



Lesson 9 | Renewal of Our Hearts

Bible Text:

Matthew 6:19-24

19“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

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 God and money.”

Commentary

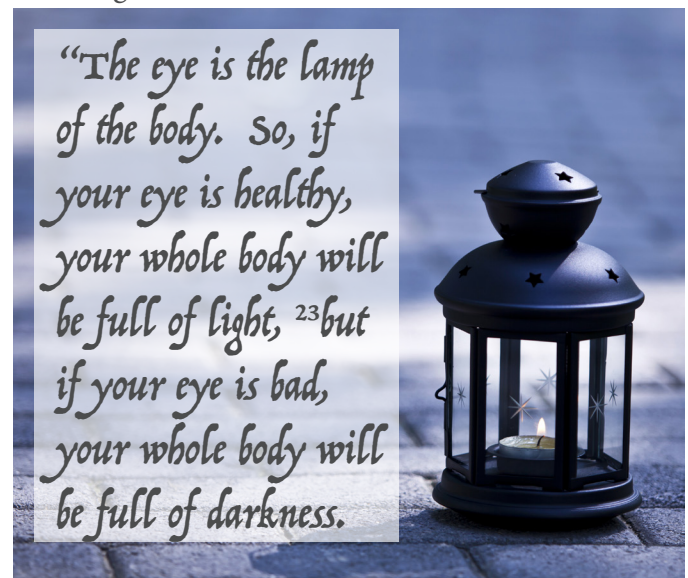
What Does the Heart Treasure?

When asked the question, “What is the treasure of your heart?” what would be a typical response? Some treasure their financial wealth, others their career, or family, or reputation, or car, or golf handicap, etc. But what does treasuring all these things ultimately treasure? That is, why are our hearts so committed to these things? What do we think they provide for us? What need do we think they meet? What appetite do we think they satisfy?

When God created Adam and Eve, they had a very special feature that set them apart from all other creatures on the planet. . . . *God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male*

and female he created them (Gen. 1:27). They were given a status of great dignity and a position of great authority. They were to *fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over . . . every living thing that moves on the earth* (v. 28). They were also in a safe and intimate relationship with their Creator. In short, as Dr. Larry Crabb articulated well many years ago, they were given the twin blessings of SECURITY and SIGNIFICANCE. They lived in a secure Garden, where there were no threats, and were perfectly loved by their Creator, who posed no risk. They were in unity and harmony with God and with one another and given the gift of holy industry.

Our hearts are built for a secure, loving relationship with God and a meaningful role in stewarding the creation for God. The fall of Adam and Eve did not remove these twin, God-given blessings, but sin certainly corrupted and distorted our pursuit of them. The fall produced an ejection from the Garden of spiritual, relational, physical, and emotional security. The fall produced a thorn-filled corruption of our significant role in managing God’s creation. What the fall has produced, Christ is restoring.



“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

The human heart treasures whatever we believe will contribute to or ensure our security and our significance. In Western culture, finances typically contribute to our sense of safety and our sense of importance. We derive from our financial resources a false sense that “I am safe because of my buying potential and significant because of my successful status.” Money is the common measure and provider of these two God-given needs.

Scripture’s Teaching on Treasure

The root Greek word translated *treasure* is *thesaurus*, from which we derive the English word “thesaurus.” It typically meant a deposit or, simply, wealth. Jesus frequently spoke of treasure (Matt. 12:35; 13:44,52; 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 6:45; 12:21,34). In our text, he made a profound statement when he affirmed:

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 (Matthew 6:19-21, underlining mine).

First, we notice that there are two distinct kinds of *treasures*: *on earth* and *in heaven*. In essence, there are two definitions of the same word. One refers to that which is of value from our temporal, earthly, and human perspective. The other refers to that which is of value from God’s eternal, heavenly, and divine perspective. The former are subject to decay and theft while the latter are immune from decay and theft. The former is vulnerable and insecure while the latter is invulnerable and secure.

Second, we read that *where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*. Whatever we determine is of ultimate value to us is the very thing we will pursue with our energy and serve with our loyalty. This cannot be overstated: We worship what satisfies us.

Third, our Lord uses the metaphor of the human eye to emphasize the radical contrast between looking toward earthly as opposed to heavenly treasure. “*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” (Matthew 6:22-23a).

Did you know that the human eye, as designed by God, is incapable of keeping two objects at differing distances in focus at the same time? [Try it by holding one index finger two inches from your face and the other index finger 12 inches from your face. Focusing on one, by God’s design, will not allow you to focus on the other.] One will be clear, the other blurry.

When our soul focuses on the *light* of the Lord and his truth, our entire *body* is full of light. When our soul’s focus is “*bad, (y)our whole body will be full of darkness*.” When we focus on achieving our security and significance through earthly means, our focus on the Lord is blurry, at best, and non-existent, at worst.

Fourth, in a similar way, we discover that it is impossible to possess simultaneously a love for both God and money. “*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*” (Matthew 6:24). Allegiance to one necessarily produces disloyalty to the other.

If we are not to focus on earthly treasure and wealth, does this mean that they are evil?

The Bible and Wealth

The Bible does not condemn wealth. Abraham and Job, for example, were men who possessed exemplary faith and possessed great wealth at the same time. The Bible does state, however, clearly and consistently, the spiritual dangers of wealth. Believers who are both wealthy and godly are those who have discovered that their only true treasure is in Christ and are, therefore, generous with their earthly treasure.

Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, “Who is the LORD?” or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God (Proverbs 30:7-9).

Extreme wealth and extreme poverty, which are economic conditions, pose to us great spiritual dangers. Our flesh, in wealth, can become self-reliant (see ReNewal Lesson 5) and tend to deny God. Our flesh, in poverty, can produce envy and theft which *profane the name of my God*.

Jeremiah warns of the dangers of those things that we value as our ultimate treasures:

Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise men boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Note the connection between our heart’s hunger for security and significance and the three things in which man might boast: wisdom, might, and riches. These three treasures provide for us deceptively stealth strategies for achieving a sense of safety (security) and importance (significance). Our boast, our confidence, our glory is to be in the Lord and in him alone. The contrast is clear—and convicting.

Isaiah records for us a profound and pithy statement:

The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness, and he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is Zion’s treasure (Isaiah 33:5-6, underlining mine).

Where do we find the *stability of (y)our times*? We find it in knowing that our great God is sovereign (*exalted . . . He dwells on high*) and that He will graciously care for and supply us with what we most need (*he will fill Zion*). Knowing, fearing, and trusting him and him alone is our greatest treasure. May it be so.

Finally, when we revisit I Timothy 6:17-19 we discover yet again a profound statement about the real treasure of our hearts:

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. They are 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 (underlining mine).

He gives to us ultimate significance by calling us his children and giving us kingdom-spreading work to do as we await his return.

The Cookie Jar Principle

Do you remember as a child wanting some of mom’s freshly baked cookies from the cookie jar? The sight and smell of chocolate chip cookies is, for most children, irresistible. Imagine, in mom’s absence, reaching into that jar and grabbing a handful of these addictive treats. Yet, given the size of the mouth of the jar, the full hand of the child is not able to pull itself out. What a dilemma! The only way to acquire our desired delight is to loosen our grip on several of those sweets.

Scripture tells us to release our grip on earthly treasures in order to *take hold of that which is truly life*. A diet of chocolate chip cookies would compromise our health. We need a nutritionally balanced diet. We are called to treat earthly wealth as an opportunity to be rich in good works, *to be generous and ready to share*. The main meal, that which truly satisfies the needs of our body and soul, is found in Christ and Christ alone. He is *the bread of life* (John 6:35), the water of life, he is life itself. He is the real *treasure* of our souls. In the gospel of his great love for us, he provides us with a secure relationship of love that can never be severed. He gives to us ultimate significance by calling us his children and giving us kingdom-spreading work to do as we await his return. Is he your very great treasure? How might you need to loosen your grip on your preferred and idolatrous earthly treasures to grasp more firmly your true treasure, that you *may take hold of that which is truly life*?

Questions

1. What has the Lord taught you about your heart's treasure(s) in this lesson?
2. What strategies do you typically use to acquire for yourself a sense of security and significance? In what ways are those strategies godly, and in what ways are they idolatrous?
3. In a typical week of conversations, what one or two things (or people, or achievements) do you typically boast in? How does Jeremiah 9:23-24 speak to your soul in this regard?
4. How and where do you seek to find the stability of your times in your private life? What is the Lord teaching you about this pursuit of stability?
5. As a congregation at Central, how and where do we seek to find the stability of [y]our times when the church has been chaotic or threatened? What is the Lord teaching us in this regard?
6. If the truths of this lesson were to truly penetrate your heart and your mind, what impact would that have on your financial support of the Lord's ministry here at Central, and beyond?

Prayer

Gracious and heavenly Father,

You are the Giver of
every good gift that I enjoy,
every breath that I take,
every skill or gift that I possess,
every opportunity that I have seized, and
every dollar that I have ever earned.

How easily and often have I separated the gift from the Giver,

claiming credit for what I have done,
boasting in my achievements,
presuming that my blessings will continue.

I confess that my heart is full of idols that I pursue for my security,
rely upon for my significance, and fail to detect because they are stealth, and that divert my love and energy away from Christ.

Teach me to see and detest these idols,
that my eyes focus on you,
that my heart's love affair is with my Savior,
that I loosen my grip on earthly treasures to tighten my grip on him who truly satisfies.

O, by your Spirit, may I see afresh and anew the beauty of the gospel,
the excellency of Christ,
the extravagance of his grace,
the satisfaction of my soul's hunger in Jesus.

I thank you that in Jesus
my security is in knowing you,
my significance is in belonging to you,
my identity is forever grounded in you.

Grant me grace that I might love you more and love things less.

Show me, every day, the cross and the empty tomb and stir my heart to serve my risen Savior, until that day when I shall see him face to face.

May it be so,
for your glory,
for my soul's satisfaction, and
for the blessing of others.

In the name of Jesus, my all in all,
Amen