

# Treasures in heaven

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[ 0 : 00 ] Dorothy, thank you. There it is. It's pretty short, pretty punchy, huh? Jesus is warning us, really. He's saying to us this morning, you've got to choose.! You really have to choose.

Because you cannot, you just can't serve both God and money. We're in the Sermon on the Mount, as you know, through the autumn, and we're sitting at the feet of King Jesus as he teaches us about the Kingdom of Heaven.

He's teaching us about living as disciples under God's saving rule. And last Sunday, earlier in chapter 6, one wonderful truth shone through. As Jesus spoke again and again about your Father, your Father, your Father, our Father in Heaven.

So those people who come to Jesus Christ and follow him are adopted into God's family. The Eternal Lord of all is now our Heavenly Father. He loves us and sees us and knows us.

He forgives us. He cares for us. He rewards us. This is true. And there is no greater thing than joining his family. There's nothing better. So imagine a happy family.

[ 1 : 18 ] Imagine parents with young boys whom they love so very deeply. But one of the boys begins to spend a lot of time at a friend's house. And he starts having some meals there until he doesn't really like the food at home anymore.

He spends the odd night staying over at his friend's house and begins to pick up the values and the ways of talking of that family. Summer comes round. He tells you he wants to go on bigger flashy holidays with them, not with his parents.

And he begins to resent his parents. Mark's mum and dad give me what I want. Mark's mum and dad let me do what I want. Mark's mum and dad give me what I want.

Mark's mum and dad give me what I want. Mark's mum and dad give me what I want. Mark's mum and dad give me what I want. And his own parents, who love and care for him so very deeply, wonder how long it will be before he moves out for good.

Imagine what a tragic, terrible family situation that would be. Like how desperately that boy needs someone to speak truth to him. Are you sure this new family is going to give you what you want?

[ 2 : 32 ] Don't leave. Don't go. But now if the parent that you're tempted to leave is your perfect, loving father in heaven, you need to be really, really sure that this new family will give you what you want.

Here in Matthew 6, if this makes sense to you, the other family, if I can put it like this, is treasure and possessions and money. In verse 19, Jesus talks about treasures on earth which moths and vermin and thieves can get at.

He's talking about our clothes and hardware and kit and cash, our possessions. And at the end of verse 24, money with a capital M. And the thing is that money and possessions can be like a rival family offering to give you the safety and the happiness you want.

And in our 21st century world which screams at us, get richer, have more stuff, feel safe and be happy. Jesus wants here to teach us and warn us about cash and stuff.

Which threatens to split up his family. When money invites you round to its house to spend the night, here is what you need to know.

[ 3 : 57 ] So that you won't leave and you won't go. But you will stick with your family, father's family forever. Our passage this morning then is Jesus' teaching on the spiritual danger of our cash and our stuff.

Next Sunday, the challenge of having little and wondering if you'll make it through the winter.

Today, the danger of money, the spiritual danger of money.

I've got three questions on the handout to help us follow through. You don't need to follow the handout if you don't want. Just three questions. Here's the first question from verses 19 to 21.

Where is your treasure?

In verse 19 and verse 20, Jesus contrasts treasures on earth with treasures in heaven. And he says, verse 19, do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth.

So what does he mean? It's worth saying just up front, Jesus is not against private property. And nor is he against saving for a rainy day.

[ 5 : 08 ] It's not what he's saying here. Back in Jesus' day, if you wanted your best oriental robe and your bits of precious metal and your coins to be nice and safe, you'd gather them all together and you'd store them in a sturdy box.

And then you'd put all your stuff in a box in a safe place under your bed or buried in a field. It's what you did. Maybe you've had, or when you were little, you had a special box hidden under your bed with your most precious things in.

Your piggy bank, the bracelet your grandmother gave you, in your box, locked up, under your bed, nice and safe. Which is normal and sensible with a few precious things. Until, well until you start storing up for yourselves treasures on earth.

I want more things in my box. I want to grow my treasure. I'll get more robes and grab more coins and I'll put them in their box and they're mine.

And I'll keep all my stuff safe. Because I can't bear to lose any of it. And with my bigger box now, under my bed, of money and possessions, I'll be more secure and more happy with my precious stuff that I've grabbed and got and I'm holding on to.

[ 6 : 33 ] And Jesus says here, don't, don't. Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth.

Question then, before we keep going.

Do you feel the pull of that? To store up cash and stuff? It's quite hard to get into your heart to think about that.

My knee-jerk reaction is, well I don't very much really. I'm not a city fat cat anymore. I'm richer than some for sure, but I'm poorer than others.

So there's nothing to see here. I'm doing okay. But ask ourselves a few questions. One, just in life, do we find ourselves wanting more?

If we get paid for the work that we do, don't we expect and demand that our pay should go up as we go on? Of course it should.

[ 7 : 37 ] I'm worth more. I want more. Or think of our standard of living. It should rise as we get older, shouldn't it?

It's what's meant to happen. I want to trade up, not down. I've got to get a better phone, not a worse one.

I need a better bike. If I can, if I can, I'd love to try to move to a better area and get a bigger flat. The slow drip, drip of wanting more and getting more.

Or, two, think about this. Do you get that strange physical thrill when you buy something? You're on Amazon looking for the next gadget or the clothes website that you've been pouring over.

And you click the button, paid. And it's coming through the post, if they're not on strike. And it comes and you rip the packaging open. And that little surge of excitement with your next bit of something eclipses anything you felt for your God that day.

[ 8 : 49 ] What is that? I want it. And now I've got it. Or, three, do you find, a bit like I do, that it's very...

We can't bear to lose what we have. When you buy something online and then a week later you find it's £10 cheaper somewhere else and you feel so cheated and really angry as though someone's broken into your special box and stolen your treasure.

Do you ever get anything like that? In 1 Timothy chapter 6, Paul, reflecting on Jesus' teaching, says, Godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. But would we?

Like, would I say, I'm in my father's family and he will provide all I need? Or if I got back home at lunchtime to discover our cash reserves are at zero, our gadgets are gone and all we have is a few changes of clothes and some food in the fridge, would the worry and the insecurity strangle me?

[ 10 : 07 ] Could it be, in part, I am actually pretty attached to treasures on earth? And only with my growing box of kit and cash do I feel safe and happy?

Could that affect me? Well, Jesus is speaking to people whom he knows through and through and he wants to say to us, don't. Don't be like that.

But the great thing in Jesus' teaching, he doesn't just say, no, stop it. He tells us why. Why would you not be like that? And here's why. Still in verse 19.

Look at this. He says that with treasures on earth, all the money and stuff we hoard, look at this, moths and vermin destroy and thieves break in and steal it.

Which is brilliant. It's not brilliant, but it's such earthy wisdom. He's basically saying it is so stupid and short-sighted to treasure cash and stuff.

[11:14] Because, we all know this, your next new item of clothing, which you pined after and got and wow, it will fade and go out of fashion and the moths will eat it.

And your gadget, your phone upgrade, your new car, it was going to change your life and it came and you loved it. But a few years later, it's lost, cracked, become obsolete, beginning to degrade. It just doesn't last, all that stuff. Like, stop thinking in the now and think forward five or thirty years. Your bike will be rusty.

Your house will fall down. Your stuff will have got stolen. For sure, if you've got any, the value of your cash and your pension will erode through inflation. There won't be much left of it.

How stupid. How short-term, Jesus is saying, to pump our energy into growing our stash of stuff, thinking, it's solid, I'll be safe, this is the good life.

[12:24] And even if some of our possessions did last through this life, they are absolutely no use to us when we die. You brought nothing into the world and you can take nothing out of it.

Jesus is saying, are you tempted to spend a night round at money's house? Do you think money is going to give you the life you want? Don't do it.

Rather, verse 20, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin don't destroy and where thieves don't break in and steal.

This is wonderful wisdom from Jesus. Heaven, in the Bible, in the Sermon on the Mount, is where God dwells, where he's seated on his throne, his home, our Father in heaven.

And Jesus is saying, instead of storing up money and possessions here, which will just rot and fade, why would you do that? Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, with God.

[13:34] Instead of treasuring your kit, make a long-term investment. Do what you're made to do. And treasure your heavenly Father who loves you.

Instead of hungering and thirsting for more stuff, that's what I want. Hunger and thirst for righteousness.

We want to do your will, our Father. And even in the Sermon on the Mount here, treasuring our Father and doing his will really does bring great reward.

I've jotted down some references on the sheet. In chapter 5, 11 and 12, when people insult you and persecute you because you belong to Jesus, Jesus says, great is your reward in heaven.

You've invested. In chapter 5, verse 46, when you love your enemies, God's reward. In 6, verse 4, when you give to the needy secretly, your Father will reward you.

[14:41] which is wonderful money advice. Instead of clinging on to my money, when I open my hands and give it away, great reward.

When, 6, verse 6, I go into my room and close the door and pray to my Father, your Father will reward you, Jesus promises. and so on.

Those treasures stored in heaven, moths and vermin won't destroy them, and thieves can't break in and steal. The riches of eternal life, and the infinite value of a character free from sin, and the precious worth and joy of seeing our God face to face forever.

We have a Father who loves us, and guarantees us wealth for all eternity. Question, where's your treasure?

Do you really want to spend time, your short life, storing up rotting treasures on earth? You really want to do that? Says Jesus to me. Because, let's move on a bit in his teaching, verse 21, where your treasure is, on earth or in heaven, there your heart will be also.

[16:10] That is, Jesus is saying, if you treasure money, and you store up cash and stuff, your heart will be changed. The stuff that we store up and treasure, it will more and more control us, and affect our whole lives.

If you ever watch the Lord of the Rings films, think of that character Smeagol Gollum, and his relationship with the ring. He's precious, his treasure. He can't take his eyes off it.

His heart is captured by it. And bit by bit, it starts to take over his life. And Jesus says, so with the things we treasure.

Which is where the rest of these verses take us, as Jesus goes on. In verse 22 onwards, there's two more bits to what Jesus is saying, two more contrasts, which warn us of the danger of storing up treasures on earth.

We'll move through them a bit quicker. Where's your treasure? Verses 19 to 21. Now verse 22. I hope this makes sense. How is your eyesight? How's your eyesight? Let me read this bit.

[17:26] The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness? Point is, I think, as what we treasure affects our heart and our life, so our eyesight affects our whole body and life.

Because the eye is the lamp of the body. Our eyes, see, if you can think about it like this, are a bit like window lamps, shining light into us from outside.

In a way. You shut your eyes and no light gets in. Your body's in darkness. Our eyes, at the same time, are a little bit like two squishy bike lights in our skulls, aren't they?

In a sense. They shine forward so that we can see where we're going. And so if in normal life, our eyes are healthy and our eyesight is clear, that's really good for daytime living and nighttime cycling.

[18:35] But if our eyes get unhealthy and cloudy and damaged, it affects everything in your life as you tap around in the darkness.

Jesus is saying, if your eyes are healthy and fixed on your unseen father, then you'll see where life is going and you'll see how to live.

But if your eyes are unhealthy, if you keep staring at money and possessions and what can I get, your body will be plunged into darkness in the here and now.

It's a warning, I think, not to tinker around with cash and stuff and I'll be okay with a bit of it. Not to spend nights around money's house.

Not to have five or six days in your week basically chasing after cash and comfort because it will ruin us in the here and now. But two things at random.

[19:40] Say you treasure your wardrobe. You're so often planning your next buy. Internet shopping to relax. You know that surge of adrenaline when it comes out of the wrapping, how it makes you look.

It's where your heart can be. It can start to take over your life, that. As you arrive in church, rather than engaging with God, you're just checking out what other people are wearing.

When life gets on top of you and you're feeling rubbish, instead of running to your Father in heaven, you run to get your credit card and buy something new. Your whole body becoming dark.

Well, say that work and trying to go up in the world and more respect and better pay and a higher standard of living drives you.

It's what you treasure. It can control you that. You'll work longer hours and travel more. You'll neglect your family because you're committed to your work.

[20:47] And you get more and more. But you have less and less time to serve others and less and less time for your Father in heaven.

How great is that darkness in you? Jesus is not being pushy. He is pushing us here. I can't spend five or six days a week with unhealthy eyes, feasting on Facebook ads, chasing after cash and better kit, and then think an hour of church will keep me going.

Because what I actually treasure and run after will ultimately take control of me. And that is why, finally, in verse 24, Jesus pushes us to choose whom we will serve.

So to those tempted to store up treasures on earth, it's kind of an ultimatum, verse 24. Who is your master? Because at the end of the day, you just can't have a life treasuring money a bit and treasuring God a bit.

It is all or nothing. Because, verse 24, no one can serve two masters. Either, at the end of the day, you will hate the one and love the other, or you'll be devoted to one and despise the other.

[22:12] You cannot serve both God and money. There's a story later in Matthew's Gospel of a rich young man who kept God's commandments and he came to Jesus and he wanted eternal life.

And who knows for how many years he'd been internet shopping and treasuring and hoarding and shining his stuff. And Jesus looked at this man and he knew him and he loved him.

And he said, right, go. Sell your possessions and give to the poor and then you'll have treasures in heaven and then come follow me.

He was saying to him, it's time to choose whom you will serve. Will you give all your stuff to the poor and devote yourself to God? And the young man, mastered by his money, he wouldn't let go.

I will not serve God in this way. I will not follow you, Jesus. And he walked away from Jesus, from the family of God.

[ 23 : 23 ] I think we should know this morning that story later in Matthew's Gospel. Jesus doesn't call all of us to sell everything and then come and follow him. Yet if the suggestion sounds so crazy and so out of this world and I could never ever do that for Jesus, then maybe he might ask you to do something like that.

But he is asking us, in all seriousness, where's your treasure? How's your eyesight? Who's your master?

And he asks this because he does not want us to stray from the father's family. I don't know how much each of us is gripped by the desire to get more cash and have more stuff and desperately hold on to what we have.

Some of us might say, not so much. That's okay. Some of us might say, do you know what? It is a danger. What we've got to know, whether we've got lots of money or not, is that storing up treasures on earth is really stupid and deadly dangerous.

That's what Jesus is saying. And you can't serve God and money. And it is possible to end up a grabby, greedy, safe and happy with my stuff Christian whose life gets darker and darker and you end up despising the God who demands your all.

[ 24 : 54 ] It does happen. It really happens. So know this, Jesus is saying, money is just a rubbish God to have. It's just rubbish.

And it's a rubbish family to belong to. Oh, I've got more. Hooray. Won't save you. Won't make you happy. Money won't love you. Money won't hug you.

It will thrust your life into darkness if it masters you. So you've got to say today, I'm going to stick with the true God. I'm going to stick with my Father in heaven who sees me and knows me and loves me.

Who sent his Son to save me from my sins and who forgives me and cares for me and will reward me. That's the God for me, not shabby old money.

So store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Be less and less attached to your cash and your stuff and sell some of it and give it away and use it for good.

[ 25 : 57 ] Hunger and thirst for righteousness, not a bigger house and a better car and more kit. Serve your God. Fix your eyes on him. Find all your safety and happiness in him, our Father in heaven.

Because he will never ever let you down and you'll have riches with him for all eternity. Let me lead us in a prayer.

Let's pray together. Father in heaven, thank you for this straight, wonderful teaching from Jesus. to us. Speak to myself almost more than to others here that we can't do it. We can't serve two masters.

Please would you help us not to swallow the lies of the world nor to be tempted by the desires of our hearts for what we can see and hold on to that makes us feel safe and happy.

[ 27 : 13 ] please give us the eyes of faith that believe what your son says here that sees our stuff as rotting and useless in the long term.

Make us those who devote ourselves to you our heavenly Father knowing that with you there is great eternal reward.

Please wean us off any desire to serve money and chase after kit. Make us those who serve you wholeheartedly our loving Lord we pray in Jesus name.

Amen.