

Sunday, July 12, 2020
Matthew 6:19-24 (Treasures in Heaven)
Pastor Eric Dubois

Intro

Last week we were confronted with our motivations. Why do I fast? This morning we're confronted with our purpose in life. What am I living for?

We all have some understanding, some framework of reality that shapes the general direction of our lives. Whether we're conscious of it or not, there are factors that drive our choices. And these factors are rooted in our beliefs, our convictions. The problem comes when we see the world through the **wrong lens**.

We're also driven by our loves. Our heart goes after whatever it cherishes. The things we think will satisfy. The problem comes when we're captivated by the wrong things.

In this world we're assaulted by the world, the flesh, and devil. The world tempts us to go along with the culture. You won't be satisfied unless you own this product. The flesh is enticed to pursue inferior things. We're drawn to find satisfaction in material goods. Once we get the one thing we think we need, another desire pops up. Satan questions the character of God. What's wrong with a little self-indulgence? Pressured by these external and internal assaults, we're pulled in different directions. Will I live for God? Or will I live for material things? This morning Jesus tells us:

BIG IDEA: Serve God because you desire superior treasure

READ PASSAGE

PRAY

Body

Passage Focus

Proper pursuit...proper perception...proper master

Point 1: Pursue heavenly treasure instead of earthly treasure (6:19-21)

Explanation

Treasures on earth are set in contrast with treasures in heaven. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." Why? Because earthly treasures are perishable and susceptible to loss whereas heavenly treasure is imperishable and secure. Earthly treasure is vulnerable to decay and theft. Whether its clothes being eaten by moths or precious metals corroding, our earthly possessions are susceptible to decay. They're also susceptible to theft. On the other hand, heavenly treasure cannot corrode, not can it be stolen. What's Jesus' point? Seek after treasures that are secure and imperishable.

Note that Jesus appeals to our logic. Choose the treasure that is lasting and secure, not the one that fades away. Don't fall for the lie that earthly treasure will satisfy. It can't, because it's fleeting.

Having appealed to our logic, Jesus now directs his appeal to our heart: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Since what you treasure reflects what's in your heart, be careful that your longing is treasures in heaven.

Application

What we treasure reflects the desire of our heart. We are driven by our desires, our loves.

James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, says this about the human condition:

“It’s not what I think that shapes my life from the bottom up; it’s what I desire, what I love, that animates my passion. To be human is to be the kind of creature who is oriented by this kind of primal, ultimate love—even if we never really reflect on it... There is a sort of drive... that pushes... us to act in certain ways, develop certain relationships, make certain sacrifices, enjoy certain things... What distinguishes us... is not whether we love, but what we love... Our love can be aimed at different ends or pointed in different directions, and these differences are what define us as individuals and as communities... what we love is a specific vision of the good life, an implicit picture of what we think human flourishing looks like... Our ultimate love is oriented by and to a picture of what we think it looks like for us to live well, and that picture then governs, shapes, and motivates our decisions and actions.”

Our thoughts do affect us, but I think Smith is on to something: we are driven by the things we love. And sometimes our loves outweigh our logic. Sometimes we go after what we know is illogical because we want it so much.

The battle is actually a battle for the right desires. Will we love the lesser? Or will we love the greater? Concerning Jesus’ promise of rewards and our misguided loves, C. S. Lewis (“The Weight of Glory”) had this to say:

“If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

There is nothing wrong with desiring our own good in the form of God’s rewards. After all, Jesus repeatedly promises reward to motivate us to live with kingdom values:

- 1) If we experience persecution, we should rejoice and be glad because our reward is great in heaven (Matt 5:12)
- 2) There is no reward for loving those who love us, but Jesus implies there is a reward for loving our enemies (Matt 5:46)
- 3) The Father will reward you for secret giving, prayer, and fasting (Matt 6:4, 6, 18)

As Lewis points out, our problem is desiring inferior things, the perishable and vulnerable instead of the imperishable and secure. We want mud pies instead of a holiday at the sea.

Well, what is this reward Jesus speaks of?

Earlier in Matthew 6, Jesus mentioned the Father’s reward. Now he speaks of treasures in heaven. In the life to come, God will distribute rewards to his people (treasures in heaven). We lay up this reward, so it’s something we accumulate like a person accumulates wealth. As there are levels of punishment in hell (Matt 11:20-24), there are levels of reward in heaven. At the judgment seat we will be individually evaluated (Rom 14:10-12), and our works that pass the test will receive reward (1 Cor 3:12-15). These eternal rewards are offered as a motivation to live for God right now. We should look forward to rewards in heaven.

So there will be differences between believers in the eternal state based on our works in this life. However, this won’t lead to discontent in heaven, nor will it lead to sins like jealousy and heaven. Because the former things will be gone (Rev 21:4), and nothing accursed will be present (Rev 22:3), sin won’t be present in the eternal state. Without sin, every individual in heaven will rejoice over each other’s rewards and declare God’s

assessment just. With God present among us, everyone's joy will be full and complete, even if the quality of our experience is different. We will be fully satisfied with our lot in heaven. God doesn't reveal the exact nature of individual rewards, but the reward every believer receives is revealed in Revelation 21-22.

In another sense, the Father's reward has present elements. Jesus' disciples were promised rewards in this life:

Mark 10:29-30 Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold **now in this time**, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

In other words, in this life God will give them more than they've given up (hundredfold = a hundred times as much). Following Jesus will be worth it. They'll receive relationships and lands. Relationships in the local church. Land in terms of shared resources with others in the local church (see Acts 4:32-35). This isn't saying following Jesus guarantees wealth. Faithful believers can be poor per James 2. After all, land comes with persecutions. But in the age to come, they'll receive the whole world (Rom 4:13). Additionally, Paul said that nothing we do for the Lord is in vain (1 Cor 15:58), and that, "whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord (Eph 6:8)." Given that Jesus promises blessing in this life for our actions, and some reward promises aren't limited to eternity, we can conclude the Father rewards our righteousness in this life. We should be motivated to serve God because of effects we'll receive in this life. Whatever the other rewards we receive in this life are, they are infinitely greater than the things we give up for Jesus.

Maybe earthly reward ties into sowing and reaping (Gal 6:7-9). Following Jesus naturally leads to peace, joy, contentment, divine comfort, divine strengthening, and the other fruits of the Spirit.

Point 2: Perceive things according to their proper value (6:22-23)

Explanation

Jesus uses the eye to illustrate the importance of our perception.

The eye is the lamp of the body

Physically, the eye relates to the body like a lamp. In the dark of night, a lamp provides us with the ability to see. Likewise, the eye is the physical organ that provides sight for our physical body.

6:22b-6:23a

A healthy eye results in a body full of light. In other words, the person who sees well has the light of sight. On the other hand, a bad eye results in a body full of darkness. In other words, the person who sees poorly struggles in darkness without the light of sight.

Jesus uses these physical realities to portray a spiritual reality: if we see well, or if we perceive well, our lives will be characterized by light (= righteous conduct pleasing to the Father). But if we don't perceive well, we'll be characterized by moral darkness. Jesus picks up on this with the next statement...

If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

If our perception is darkened, our lives will be darkened. When our evaluation of the importance of things is mistaken, we will look in the wrong places for security, identity, and pleasure. And we'll pursue the wrong things. We'll make costly mistakes because we don't see rightly. Just like the person without their glasses is susceptible to error.

Illustration

Driving in Maryland before I was required to wear glasses & unable to see the street signs

Like the person without their glasses is prone to error because they can't see correctly, so is the person who doesn't perceive things according to their proper value.

Application

Jesus' illustration of the eye piggybacks on his previous statement about the heart. Our heart is shaped to some degree by our perspective. We all have a vision of what the good life is. So when our vision is misguided, we go astray.

Illustration: Ezra

Our judgment about what is important can shape the course of our life in unexpected ways. I once had a co-worker whose vision of the good life directed the course of his life in an interesting way. Shortly after I was converted, I met a guy in his early 20's at work. He was going to college, so to make conversation I asked where he went and for what. He proceeded to articulate his motivations and methodology.

He was going to school for optometry. The why was the interesting part. You see his goal was clear: to secure an attractive girlfriend. In his estimation, in order to acquire an attractive girlfriend, he needed to drive an expensive car. He had some Acura that cost \$80,000 in mind. But in order to get the expensive car, he needed to have a job that paid a lot of money. This is where optometry comes in. If he could open up his own practice, he would have plenty of money. So he was going to school for optometry so that he could make a lot of money in order to purchase an expensive Acura, all to achieve his life's goal: to secure an attractive girlfriend.

What we treasure drives our life. My co-worker was driven to get the girlfriend he wanted. What drives you? What directs the course of your life? Jesus pits the accumulation of material possessions against treasures in heaven. Which of these do you desire? Which "treasure" has priority in your life? Jesus warns us to perceive correctly: strive to lay up treasures in heaven. Don't orient your life around the wrong things.

Point 3: Serve God rather than money (6:24)

Explanation

Here Jesus sums up what he has been getting at: "You cannot serve God and money." Jesus' logic is simple: you can't serve two masters at the same time. Inevitably, you will have to give the priority to one of them. So it is with God and money. You can't be devoted to both. You'll have to choose one or the other. Your allegiance is either with God or money.

Here God and money portrayed as slave owners. In Roman culture, the slave related to their owner as property. And the slave was subjected to their owner's rule. So Jesus paints the picture that we either belong to God or money. God or money, one or the other, rules us.

Application

Another way to put it is either God or money will have our heart.

If we're ruled by God, God will have our affection. We'll love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). We'll value him above all things. We'll find our purpose in doing God's will. Our singular aim will be to live pleasing to God (Eph 5:10). Whatever it is we do, we'll do it for God's glory, for his honor (1

Cor 10:31). We'll boast only in the cross (Gal 6:14). We'll find our joy in God. We'll treasure the Father's reward. And we'll find our security and safety in the comfort of the Father's care.

If we're ruled by money, money will have our affection. We'll love money with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We'll value accumulating wealth and possessions above everything else. Our singular aim will be acquiring more wealth. God's will won't matter because wealth is our concern. We'll find our joy in wealth and possessions. And we'll find our security and safety in the comfort of our wealth.

You see, we'll be ruled by one or the other. If loving God and doing his will is the goal, money will serve the purposes of God. We'll see ourselves as stewards of what God provides. Money will serve kingdom purposes, but we won't serve money. But if stockpiling wealth and possessions is the goal, we'll serve money. We won't serve God because wealth trumps kingdom purposes. The heart follows after what it loves. We need to ask ourselves this question: In my life, does money serve the kingdom or does it master me?

A word of caution. Jesus isn't applauding poverty and condemning ambition. Scripture encourages labor (Col 3:23) and discourages idleness (2 Thess 3:10). We should work so we don't have to steal, and so that we can share with those in need (Eph 4:28). God requires a man to provide for his family (1 Tim 5:8), saving money is encouraged (Prov 6:6-8; 21:5, 20), and God provides wealth for our enjoyment (1 Tim 6:17). But wealth can't rule our heart. Money must serve the kingdom. Because we serve God, our money does as well.

The same goes with the church. Our budget can prioritize our comforts, or it can prioritize God's mission. Some local churches are committed to giving certain percentages of their offerings to missions. Others place greater priority on meeting the desires of consumers. I've seen the \$100 million building campaign. Our budget should serve the kingdom.

In the end, it's a matter of what we treasure. Likely we're not wholly mastered by money, but it may be that money stands in the way of our serving God.

Examples

- 1) Fear of loss that restricts generosity
- 2) Fear of loss that results in working too much and neglecting critical obligations to the family, neighbor, and the church
- 3) Greed that affects relationships (siblings fighting over a will)
- 4) My co-worker: money is the means to the good life

How do we beat enslavement to money? Jesus' answer is simple: perceive the superior value of treasures in heaven and set your heart on God's rewards. Direct your attention towards the holiday at the sea instead of mud pies.

To the struggling

Maybe you're struggling and feel like giving up. Remember, following Jesus is worth it in this life and the life to come. The things we look to for security, comfort, and joy (health, appearance, economy, relationships, etc.) are unstable. They can come and go. They aren't certain like God's promises. Are you having motivation trouble? Remember heavenly reward, the eternal state, blessings in the church, and the fruits of the Spirit that come with following Jesus.

To the unbeliever

Our problem is misguided loves. As a result, we give ourselves over to those things that the world says will satisfy, like wealth and material possessions. But Jesus challenges us to chase after superior pleasures, treasures

in heaven. If you've recognized your sinful devotion to wealth, respond to God in faith (trust his promise of forgiveness of sins through Christ) and repent (turn from pursuing wealth to pursue God's will).

Conclusion

Serve God because you desire superior treasure. Seek the holiday at the sea instead of mud pies. **Pursue heavenly treasure instead of earthly treasure.** God's promises dwarf the world's treasures. **Perceive things according to their proper value.** Set your course after what has lasting value. **Serve God rather than money.** Be ruled by God's will, not money.