

The Sermon on the Mount #4

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[0 : 00] Excellent. Good morning. Morning to people at home and the cameras. Well, this morning, what is it you treasure? I'm going to, I've brought in a few little treasures as a show and tell.

And so here's one thing I treasure. My family, that's my wife Deb, and that's my daughter Adelaide and my son Hamish. They're both actually taller than her now.

That was taken just before COVID and it's hard to find a photo. Anyway, she's in year 12 this year and he's going into year 9.

So I treasure them. And I also treasure this, which I'm going to get now as part of the show and tell. I treasure this painting. This painting was given to me for Father's Day by my daughter when she was three and she painted it herself.

Now, come on, gifted? What? No, no. Everyone's kids are gifted. I'm joking. She's not doing art, but she is doing D&T; and drama.

[1 : 05] So it's something I treasure. Something else. I treasure these. I got a silver medal at the World Championship in St Andrews playing frisbee.

And I've got a bronze medal playing frisbee. And this was the first Australian team ever to get medal overseas. So I kind of treasure them, but when you look at them, they're actually a bit cheap.

And they'll rust. You know, they're not going to last. And something else here I treasure is the jersey. When you get to play for your country, like you have this little dream.

And yes, it is a real sport. And, you know, you do have to be a little bit fit and know what you're doing. So it's a little fringy. But anyway, moths will eat that.

It just won't last. And the thing that I really treasure is my relationship with Jesus. And that lasts forever. And I hold on to that. Today's passage in the Sermon on the Mount, as Jesus commenced his public ministry, he listed off the beautiful attitudes meant for his followers.

[2 : 21] He taught how we are to live as subjects in the long-awaited kingdom of God. And this is the best life for us. If we're to be followers of Jesus, we must listen to Jesus' words and obey them.

The standard is high. And when we live this way, we are salt and we are light in the world. Even though it will make us stand out and often put us at a disadvantage to others in the world and by the standards of this world.

The Sermon on the Mount challenges us to make significant changes, to live for God's upside-down kingdom. It's opposite to the way the world operates. And today I want to talk about an area that actually needs serious attention, but it's a sensitive topic.

It has to be one of the least popular ones for us to talk about as Christians, especially from the pulpit, because people feel like being bent behind their back. And whether you have a little or a lot, as we head into this new year, we need to hear what God has to say about treasure.

It's a touchy subject. But most of our life kind of revolves around the acquisition of stuff. Get a qualification. Get a career. Work.

[3 : 38] Mortgage. Clothing. Bills. Save. Super funds. Amass material blessings and wealth. Save for a restful, prosperous retirement, where the person with the most toys wins.

This can be a real trap. In 1 Timothy 6.10, we're reminded, For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Money isn't evil. It's the effect it has on us. It's what people do with it. People lie for money. People kill for money. Families face bitter splits at the reading of a will.

I've seen it happen. People betray friends for money. No one ever thinks they've got too much money. Hardly anyone thinks they have enough money. Acquiring money for security and comfort drives our life.

The opportunity to earn more money can motivate people to reorder their priorities in life. A big loss of money is a huge tragedy for most people, second only to death itself.

[4 : 57] We need to ask ourselves, what is it we treasure? Jesus concluded, you cannot serve both God and money. Who or what has mastery over our hearts?

We serve whichever master has control over our heart. What would the world offer you that could entice you away from Jesus? And the answer Jesus gave is money.

Listen to what Jesus has to say to those who are to follow him. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

But store 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.

Two treasures. Treasures on earth, treasures in heaven. Don't store up the first for yourself. Store up the second. Sounds simple, but in practice, treasure on earth.

[6 : 10] We need to note what Jesus is not talking about first. Money doesn't grow on trees or fall from the sky. Please God. Oh, there we go. Sweet. No, Jesus is not talking about making sensible provision for the future.

He's not talking about working hard to avoid poverty. He's not talking about enjoying with gratitude the good things that God has made. And he's not talking about providing for our dependence.

I think we know what Jesus is talking about. The human desire. Give me more. The love of wealth. What has got our hearts?

What do we treasure? If we treasure honour and fame, then our heart will be ambitious. Sorry, I said treasure. I was thinking of true love then, but if we treasure...

That's what I started. Anyway, if we treasure pleasure, then our heart will be self-indulgent. If we treasure money, then our heart will be greedy.

[7 : 14] Whatever has our heart, we actually worship. And how do we know we worship it? We make time for it. We make sacrifices for it. Whatever's on our heart will master us.

We live with the cultural delusion that wealth equals security. With wealth, we can be our own gods, independent and not rely on God.

Because we're self-made, we're self-sufficient. Wealth gives us control and power over our own fate and over other people. Personal wealth and worth can build our self-esteem and value.

And they can be tied together with material possessions. We can feel good about ourselves if we dress and drive and dine and decorate well. With wealth, we can indulge our every desire, whether it's the exotic vacation, the luxurious wedding, the finest dining or the most extravagant home. People abandon Jesus and choose money and earthly treasure and it's a strange choice. If we read in Timothy, we brought nothing into the world, we can take nothing out of it.

[8 : 32] The same fate awaits everyone. Treasures on earth just don't last and we don't take any of it with us. Imagine gaining the whole world yet forfeiting your soul.

The person with the most toys doesn't win. In this section on the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns against the extremes of wealth and worry.

As God cares for the flowers in the field and the birds in the air, how much more his own children? Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink? What shall we wear? For the pagans run after these things and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But, seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you.

They'll be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. Do a quick tangent here.

[9 : 38] I just thought of it. My grandmother, when she was dying of bone marrow cancer, she was a Christian and she had a little EP. This is back in vinyl days and it was a country and western song, One Day at a Time, Sweet Jesus.

That's all I'm asking you for. And she'd play that every day until she went home to be with Jesus. Don't worry about tomorrow. Each day has enough worries of its own. Live one day at a time, sweet Jesus.

Well, later in the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of the thorns and the worries of wealth in Matthew 13. Talks about the seed falling among the thorns, actually refers to the person who hears the word, but the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. We need to weed out the thorns in our life. Don't worry and amass wealth like the pagans. Real security comes in a relationship with God.

Seek first God's kingdom and all these things will be given unto you. So do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth. Jesus shifts now here from the heart to our eyes.

[10:53] 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? We actually can't separate the heart and our eyes. We set our eyes on our heart's desire.

The two are entwined. What is on our heart drives what we look at. What we treasure, we watch. It's what we read.

It's the magazines we buy. It's the movies we watch. It's the internet searches. Whatever masters our heart masters our eyes. And what our eyes see in turn feeds our heart.

It's this cycle. Are your eyes good and full of light? Or are your eyes bad and full of darkness?

Jesus is saying, if our eyes are set on earthly treasures, on treasures on earth, then our eyes are in pretty bad shape.

[12:03] And by inference, so are our hearts. If we can't see that it's meaningless chasing treasures on earth, that it's just like a chasing after the mist, and if we can't see that it's actually wise to store up riches in heaven, then we need more than spectacles.

We need to readjust our lens to that which emanates light. Open our eyes afresh to God's word, which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

Just on this, again, a little quick tangent that's not in the notes. Have you ever done a kaplunk?

Kaplunk is, God, I don't know what's going on, just, you know, you've opened the Bible and you've pointed to a passage and hope it's spoken to you.

People have done that? I'm really interested. I've seen a few notes. Righto. Well, get this. Married, no kids. My wife and I go to a conference and it's a conference on international schools. We're both educators and we heard you could go to Berlin and Jakarta and Tokyo and teach in all these international schools and you got paid pretty well and looked after and even got accommodated and some schools even offered you a security home and a chauffeur-driven car to inform us.

Anyway, I was like, well, this sounds good, you know, and so, should we do this, God? You know, we'll come back to Australia and we'll have a deposit for a house and we'll be all set up. Kaplunk time. James, chapter 4.

[13:30] Who are you? Just say you'll go to this city and that city and make money. You are but a miss. What you should be saying is what is God's will and do that.

Anything else is evil. Okay, God, we're not going to international schools. Got it? Kaplunk. Very good. So, God's word is a lamp to our feet, a light to our path.

Fill our eyes with light. If not treasures on earth, then what are we to live for? Jesus tells us what our motivation should be like. Jesus said, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moths don't eat, rust doesn't destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. What does Jesus mean by treasure in heaven? According to Don Carson, the words treasure in heaven go back to early Jewish literature. Here it refers to whatever is good and of eternal significance that comes out of what is done on earth. Doing righteous deeds, suffering for Christ, forgiving one another, willingness to share what you have.

[14:48] You remember the early church people sold their houses and their land to give out. In other words, what has eternal significance is leaving out the complete package outlined in the Sermon on the Mount.

Now, while we don't know what the reward in heaven is actually going to look like, we get a picture of what heaven actually will look like to some degree in Revelation and it's beautiful and majestic and amazing but we still actually can't fathom that because we're sitting in these chairs and we're in these mortal bodies.

We can't fathom it. But let's face it, none of us are really concerned about receiving some kind of material reward in heaven, surely. the best treasure in heaven, this is what I hope for, will be to see the people we know and love, the people we've come in contact with.

Our friends and family are going to be a given that we want to see them there but what about the people we meet on the streets? Sometimes I'll get on public transport and I'll sit on a bus and actually face the opposite way and I just look down the barrel at all the people and I'm thinking, do you know Jesus?

Are you ready? I'd love to see you all there one day. I don't know you but I'd love to see you there. And it's the image bearers of God that Jesus died for.

[16:08] Not a car or an Australian frisbee jersey or a rusty medal. What has eternal significance? Doing God's will on earth as it is in heaven and sharing the gospel with our whole lives.

I don't think it's too much of a stretch but I honestly believe that the treasure we store up in heaven is the people we personally point to Jesus. Normally if you give earthly treasure away it's gone.

The gospel is better than a Tim Tam pack that never runs out. In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade kept in heaven for you.

The gospel is the treasure that keeps on giving. When we share the gospel we still have it but so does someone else. It's God's treasure that never perishes never spoils never fades.

As we share the gospel and give generously to support ministry of the gospel both here and with overseas mission we are using riches on earth to build treasure in heaven.

[17:28] In this life we won't always see it but what joy there will be what treasure in heaven when we are united with those who have come to know Jesus either because of our direct connection in sharing our lives and the gospel with them or indirectly through our partnering financially and mission both locally and globally.

Jesus concludes no one can serve two masters either they will hate the one and love the other or they will be devoted to one and despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and money. Why can't we have it all? Why can't we have both? A couple of observations here.

In this western age of individualism selfishness instant gratification people today find it hard to miss out on anything that money can buy if they have the means.

Needing the right brand of clothes cars mobile phones gaming consoles spectacular holidays not many of us are willing to go without or prepared to make costly sacrifices in laying down our lives for Jesus.

[18:41] Worldliness can so easily entangle like the thorns the Christian life. Nothing but the best will do for me. I've earned it. I deserve it.

We place limits on trusting Jesus. I'm not prepared to step out in faith and trust God and let him take me where he'll take me. I'm scared that my pay package will drop that my standard of living will lower.

Not many people are prepared to downscale for the sake of the gospel buy a cheaper brand or generously support mission. When Jesus says no one can serve two masters it's an image of slavery.

Slaves were owned by a master. They were required to obey and serve their master full time. There was no room in their lives to serve another master. Two treasures.

Treasure on earth or treasure in heaven. We'll hate one and we'll love the other or we'll be devoted to one and despise the other but we can't serve both God and money.

[19:51] who or what has mastery of your heart? Have you been enslaved by earthly treasures because it's idolatry?

Whatever you do and this is a popular thing just follow your heart listen to your heart don't listen to your heart. Jeremiah 17 9 reminds us the heart is deceitful above all things but praise God in Ezekiel we're reminded that God wants to give us a new heart and put a new spirit to remove our heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh.

We all need to hear these words and to take them seriously. The heart of our living is to be for the kingdom of God. What then are we to do with earthly treasure?

The first thing we need to acknowledge that we are rich. Did you know that if you earn \$90 a day you're in the top 1% of the richest people in the world?

You don't have to be Elon Musk Bill Gates or any of these people \$90 a day will put you in the top 1% of people in the world. As we are blessed we need to be a blessing to others.

[21:09] Jesus said to whom much is given much will be required. And we need to acknowledge that this is actually all just a loan from God. In Psalm 24 verse 1 we read the earth is the Lord's and everything in it the world and all who live in it.

In other words everything we have is just on loan from God. If it wasn't we'd take it with us when we die. So what do we do with earthly treasure God has given us on loan?

We get a really clear indicator in Timothy. Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth which is so uncertain but to put their hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Command them to do good to be rich in good deeds and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

be rich in good deeds be generous and willing to share. For those in the family of God our inheritance is in heaven. This treasure is secure and it lasts forever.

[22 : 25] There's a story of a rich diamond merchant who was looking for a particular diamond for his collection and there was a New York jeweller who traded in diamonds who knew of this and he discovered in his collection a diamond that this Dutch diamond collector would like and he flew over and he said come on over and he got his associate his best salesman who knew everything about diamonds to talk about this diamond and at the end of him discussing all the technical details of the diamond the guy decided he wouldn't buy it.

He wasn't interested after all and then the owner of the shop said hang on a minute can I just take that diamond and give it one more crack and then he explained all this about the diamond and the gentleman decided to buy it and then he said sir I wonder why you're able to sell me this stone when your salesman could not and the owner replied that salesman is the best in the business he knows more about diamonds than anyone including myself and I pay him large salary for his knowledge and expertise but I would gladly pay him twice as much if I could put into him something I have which he lacks you see he knows diamonds but I love them what we love what we treasure what we're passionate about passionate about we talk about if you like skiing I'll know you like skiing because you'll start talking about it or some kind of sport or music or your family

Jesus said out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks what's on our heart we speak about it just comes out it's one thing to know about Jesus it's another to love Jesus and if you love Jesus and treasure knowing him you can't stop talking about him we're jars of clay and like jars of clay we're fallible we're broken we're fragile yet we have this glorious treasure within that will not perish and will not fade when we truly love Jesus and truly love our family and friends and really care about other people we don't want them to miss out on heaven the diamond salesman loved earthly treasure and loved talking about that treasure but that doesn't last if we love Jesus we have a different perspective on life looking forward to a place where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves cannot break in and steal and as a result we focus

I hope on things that have eternal significance if we love Jesus we love sharing the gospel godly treasure and use our worldly treasure God has given us on loan to support ministry of the good news of Jesus both here locally nationally and globally Oscar Schindler and his wife saved over 1200 Jews from near certain death at the hands of the Nazis in the Steven Spielberg film Schindler's List it records how Oscar used his worldly wealth to rescue Jews at the conclusion of World War II Schindler was given a gold ring this is true it's not just a movie depiction and on the ring the gold ring from the survivors and the gold was actually extracted from the tooth the bridge in a prisoner's mouth and they got the ring and they inscribed it with something from the Talmud and this is what it read he who saves a single life saves the entire world the film marks this moment powerfully on receiving the gift

Schindler breaks down and he removes his watch and he removes a gold pin and he says this could have been one more this could have been five more he could have used his earthly treasure to save more one day we will see Jesus could be sooner than we realise and we'll look around all the people that we shared the gospel with or we supported in ministry and ministry of the gospel will we wish we'd done more those who point others to Jesus the one who saves life store up treasure in heaven when the Christian community is salt and light in the world generosity is a sign that this world has not taken hold and that we've weeded out the thorns of wealth accumulation and worry from the garden of our lives there will be an observable difference as we live by using treasure on earth

[27 : 23] God has given us not to invest in property shares or our portfolios but rather investing in sharing in the gospel I pray this happens as we listen to the teaching of Jesus and respond by living for God's upside down kingdom seeking to build treasure on earth treasure in heaven not on earth so as we head into 2022 it's a great opportunity to reassess our motivations where our hearts lie and what it is we really treasure it's a chance to examine our finances rework the budget prioritise

giving we cannot serve two masters we either live for treasure on earth or live for treasure in heaven which treasure will we live for today it's a choice we have to make constantly stir up for yourselves treasure in heaven where moths don't eat rust doesn't destroy and where thieves do not break into steel for where your treasure is there your heart will be also let's pray heavenly father lord weed out our hearts lord take from us anything that's taking us away from you whatever we've it's encapsulated us in this world you've made a good world it's an amazing world lord that it's broken and it's fallen and we need Jesus lord let this world not distract us let us live in this world but not of the world let us fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith and lord motivated by love for you and love for others can we just share this treasure this gospel treasure with all we come in contact with with all we see and may they know the love of Jesus and the hope we have the new creation lord we hope for that in Jesus name amen