

Lighthouse: treasure *THE* Treasure (pt 1)

Matthew 6:19-24

Oct 14, 2017

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Today we are talking about treasure. So, what would you do if your rich uncle died today and left you with a box full of gold coins valued at a million dollars. Ask the person beside you "What would you do with your treasure?"

[Discussion]

We are back in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount today, so please open the Bible on your device or grab the one from the pew in front of you, and open to Matthew chapter 6.

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Matthew chapter 6 verses 19 to 34 is really one section with two parts to it, and so we are going to give it two sermons. Today we are going to look at verses 19-24 and next week we will look at the rest.

But in the larger section Jesus gives us one main command and two smaller commands that help us keep the main command. The main command comes in verse 33. It says:

[Read Matthew 6:33]

Now I don't know about you, but the obvious question that jumps into my mind when I come across a verse like this is "how does this work?" I mean what does it even mean to seek God and His kingdom and His righteousness first?

Actually this is the same question I ask when I read Jesus' greatest commandment:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

Commands like this hit us as great ideas, but very difficult things to make practical. I mean have you ever wondered what it looks like to love God. Yes, I get the whole "obey what He says part." But I can obey people I don't love. I obey the speed limits. I pay my taxes, but I don't love Trudeau. There has to be something more than just obedience when it comes to loving God. And this is an important question because I can't make Him breakfast in bed, I can't mow His lawn, I can't give Him a hug. What does it look like to love God?

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With the person beside you look at this verse and think of one practical way you could love God for each of the categories Jesus gives here: so heart, soul, mind and strength.

[Discussion]

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Was that a little challenging? I mean it's hard to even know how to differentiate between loving God with your heart and loving Him with your soul or mind. And then it is really easy to come up with answers like read my Bible and pray – and these are good – but in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus doesn't give us these things as ends in themselves, so there must be something more. And there is.

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What Jesus gives us in the Sermon on the Mount is an incredibly practical answer to the question "how do we love God." Jesus says: We love God by loving our neighbours with God's love.

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Here's how I get this. And this is going to be a bit of review. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount starts with the Beatitudes.

9 pictures of what a Jesus follower looks like. So the first three Beatitudes are about receiving grace from God in spite of being unworthy. So, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In these three Beatitudes the Christian is on their knees recognizing their own brokenness and realizing that they don't deserve anything good from God. And yet God pours His grace out on these kinds of people – they win.

This is the vertical relationship between a person and God. Grace starts with God and comes down to fill us and begins transforming us in spite of the fact we have done nothing to deserve it.

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The next four Beatitudes build on this posture as the Jesus follower gets off their knees and begins to turn what they have received vertically outward to their horizontal relationships. So "Blessed are the merciful" and "Blessed are the peacemakers." These are things we do to each other.

Then the final two talk about suffering. So "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me." This makes it clear that to look like Jesus means we should expect to get what Jesus got.

So Christians start on their knees receiving grace, then raise to turn that grace towards their neighbours, even when that means suffering like Jesus.

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In the rest of chapter five Jesus goes on to outline what it looks like to love our horizontal relationships with love we have received vertically. So Jesus' rules about murder and adultery and keeping our word are not just random laws God wants us to obey – God doesn't care about the rules – They are examples of ways we love our neighbours. Why? Because God wants us to love our neighbours with His love.

Friends, this is why we exist. Jesus came to save the world. He brought His relationship with God to earth and poured it out for us even when we killed Him. And now He has put His Spirit in us and given us the same job. We are supposed to take our relationship with God and share it with the people around us no matter what it costs. That's how we love God.

But then in chapter 6 Jesus says if we are going to love God it isn't just the things we do that matter, but the reason we do these things. In fact, the main question is who we are seeking our reward from.

So last week two fine young ladies competed in a game of 52 card pick-up to get a reward from either Spencer or myself. Spencer had a nice looking bag of Reese's Pieces, and I offered a smile and a handshake. But what looked like the better of the rewards turned out to be Reese's Rocks, while the other reward turned out to be considerably more valuable.

Jesus says, when we do good things to get people's reward, that reward is small and fleeting, but if we do good things to get God's reward then we win. And Jesus wants you to win.

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And that brings us up to where we are today. Next Jesus tells us how to treasure the right Treasure.

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So I need a scripture reader. Who can read Matthew 6:19-21 for me?

[Read Matthew 6:19-21]

You've probably seen those pictures pasted on the wall behind the cashier at the gas station or the convenience store that say "We sold a winner." Seen that? Did you ever notice that the people in those pictures all have the same expression? They have these wild smiles very unlike family picture smiles.

So two weeks ago my family booked a photographer to take some pictures. And we have 4 kids, Elliana is 6, Corban and Jaxon are 4 and Nathan is 2. So we have a lot of small kids. And this means our photo shoot consisted of Nikki and I continually handing out granola bars and candy in order to get our kids to smile and pretend they were having fun. Anyone ever been forced to get a family photo before?

So by the end mom and dad were exasperated, the kids were crying – total fun! But our photographer was a magician because some of the pictures turned out. As I looked at them I thought "I don't remember us ever actually looking like that – wow!"

But when lotto winners hold their cheque for the first time it's easy to get a great picture because they just collected a bucket full of treasure and treasure makes people smile. Treasure brings people joy. And that is what Jesus is talking about – Jesus wants His disciples to have joy.

Friends, God wants you to have joy – to be really happy. Do you believe that?

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Here is the qualifier: God wants you to be really happy long term. As I was looking for pictures of lottery winners I came across a stat that said “70% of lotto winners are broke within a few years and wish they had never won.” Their relationships are wrecked. Some of them have been murdered. It turns out those ecstatic smiles don’t last. And so Jesus says our long term happiness depends on what treasure we treasure.

Literally verse 19 says “Do not treasure to yourself the treasures of earth.”

Jesus says it is a bad idea to let the things we care most about, the things we treasure be the treasures of this world. That might be cars or clothes or bank accounts or relationships, whatever. Jesus says don’t treasure these things. And then He tells us why:

He says all this stuff is going to disintegrate. It is going to rust. All of the treasures of earth will be tomorrow’s garbage.

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On May 25th, 1994 George Swanson of Hempfield County Pennsylvania was buried in the middle of the 12 burial plots he had purchased from the county cemetery. Why so many? He was buried inside his collector’s edition, mint-condition 1984 Corvette. The Washington Observer opened its story with the words “If there is a highway to heaven George Swanson is driving it in style.”¹

That’s what the newspaper thinks. Jesus says “Ummm... the car is rusting in the mud with a dead guy in it – what a useless thing to treasure!

In place of this Jesus says treasure the treasures of heaven. Treasure the Treasure that brings lasting joy.

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Now what is the “Treasure of heaven?” Is Jesus talking about us working to get jeweled crowns and bigger mansions in glory with gold paved driveways? No, that’s not the context here.

The treasures Jesus is talking about in Matthew 6 are the rewards of the previous section. So in Chapter six verse 1 Jesus said:

Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. (Matthew 6:1)

And then three times Jesus says do your good deeds in secret – so give and pray and fast – in a way that will get God’s reward. In other words Jesus says seek God’s recognition not people’s. Your reward is God saying ‘That’s my kind of person, I’m going to give Myself to her.

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¹ Washington Observer-Reporter, May 26th 1994.

Now here's the problem. We don't understand how valuable getting God's reward is. It feels like my offer of a smile and a handshake. It feels worthless in comparison with the bag full of Reese's Pieces. That's why so often we fall for the rocks instead of the real reward. But when we catch a glimpse of how valuable God is things start to change.

I remember when this started to happen for me. Nikki and I had just gotten married and we were living in Vancouver – some of you have heard this story before. We were so poor that the only furniture we had were a couple lawn chairs we had gotten as gifts.

But Christmas was coming and Nikki's mom was going to visit. And so one day Nikki said to me "We need to get a futon that can be a couch by day, and a bed for my mom by night."

So we starting looking at how much a futon cost and it was about \$400. To which my first thought was "There is no way we have the money for this." In fact all the disposable income we had was in a little jar we kept in our kitchen. We were both students and Nikki had a part time job at Swiss Chalet. So she had about \$27 worth of tips in that jar.

But Nikki is a woman of faith. And she looked at me and said "God is going to take care of us." I said "If you say so." And then I went off to Bible school and she started looking in the buy and sell.

When I got home she said "I found a futon for \$200 that would be perfect, and the people say we can come look at. Now this didn't sound like God was taking care of us to me. It was still 10 times more money than we had. But I figured "it doesn't hurt to look." So we jumped in our rusting 1980 Honda civic and drove out to these people's house.

When we got there this young family greeted us. A mom and dad and two boys about 5 and 3 years old. And the futon was perfect. It was virtually brand new, it just didn't fit in their space. And so Nikki was getting really excited, and I was getting really nervous. "I'm wondering 'am I going to have to sell drugs at Bible school in order to support my wife's futon habit?'"

But at that moment the mom looks over at us and says "We aren't really sure who you guys are, but we are Christians, and we are teaching our kids to hear from Jesus. And little Johnny has a message for you."

And then 3-year-old Johnny looks up at us and says "Jesus says 'give it to you for fwееееее!!'"

And then they invited us in for tea. And while we were there the boys went and got their piggy banks and emptied them in our laps. And the mom and dad hired us to cut the hedges by their driveway, and we did. And we left that afternoon with \$200 in our pockets and a brand-new futon in our living room, that they delivered.

And I realized God provides in ways I can't predict. And I woke up to the reality that getting God is the greatest treasure I could ever want.

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Jesus says “Seek first God and His kingdom, seek His reward, and if you get Him you get everything that matters. This is how to win.”

So how do we seek God’s treasure? Look at verse 22.

[Read Matthew 6:22-23]

At first Jesus seems to be changing the subject. One minute we are talking about treasure and the next we are talking about eyes. So what’s up with this?

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Well, Jesus hasn’t changed the subject. He is saying “we get the treasure we spend our time looking at.”

To treasure something is to worship it. And here Jesus says the eye is the lamp of the body. So the thing we focus our attention on is our treasure – and we get that treasure.

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Notice again that Jesus is not telling us to kill our desire for reward. He is telling us to focus our eye on the right treasure. He says when we treasure God and His glory and the expanse of His kingdom then our whole life fills with light. That’s when we win.

So think about what you spend your time looking at. What are your eyes trained on?

The test for this is what gets you most excited? When you talk with your friends what do you get passionate about? Are you most excited about your significant other or your pets or your car? Are you excited about some hobby you do. Are you excited about some show you are watching? What is the thing you are most excited about?

Now there is nothing wrong with having hobbies or developing relationships. But these are secondary attentions, they can’t become our focus. Jesus says no matter how good these secondary things are if they become our focus our whole body fills with darkness. And then Jesus tells us why. Look at verse 24.

[Read Matthew 6:24-25] (anything)

Friends, the reality is that every human worships something. All of us have something that consumes most of our resources and most of our time and brings us most of our pleasure. But the law of worship is that there is only room for one god in each of our lives. And Jesus tells us that only one God will actually bring us lasting joy and happiness.

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C.S. Lewis, who wrote the Chronicles of Narnia said:

“When people elevate something in their lives, whether that is art or music or relationships or wealth, to the first place they end up losing both that thing and everything else.”

So if you make your dog the centre of your life, in the end, you lose not only your human dignity but even the proper pleasure of dog keeping because a dog can't possibly satisfy your needs. And neither can a girlfriend or a boyfriend or a pile of money or winning an e-sports championship - whatever. If our identity is tied up in any of these things – even though there is nothing wrong with these activities in and of themselves – what happens is we end up destroyed. Here's why:

When anything becomes our source of identity what we are saying is “you're my god, you're the reason I get up in the morning, you're the reason I'm a worthwhile person. Without you I'm nothing.” And that might sound like a romantic thing to say to your boyfriend or girlfriend, but there is a massive problem with this.

And the problem is when a person or anything else becomes your god then the expectation you put on them becomes totally unrealistic. We are saying “You are the one who makes me happy. But that is way too much pressure to put on a person. The fact is no one can make you happy. No one is that strong.

Eventually whatever or whoever you have put your trust in is going to let you down. And when your god lets you down you get destroyed.

This is why people jump off buildings when the stock market crashes. Money was their god and it just let them down.

This is why young people today are attempting suicide so regularly. They have made relationships with other people their gods, and those people let them down. And when your god dumps you, you get destroyed.

So Jesus says “No one can serve two masters. There is only room for one God in your life, so where have you been looking to find fulfillment? Are you looking to the only God of the universe who can actually satisfy you and will never let you down? Are you spending time every day focussing your eyes on Him. Or has the focus of your eyes been distracted by something that looks really great, but is going to rust or is actually full of rocks?

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Friends, Jesus wants you to win. And He knows what it is going to take to make this happen. He knows you were built to worship one thing. And that thing is Him. And so He says seek first God and His kingdom, that's how you get everything that matters.

But if you seek anything else first, no matter how good it is, it is going to let you down and you are going to be destroyed. So are you treasuring the right treasure?

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Kaitlyn you can come up now. And Jared and Nikki if you could take spots towards the back that would be great. And Spencer if you can come and prepare communion.

We are going to head into our worship response time now, but we've got something a little different today.

If you recognize you've been treasuring the wrong treasure and want someone to pray with or for you then Nikki and Jared are available. But we've also got a few stations for you to visit tonight.

So grab a friend and head over to one of the stations we've set up over on the right. There is a thought provoking station here and a prayer provoking station there and a giving provoking station in the middle. These are ways we respond to God, our Treasure, in worship.

And I will be at the front with a communion station here.

Now just one word on what communion is about. This isn't a snack. This is Jesus offering you His forgiveness and grace. This is Jesus offering you the greatest treasure in the universe – Him. The bread and the cup represent His broken body and shed blood for you.

And He invites sinners to come and receive it. So if you are someone who knows you aren't good enough to deserve anything from God. But you want to receive Jesus' forgiveness and grace that is what you are saying by coming to this meal. If you aren't ready to say that tonight then don't feel pressured to come and eat. No one is taking notes on who eats and who doesn't. But if you are ready to say "I'm a sinner who needs a Saviour then come and eat."

So we are going to move into our worship response stations now. Grab a friend or two and go check them out. And then we will come back to continue singing in a bit.