

Treasuring Your Treasures

About one year ago, a man very enthusiastically told me about his collection of watches. He had many watches from different countries and manufacturers. Most of them were very expensive. Every day he wore a different watch. He knew more about watches than many people. He knew their history, their movements, their crystals, and the best manufacturers. His watches were very interesting, and it was clear that they were one of his treasures in life.

Most of us have treasures or things in this life which we highly value. For some, our treasures may be a collection of movies, a library of books, a vintage car, prized trophies, or our position in life. For men and women their life's treasure can be their children, a business, a military rank, medals of honor, a famous name, a stack of DVDs, a home, sexual fantasies, a coin collection, an exclusive address in a wealthy neighborhood, or money - coins, bills, and stocks.

Do you have any treasures? One of the signs that you have a treasure is that you devote a lot of time to it or you do not want to give it away. Some steal, lie, cheat, and do almost anything in order to obtain more of their treasure or to keep it. I remember stealing some treasure when I was about six years of age. I stole some money - a penny. I had already learned that money was a treasure. Other children stole marbles, pencils, balls, or food from another's lunch. Whether young or old, everyone has treasure. What are your treasures?

JESUS AND TREASURE. Our next study in the Life of Christ is about treasure. It is something that Jesus talked about while He lived among us. In the Sermon on the Mount, His first words about treasure were a warning.

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 or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (NASB) Matt. 6:19-21

The Greek word that Jesus used for treasure is **THESAUROS**. The word was used in ancient times to refer to "treasure chamber, a treasure box, a storeroom, or treasure." Temples often had treasure chambers where gifts and taxes were stored. Jesus used the word to refer to anything that

you highly value and, therefore, keep, safeguard, store up, or protect. The Greek word translated as "store-up" in the English actually means "to treasure." So Jesus did not tell His listeners to "store up" their treasures, He commanded them to stop "treasuring up their treasures."

Earthly treasures were not safe in Jesus' day, and they are not safe today. In Jesus' day moths would eat clothing. Humidity could result in a chemical reaction called rust that would damage coins and other metal objects. What the

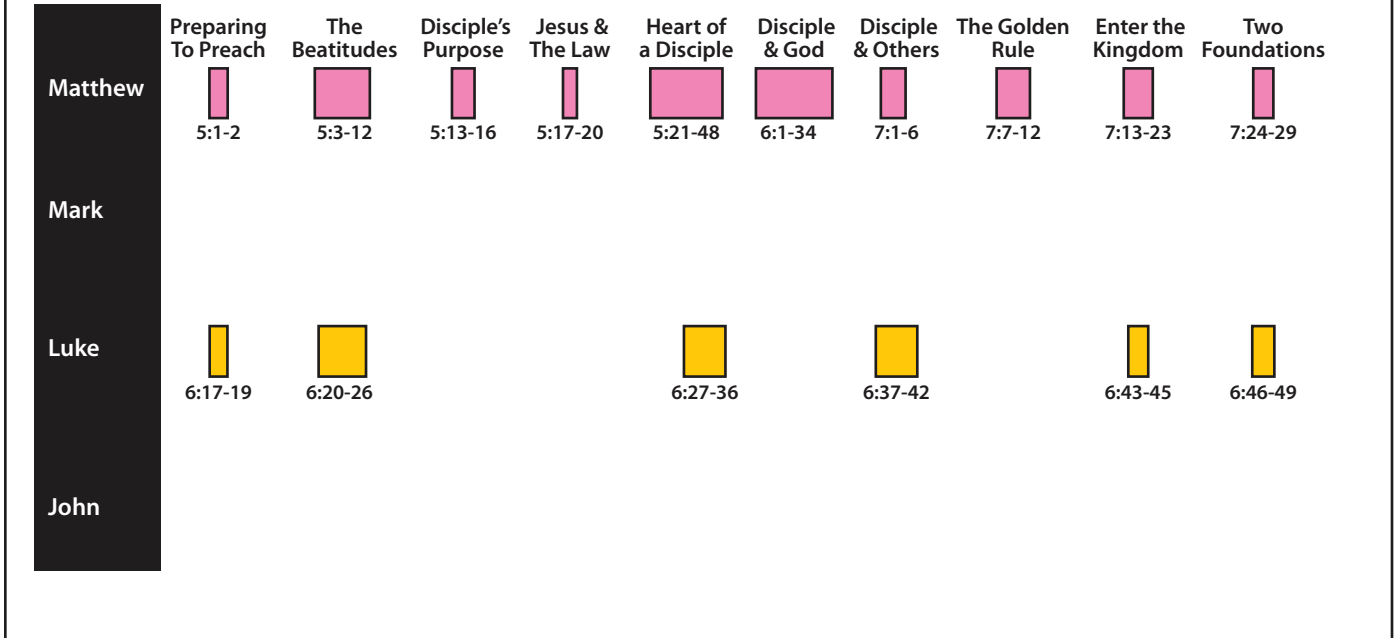
moths and rust did not destroy, thieves could "break in" and finish the job. The Greek word for "break in" literally means "to dig through." Thieves in ancient days would actually dig through mud walls of buildings in order to plunder valuables.

Today, we have mothballs and synthetic clothing to prevent damage by moths. Our coins contain alloy compounds to prevent



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rust and corrosive destruction. We may not be concerned about moths and rust, but we are still concerned about modern thieves. So we have insurance to protect our treasures against theft and damage from various elements. If Jesus were here on earth today, His illustrations would be different. Our treasures are still not safe. The watch collector understood this truth. A woman by the name of Hetty Green also understood.

Hetty Green was a miser. She died in 1915, leaving an estate valued at over one million dollars, but always ate cold oatmeal because she believed it cost too much to heat it. Her son had to suffer through a leg amputation unnecessarily because Hetty wasted too much time looking for a free medical clinic. Hetty Green was wealthy, but she chose to live like a pauper. Eccentric? Yes. Crazy? Perhaps! She was so foolish that she hastened her own death when she suffered a stroke by becoming too excited over a discussion about the cost of drinking skimmed milk.¹

Hetty had a treasure in this life. It is called money. Hetty's

¹Green, Michael P. illustrations for Biblical Preaching. Baker Book House. 1989. p. 393.

heart was devoted to her treasure. Jesus was correct. Our heart will be devoted to what we treasure.

Therefore, Jesus challenges us to store our treasure some place other than here in this life. He encourages us to place our treasures in heaven. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 echoes Jesus' words and tells us how to store treasure in heaven.

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. (NASB) 1 Tim. 6:17-19

While this passage is directed to those who are rich, we must not forget that everyone in this life has treasures, and there is always someone who is poorer.

In this passage, God first commands us to treasure Him and not the "uncertainty of riches" That is the first step to storing treasure in heaven. We are to fix our hope on Him

because He supplies every good thing to enjoy. The second step to storing treasure in heaven is “to do good,” “to do good works,” and “to be generous.”

The phrase “to do good” refers to noble acts that we do for others, and “good works” includes support for one’s family (1 Tim. 5:8), care for widows (1 Tim. 5:4), hospitality for strangers and prisoners (Heb. 13:2-3), visiting orphans (James 1:27), helping fellow Christians (Gal. 6:10), and raising children (1 Tim. 5:10).

We are also commanded to be generous and share what we have with others rather than devoting ourselves to collecting treasures. This is the test that reveals what treasures you have. Is there anything that you are unwilling to give to another? A treasure is something that you value and really want to keep, just like the watch collector and Hetty Green. The one who is good, does good works and generously gives is one whose heart is in heaven. Their treasure is in heaven and not here on earth. Where is your heart?

THE LAMP. Jesus’ next statement was easily understood by His Jewish audience because it was based on a Jewish saying of His day.

The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, 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 that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! (NASB) Matt. 6:22-23

The first part of Jesus’ statement tells us that the eye is like a lens which allows light to enter the body. If the lens is clear and not colored or dirty, then all of the light can enter. So obviously, if something is wrong with the eye, less light will enter. But if the eye is bad or blind, we cannot see anything. Everything is dark.

If we look at the verses that follow this illustration, we discover that Jesus continued talking about material things.

So we must ask, “What does seeing, light, and darkness have to do with wealth?” The answer is found in the book of Proverbs and a Jewish saying. Proverbs 28:22 captures the Jewish view about a “bad eye.”

A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth . . . (NASB) Prov. 28:22

The proverb tells us that a man with an evil eye is one who chases after wealth. He is greedy! According to the Jewish saying, a person with a “bad eye” was a stingy or selfish person. These people did not want to help anyone else. They did not give away any of their money. They treasured their

treasures and did not want to share. The Jewish saying and the proverb agree. Jesus used His illustration to send us the message that a greedy, selfish, stingy person is one who is really in the dark. This person’s heart is very cold and unloving - how great is the darkness! Is your eye dark?

YOU HAVE A MASTER. Do you have treasures? Are you willing to share them? Are you stingy, greedy, and selfish? If so, then you have selected your master. Your treasures control you. Robert G. Ingersell once said this, “Few rich men own their property. The property owns them.” God knew this and so He added this

next comment.

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. (NASB) Matt. 6:24

The Greek word that is translated as “devoted” is ANTHEX-ETAI. The Greek word refers to one who “holds firmly, clings to, adheres to, or seeks after.” If you have treasure, then Jesus is telling you that you are clinging to it or hanging on to it and not Him. God wants us to cling to and seek after Him.



Do you? Does your treasure keep you from worshiping God, reading the Bible, confessing your sins, doing good works, and being generous?

If we are unwilling to be generous with what God has given us, then we have a “bad eye.” Are we worried about the future? Then listen to Hebrews 13,

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,” so that we confidently say, “The Lord is my Helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?” (NASB) Heb. 13:5-6

Here God promises that He will never desert us or leave us alone. We should not be afraid to give our money or share our treasure. Whether it is a love for treasure or worry about the future, God wants us to know that we can trust Him. We should never treasure our wealth because we fear some future event will leave us poor. The question is, “Where is your heart?” Is it in earthly treasure or heavenly treasure? Who is your master? Whom do you trust? Whom do you cherish?

TRUST - DO NOT WORRY. The rest of Jesus’ message is about worry and anxiety over earthly things. Here is the first verse in this section. It is a summary of the following nine verses.

For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? (NASB) Matt. 6:25

The root Greek word that is translated as “worried” is sometimes translated as “anxious” or “worry.” It occurs five times in this section of Jesus’ sermon. It occurs more times here than in any other part of the Bible. This tells us that Jesus’ message is unique. It is about worry or anxiety.

Jesus encourages us to not be anxious about our basic needs such as food, drink, and clothes. We have more important things to do than to be anxious about the basic needs of life. There are other things in life for us to focus on than the

things that God silently gives us: food, water, and clothes.

In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness. (NASB) Acts 14:16-17

Have you noticed that God cares for the wild animals such as the elk, deer, bear, bobcats, mountain lions, elephants, leopards, giraffes, whales, seals, walruses, and other mammals? He provides them water and grass to eat.

Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? (NASB) Matt. 6:26-27

God also feeds the birds who do not work for their food. If God cares for them, we should trust God to meet our basic needs because He considers us to be more important. Those who believe in evolution have it wrong. We are not like the animals. We are more highly valued. We should not worry but trust Him. Worry is empty and pointless. Worry has never added a minute, an hour, a day, or a year to your life. Worry and anxiety accomplish nothing. We can trust God for our food and water.

We can also trust God for our clothing!

And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! (NASB) Matt. 6:28-30

If God clothes the flowers with beauty, why do we think that He does not care enough to provide us the basic clothes that we need? The Greek word that Jesus uses for “lilies” and “grass” are words that probably include many other plants. The Greek word for “clothed” has the idea of being “wrapped

around or covered up.” That is, God clothes even the plants. He also clothes birds with exquisite arrays of feathers, mammals with colorful, exotic fur, and salt water fish with beauty and elegance. If God does that for His creation, He will do the same for us. So, . . .

Do not worry then, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear for clothing?” (NASB) Matt. 6:31

God already knows what you really need.

WHAT WE SEEK. God knows that some Christians worry as most Gentiles worry!

For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (NASB) Matt. 6:32

Whether we are Christians or non-Christians, most of us worry. We worry about having a job. We worry about the money that will be left at the end of the month.

What do you worry about? Is it food, water, and clothes, or the stock market and some of your treasures? Sometimes we forget the difference between basic needs and our wants. The following illustration will make the point.

In Hollywood, California, in the United States of America, there is an exclusive school attended by children of movie stars, producers, and directors. The children come from very wealthy families. When asked to write an essay on the subject of poverty, one little girl started her composition: “Once there was a poor little girl. Her father was poor, her mother was poor, her governess was poor, her chauffeur was poor, [and] her butler was poor. In fact, everybody in the house was very, very poor.

Are you worried about your treasures or your basic needs? God has promised to meet your basic needs. God wants you to be willing to give away your treasures. If you are willing to give away your treasures, then you will know whom you

really love.

CONCLUSION. What is your true treasure? Is it God? Is your heart’s desire earthly treasure? If so, Jesus tells us to get our hearts on the correct path.

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (NASB) Matt. 6:33-34

The solution to a wrong heart’s desire is to seek God. God wants us to seek Him more than the things He gives us. He wants us to desire to be holy just like Himself. If we seek Him with all our heart, He has promised to not only give us our basic needs, but to give us beyond our wants and desires. The Greek word that is translated as “added” in Matt. 6:33 is ZATEO. It means “super added.” That is, God will give

you more than your basic needs. He will richly bless you, but not necessarily make you wealthy.

The cure to treasuring things is to seek something different - treasuring Jesus Christ!

Each one of us is faced with a decision. We must ask ourselves, “What are my desires? What are my treasures? Am I worrying about the basics of life? Do I have something that I would not give away if God asked me to give it away?” Your answers will reveal if you are treasuring His gifts and ignoring the Provider. Your answers will reveal if you are trusting God. You will discover how much you are focused on God.

Jesus calls us to seek or treasure His kingdom. If we will, God will give us more than our basic needs. And the cure to treasuring the things He gives us is to always seek Him. The cure to treasuring things is to seek something different - treasuring Jesus Christ!