price for mild and temporary thrills, right?

That price might be in terms of their piggy bank.

You want to pay how much for that treat? Or in terms of discipline, you're willing to risk how much to act that way for a moment? It might come in terms of a relationship.

You're willing to do what to your sibling to get a turn with that toy? All because they can't lift their eyes above this moment.

[ 3 : 55 ] Now, every one of us has stories like that, too, from our own past. some more recent than others. And parents have a fresh experience of watching it play out in their own children's lives.

And today, Jesus tells us that even though we're taller than our children, in terms of decision making, we often don't see much further than they do.

And that's why he begins today in verse 19, saying, do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

And here, Jesus instructs us, commands us not to store up treasure for ourselves on earth. but this is not just a simple regulation. This is wisdom.

Commands normally come with moral and ethical reasoning behind them. In chapter 5, we've been walking through this Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says, don't lust because it's the heart of adultery.

[ 5 : 13 ] And he says, don't give yourself over to selfish anger because it's the heart of murder. Law says, don't do this because it's evil.

But here, he has shifted, hasn't he? He's beginning a new section of the Sermon on the Mount. They're still commands, but they are wisdom.

We're seeing here is a shift in genre from law giving, which commands don't do this, it's evil, to wisdom, which pleads with us.

Don't do this. It's folly. It's emptiness. And so, Jesus is appealing to us, out of love, in the same way that we aim to teach our children, to lift our eyes a little higher than that shiny object, to prize the better prize, to find something of substance in a world that rarely has any.

And this begins the final section of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is going to draw us into a greater heavenly wisdom.

[ 6 : 29 ] And that is our theme for the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount. Today, he asks, what will you treasure? Will you be wise in the way you value things?

Next Sunday, he's going to ask us, will you be wise with your cares? Where will you take them?

Then he'll say, by what standard will you measure the people around you?

Will you be wise in it? He'll ask us, what will you ask of your Father in heaven? And how will you ask it? He'll challenge us on the basis of wisdom.

What do our actions say about our hearts? And then he'll ask us the most important question, the question that defines our lives. Do you know Jesus?

Jesus? So this is wisdom literature, friends. In our passage today, Jesus doesn't demand on the basis of morality, he doesn't say, do not store up earthly treasures because it's evil.

[ 7 : 37 ] Instead, he pleads on the basis of wisdom, do not store up earthly treasure because that's folly. The way we're going to put it today is do not store up earthly treasure because it's stupid.

It's stupid for both the things that you do have already and for the things you want, the things you're longing for.

It's stupid for the things you have. What is your most prized possession? What is the most cherished part of your reputation? What's your greatest earthly treasure?

What is it? you will lose it. Either in this life or at this life's end.

Moth and rust and thieves, if they don't get it, it doesn't fit in your coffin with you. So Jesus entreats you with wisdom.

[ 8 : 45 ] Do you want to spend your life protecting something you cannot keep? Never mind the fact that we're fickle creatures with changing desires.

Toys lay around the Christmas tree unused all too quickly. there's no guarantee that the thing you think is the most important thing in the world today will be the same thing that you think is the most important thing in the world tomorrow.

Do not store up earthly treasure because it's stupid for the things you have and for the things you want. what would you like to earn or to have or to enjoy?

Possession a house a car a gadget a status because that's an earthly treasure too a good reputation popularity a position that's an earthly treasure at work among friends here's my question to you that thing you want where is the guarantee you will ever get it?

You might work your entire life for the ghost of an aspiration and the higher you set your sights the more likely you are to fail and where is the guarantee even if you get it?

[ 10 : 28 ] that you'll hold it who wants to spend their life tilting at windmills the ambitious fool is a fool nonetheless and friends Jesus wants to release us from the burden and the folly of chasing after dust do not store up for yourselves earthly treasure because it's stupid proverbs 23 says do not toil to acquire wealth be discerning enough to desist when your eyes light on it it is gone for suddenly it sprouts wings flying like an eagle towards heaven rust and moth destroy thieves break in and steal the luster of shiny objects fades quickly anything in this world labeled mine is already rusting and that is the trap that Jesus wants to free us from by stretching our gaze further than our eyes naturally want to look and that's what he says in verses 20 and 21 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 we think longer term than our children we pay attention right to the to the pop psychologists who tell us about delayed gratification and the financial advisors who preach compound interest right we think we're long term thinkers because we save for retirement if we can but

Jesus says to us today in verse 20 no children that's not long term that's short term why is that short term most fundamentally retirement is the short term because Jesus rose from the grave and the

tomb is empty see why is Jesus here standing on a hillside in Galilee preaching this sermon on the mount why did he come preaching the kingdom of heaven why did he go to the cross bear your sins and mine suffer in our place bear the weight of God's holy wrath against sin and die in our stead why did he do that because he was thinking about the long term the truly long term past today past retirement past the grave itself to eternity

Jesus came to die for your sins and mine to rise from the grave and break the bonds of death to bring you to him forever forever C.S.

Lewis in his book *The Weight of Glory* writes there are no ordinary people you have never talked to a mere mortal it is immortals whom we joke with work with marry snub and exploit immortal horrors or everlasting splendors that's long term you are an immortal being destined for either just unending wrath or undeserved unending fellowship with the living God Jesus resurrection is the proof of that reality and it is the entrance into it for all who believe and so friends if you have not turned from sin and foolishness and folly will you not this moment cry out to

Jesus and find in him a treasure beyond all imagining because retirement is remarkably short term he came to break death itself so if our planning doesn't extend past death we're still thinking short term does that mean no comforts or toys or luxuries in this life at all of any sort again this is wisdom and Jesus is laying out a principle a heart idea and I think Jesus who in his ministry was often found at feasts so much so that the religious people thought that he was you know partying too much wants I I think that he wants us to enjoy our lives special meals with friends and family it's okay to own nice things to have goals and aspirations it's okay to decorate your house in fact the apostle [16:36] Paul has really strong words to condemn people who think Christianity means rejecting wholesale the world God made in 1st Timothy 4 he calls people who would deny us that privilege preaching the lies of demons instead he says God created all things to be received with thanksgiving everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving he writes and the Lord does not prohibit saving either look at passages like Proverbs chapter 6 we see that the Lord instructs us and guides us even in wisdom literature to be thinking about the future and preparing for it we do not reject the good world that our

Lord has made but neither do we hold it as our treasure it's hard to see in English but the words that Jesus uses here for lay up and treasure are really closely related the verb is *thesorizo* and the noun is *thesoras* it's nearly a play on words so it could almost be read don't treasure treasures on earth the issue isn't chiefly in the possessing but in the treasuring which means that this is not wisdom for those rich people alone though if you have a house and a car and meals that qualifies you as one of the richest people in human history but even if you don't have those things you can be poor and still consumed with visions of wealth you can be an outcast and still enamored with dreams of popularity you can have no earthly treasure and still have unending desires for it this passage this wisdom is for everyone who hungers and thirsts for the things of this world and where your treasure is there your heart will be also so we may have earthly decorations and toys and goals but as Jesus has said the last three Sundays don't expect heavenly rewards when you dive into those things when we give our time our money and attention to entertainment and leisure and the shiny things of this world we have as Jesus said in the last three weeks received our reward in fall so toys and luxuries and earthly treasures are the empty calories in the diet of our lives they're not evil but if your life is about them you will die of malnutrition and even if you get your hands on an unlimited supply of those things you won't find the experience as satisfying as you'd hoped because the world's treasures aren't treasure not really the world's treasures are not treasure let me give you two recent examples one about the treasure of wealth and one about the treasure of status not long ago

I was having a conversation with someone who had come into a significant measure of wealth he reflected on what it had bought him and I was encouraged to see that in his mind what it had bought him was responsibility to use it well and to use it wisely but past that in his personal life had the wealth brought him everything he wanted was he now fully satisfied everything he had he reflected on that saying money isn't everything right we say that he said not only am I finding that money isn't everything it's not even most things see the thing our world works and longs and searches and sacrifices for as if it were everything when you get it isn't even most things do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth because it's stupid the world's treasure isn't even treasure that's the treasure of money what about the treasures of respect and status and reputation and achievement just about a week or two ago

Sir Anthony Hopkins the celebrated awarded actor who also happens to be a British knight sat down with the Guardian newspaper to talk about his lifetime of success and accolades here's what he said I meet young people and they want to act and they want to be famous and I tell them when you get to the top of the tree there's nothing up there most of this is nonsense most of this is a lie you and I will never reach a fraction of the worldly respect and success and notoriety and fame that this man has achieved but even if we did it is nonsense and lies do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth because it's stupid the world's treasure isn't even treasure

[ 23 : 35 ] Jesus wants to lift our gaze to change our perspective and that's why he speaks about our gaze in verses 22 and 23 he starts speaking about our eyes I think what's happening here is he's saying what you treasure shapes how you view the world it shapes your vision so let's ask what if what happens if we follow the world grasping for money and reputation and entertainment as if it were everything when in fact it is folly if our treasure shapes our vision what happens to our vision when empty calories nonsense and lies become our focus verse 22 the eye is the lamp of the body so if your eye is healthy your whole body will be full of light but your eye is bad your whole body will be full of darkness if then the light in you is darkness how great is that darkness now that might be a bit cryptic so let's break it down piece by piece the eye he begins with and well it has to do with our vision in this context he's talking about our treasure so

I think the best way to understand the eye is how you view the world what do you see as valuable what do you look to for treasure and then he says that this vision that worldview is the lamp of the body that's the whole rest of you the way you view the world the way you consider things valuable or not affects the whole rest of your life and then he says if your eye is healthy I think that means if you have a healthy understanding of what's truly valuable he says your whole body will be full of light meaning the whole rest of your life will bear healthy fruit in keeping with right priorities but if your eye is bad if you prize the wrong things if your vision is corrupted and skewed if your eye is bad thinking that dust and nothing lies and lies and empty calories are something something to be prized he says your body will be full of darkness the whole rest of your life will suffer that darkness and so then he exclaims if then the light in you is darkness how great is the darkness if you look to darkness as a source of light how blind will you be if you look at empty calories to sustain you how malnourished will you be if you look to things that have no life for your vitality how lifeless will you be if you look to the world's treasure nonsense and lies for your wealth how impoverished will you be what you treasure shapes your vision and the last thing

Jesus says is then it becomes your master verse 24 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 both God and money whatever you look to as your treasure that's worship that's that's what worship is and when we sing songs in worship we're proclaiming the value right of our great king that's what worship is extolling his greatness so whatever we look to as a treasure that is actually worship and what you worship becomes your master and that is the most important thing about you or about me why well because that will define our relationship with God

God see what's interesting here is there's no middle ground in this passage you either love one and hate the other you hate one and love the other there is no I love this earthly stuff and I'm just neutral I'm cool with God he's over there I'm over here we're doing our thing there is no middle ground there is no!

neutral why not? because your treasure is your master and you will subject everything else to it even God either by ignoring the Lord and chasing something else entirely that's not neutral spurning the living God is not neutral or you will act actively subject God to your treasure by making God a servant of your treasure your prayers what are you asking for are you asking mostly for your kingdom to come or God's now two weeks ago Jesus taught us to ask for our daily bread the things we need to survive but is that all you pray for do not store up earthly treasure because it's stupid and because when you do you stand against the

[ 30 : 14 ] Lord now we have been so far looking very much at the negative I can't even count how many times I've said stupid to you what not to do why not to do it but there is a positive side of this passage as well a positive command a positive principle of wisdom store up treasures for yourselves in heaven which means there's there's a promise here we can store up treasure in heaven that doesn't mean that we somehow earn our place with God and that by storing up treasure however that looks that we will pave our own way to heaven that is an impossibility

Jesus Christ died on the cross to make a way for us he rose from the grave to secure us to himself he ascended into heaven to send the spirit to our lives as a deposit and a guarantee and empowerment for the rest of our lives on our way back to him these treasures in heaven are just gifts of grace our heavenly father bestows upon his people in his grace on top of that and so I want to give us some practical wisdom on how to live this out as the people of God stemming from this I think the first thing to do is to identify your earthly treasure!

We're all tempted towards shiny objects and just like children they tend to fill our gaze one pastor asked a really great series of questions to help us think through our treasures and I'll ask them to you because they have hit home for me the first thing he asks is what occupies our thoughts when we have nothing else to think about where do our thoughts go where do our thoughts naturally drift what do we daydream about that's probably a big part of our treasure and that's where we really are the next question he asks is what are the things we worry about the most we worry about our treasure don't we if it didn't matter to us we wouldn't be worrying or what is the thing we dread most to lose another question what is it that we measure other people by their clothes their education their home their appearance their success what is the barometer we measure people by the things that we treasure that's a good indicator the last question he asks is what is it that if you didn't have it you could not be happy that is a sure sign of where our hearts are set and what we find most valuable so first identify the earthly treasure second we want to crush our desires for it not entirely but crush the thing in our heart that would say this is most valuable

I think we can do that by taking what Jesus has already taught us today and meditate on it will you meditate on the idea of the moth and the rust and the thieves in relation to that earthly treasure will you think about how short term it really is will you meditate!

on the fact that not only is it not everything but it's not even most things will you meditate upon the fact that it's probably nonsense and lies that's internal work for you to be doing but in the crushing of our sinful desires and prioritization our help cannot come from us alone we need God's help so will you not only meditate upon those things but will you also cry out to God to help you in that quest identifying crushing the desire those are both kind of on the negative side what about the storing up of treasure we need to grow in our desire for the

[ 36 : 10 ] Lord and for his reward see we want to displace the longings for dust with affection for God and his kingdom we squeeze out lesser treasures with bigger ones see the Christian life is not mostly stop this and this and this and this the Christian life is mostly fill yourself up with Christ and so that looks like a lot of things in 1st Timothy chapter 6 Paul gives an instruction for the rich people in this present age that's most most people in here qualify for that he says to

Timothy as for the rich in this present age charge them not to be haughty nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches but on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy there to do good to be rich in good works to be generous and ready to share thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of that which is truly life if you need to spend some time reflecting on that it's 1st Timothy chapter 6 verses 17 through 19 the Christian life is not mostly stop this and that and the other thing it is mostly fill yourself with Christ last fall we were in the book of Colossians the great turning point in that book is chapter 3 verses 1 and 2 right in the middle he has been talking about the glories of Christ the glories of what he has done for his people and then he says if then you have been raised with Christ seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God set your minds!

on things that are above not on things that are on earth friends that's how we displace longings for dust with affection for God and his kingdom it is by setting our sights on real treasure we do that in our hearts and in our minds and in the way we go about our thought life but let me commend to you also that what he's saying here is actually a process and that by investing your earthly treasure! By staking your reputation on the gospel! By investing your money in kingdom things by spending your time and energy in the things of God and in his church you embed your heart in the things of God and he will become to you more and more a treasure!

[ 39 : 44 ] When we invest in anything it gets lots of our attention doesn't it? Think about if you wanted to make an investment in the stock market we research our investments ahead of time we spend lots of time on that it gets all of our attention we seek out wisdom and counsel we get lots of our focus on it and it grows in importance day by day as we do that and not only that but after we've made the investment we spend time tracking it we get alerts we get all sorts of things we are

reminded by it constantly because we've put treasure somewhere and we have invested of ourselves in it and it grows in importance to us the same is true of anything you invest your treasure in where your treasure is there your heart will be also our treasure wherever we place it drags our heart there and so when we invest our money in

God's kingdom we proclaim to our own soul that our money is a servant! to God not the other way around when we invest our time and our energy in God's kingdom we proclaim to our own heart that we are servants to God friends do you want to store up treasure in heaven and throw yourself into the community of the church there's treasure there devote yourself to evangelism for your own joy open your doors to hospitality for your eternal benefit abandon sin and let light shine in your life serve the

Lord by being a children's minister and serving children laying up treasure for yourself in heaven when you are about your father's business with your time and your money and your energy you will find that even in times of difficulty blessings that this world does not know are yours and there is treasure in heaven if you set your heart on this world's treasures you are chasing after dust if you set your heart on God his kingdom his church his work you will have treasure in heaven John Piper wrote a book called Don't Waste Your Life it's a good book I commend it to you in it he cites a poem that was in his childhood home it reads simply only one life it will soon be past only what's done for Christ will last let's pray