

Treasures

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev K.M.Macdonald

[0 : 0 0] Matthew chapter 6, reading from verse 19. Tonight in our ongoing study of the Sermon on the Mount, we will look at verses 19 to 24, where Jesus says, Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Now Jesus is going on teaching in this Sermon on the Mount, and he is dealing, of course, with the relationship that the Christian has with God. And tonight he deals in those verses with the temptation that comes to Christians, that comes to everybody, a temptation to worldliness, a positive love of the world, a positive love of some aspect of it, whether it be material things, money, houses, or whatever. Jesus is pointing out to us the danger of being lured away by the things of the world. And in those verses that we have here, he gives us two commands. And not only does he give us the commands, but he gives us two reasons why we should obey them. Now it's wonderful that the Lord Jesus Christ should take time to give us the explanations and reasons why we should obey him. He is the one who commands and must be obeyed. And yet he recognizes and understands us so that he reaches out to us in loving sympathy. And he takes time to explain to us why we ought to obey his command.

The matters that he deals with, they are so very, very important that he explains and reasons with us about them. Command one, that is the first command he gives us is, lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. And the command two is, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. The first command there, lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. The reason for the command is, moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal. Now Jesus was speaking to Christians in his own day, and this explanation was particularly applicable to them then. Because riches in Christ's time were linen and embroidered clothing, embroidered goods. And to have great stores of linen and great stores of embroidered goods, these were considered to be great wealth to the Jews of the time.

And Jesus was able to see before him the great piles of linen and the great piles of embroidery. And he warns, remember the moth, remember a consuming insect that can get in there and ruin and destroy your pile of precious possessions. And then rust doth corrupt. There were of course no banks in the days that Jesus walked this earth. So for safety reasons, the people used to bury their precious metals. Their treasures made of metal, they were buried in fields. Men would dig deep pits in the field and hide their most valuable possessions there. And there of course over a period of time, they would begin to rust. And Jesus warns them, remember the rust, what you have put in the earth, though it is well wrapped, though it is safely in boxes, the dampness and the rust will get at it and will attack it. And then he says, where thieves break through and steal. That is the houses in Palestine there and where Jesus walked, the houses were made of mud. Dried, yes, dried hard in the sun, but still mud. And the thief could come along and could bore his way through to get at the treasure that was hidden inside. And Jesus warns, remember, take care. The wall is made of mud. The wall keeping your most treasured, the most treasured possessions, it's only made of mud the thief can dig through.

Beware of the moth. Beware of the rust. Beware of the thief. What Jesus is warning against here is putting out trust in earthly things. He's pointing out that worldly treasures don't last. They have their time, but their time is passing. They are transitory, passing away. Change and decay in all around I see.

[5 : 23] The most beautiful flower is dying the moment that you pluck it. And soon it has to be thrown away. Things develop holes and have to be discarded. Things rust and have to be thrown onto the scrap heap.

The most perfect physique, the most gorgeous figure, the most beautiful face, they have their time. The keen intelligence, the scintillating oratory, the genius, the mind that is a genius. These can all be reduced to helpless gibberish in a moment of time by a simple thing like a stroke.

However beautiful, however wonderful, however admired things may be, they have their time. And they all perish. Moth, rust, thieves. And whatever is our own up-to-date version of those things. Age, illness, business loss, war, death, whatever it is.

Jesus appeals to our common sense and he tells us that we know that worldly treasures don't last. They have their time, but they're passing. And Jesus says, don't place your hope and your trust in worldly things.

The second command he gives is, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. The reason for the command is, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.

[6 : 54] When we become Christians, when we see our need of a savior, and when we become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we get certain things. We get forgiveness for our sins. And we get a place reserved for us in heaven.

We become heirs and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ himself. There's an inheritance awaiting all those who trust in Jesus. And in 1 Peter we read that it's an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

These heavenly things are imperishable. Nobody can take them away. Nothing can destroy them. Why not? Because God himself is watching over them for you and for me.

I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There is nothing that can touch our inheritance in Christ. No moth, no rust, no thief. Again, surely an appeal to our common sense. But although we may agree that all that we have said up to now makes sound sense, Jesus is aware of our weakness.

[8 : 21] And he knows the overpowering hypnotic effect, the attraction of earthly treasures. And he warns us twice against being overcome by the lure of things.

Although we may agree with the warnings that he's given, and the commands that he's given, and the reasons that he's given, and we may say that it is just common sense. Because we're all aware of the transitory nature of everything.

We're aware of the frailty of humanity. We're aware of that. And yet Jesus knows that in spite of all that, that we are also weak.

And that there are things that overcome us, even almost against our own inclination. Jesus warns, first of all, he says, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Jesus is anxious about us. He's particularly anxious about our heart. That is, our affections, our feelings, our outlook. If the heart is right, if our affections are fixed on the right things, if they are fixed on things that are to do with eternity, things that are to do with our immortal souls abode throughout all eternity, if they are to do with Christ, if they are to do with Christ and his finished work, if we view everything from the vantage point of Calvary, then we will always rise above our possessions.

[9 : 54] It won't matter whether we have a lot, or whether we have next to nothing. It won't matter whether we are rich, or whether we are poor. We will be master of the little we have, or we will be master of the lot we have, if we are able to put it in the right perspective, because our eyes and our heart and our emotions and our affections are fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we value things as if we are leaving them for the last time, because we know that Jesus Christ is King. So that Jesus once says to be master of our own possessions, not a slave to them.

And then the second warning he gives is about distorted vision, our spiritual vision. The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! Jesus is concerned about how we look at things.

He is concerned about our view of things. The eye is regarded as the window by which light gets into our mind. If the window of our mind is colored, colored by prejudices, colored by lusts, colored by selfishness, colored by greed or any other dirt, then the light doesn't get in at all.

[11 : 17] It is obscured. And the light doesn't reach the mind and the mind remains in darkness. How is our spiritual eyesight, my friend? How do we view things?

The things that meet us each day. How do you view your work? How do you view your bank balance? How do you view your car? How do you view the television? How do you view sport?

How do you view everything round about you? Is your mind clear? And above it all is the knowledge that you are going to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ one day. That all of those things that we place so much value on in this world will depart and will be gone and will be nothing.

Do we view things in the right way? Do you see God's will clearly in your own life? Or is your vision clouded by your possessions, by your responsibilities, by your ambition, by the business, by all of those things that flock in upon us and that Jesus Christ knows is a problem to the Christian?

Are you dazzled by the passing pleasures and allurements of the world? Remember that man Demas who appears for such a brief time with Paul in the New Testament there.

[12 : 31] He was a missionary with Paul. He joined up with Paul and he went with Paul and he was a missionary preaching the gospel of the cross. Then one day he ups and he leaves Paul.

And he disappears off the pages of the Bible and we don't hear nothing more about him. He just passes away. What happened to him? What happened to his desire to be a missionary?

What happened to his calling? What happened to his responsibility and loyalty to Paul? Well Paul writes, Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.

Now you'll notice that it doesn't need to be anything evil in itself that entices you away and blinds your eyes from God and from his ways. It doesn't need to be anything evil in itself.

The cares of this world, whether you are rich or poor, it doesn't matter. Just the very cares, the responsibility, the economic pleasures, the pleasures, the pleasures, the pleasures you work, the ambition you want to get on, the things that you want to get for your wife or girlfriend or whatever.

[13 : 33] The cares of this world, our own worldly position, our home life, our very family, visitors visiting us at certain times, or even laziness. Any of those things can be used by the master of deceit, by the prince of deceit, the devil, who's always waiting and who is cleverer than any of us to get at us.

And these things, these simple things that are good in themselves, and not harmful at least in themselves, can be just as dangerous as outright blatant sin.

You see, in our verses, we see that Jesus is concerned that worldly things should not get a hold of us, that worldly things should not get such a hold of us, that God is usurped from our lives, that God is pushed completely out of our lives, or else just pushed back into our box, and only allowed out now and again, just for a few seconds before we go to bed at night, or first thing in the morning, or when we come to church, or when we meet another Christian, or just allowed out, as it were, when it suits us.

Walked away somewhere. Well, in verse 24, Jesus tells us straight, that we can't dabble at Christianity. We can't be a half-hearted Christian at all.

We must make up our minds what we're going to be. We must make up our minds whether we're going to be Christians, with Christ as King in our lives, or that we are worldly people giving in to the attraction of the world.

[15 : 00] Giving in to money, wealth, ambition, success, or whatever. It is either or. It cannot be both. No man can serve two masters. For either he will hit the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other.

Ye cannot serve God and mammon. That's what Jesus says. You see, compromise is impossible. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Mammon, the original meaning of it was material possessions.

But then it became to mean, over a period of time, it came to mean the God of material possessions. And it's a very, very worrying trend in Christianity today, that there are many half-hearted Christians.

The ones who profess that they are Christians, and yet don't change their lifestyle. And don't keep to the discipline that Jesus Christ wants them to do. There are many, many young people who flock to the things that they want to go to, and yet when it comes to this steady walk, this steady Christian walk each day, they are nowhere to be found.

They do their own thing. And it is a worrying trend. That these Christians, that they continue to live their life in the world. Their lifestyle is Jesus and my lifestyle.

[16 : 21] Their Christian discipline is compromised. They water down their Christianity to accommodate their own desire. Their love of the world comes in, and waters down their Christian witness.

Jesus tells us quite clearly, that there is no room for this kind of behavior. And he tells us quite clearly, you cannot serve God and mammon.

If worldly considerations control us, then Jesus says we are godless. We are atheists, if we are pandering to the things of the world. The person who talks about God, and says that he or she believes God, and attends church occasionally, but is really living for earthly considerations, how great is that person's darkness.

Because he genuinely thinks he is saved. He genuinely thinks that he is godly. He genuinely thinks that he is a Christian. If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.

Remember the chapter that we read in 2 Kings there, chapter 17. The king of Assyria had captured land. Land that had belonged to the Jewish people. And to keep it under subjection, and to make it really belong to himself, to the Assyrian Empire, he settled some of his own people there.

[17 : 43] And these people that he settled, were of course heathens, and they worshipped idols, and they didn't know, or recognize Jehovah, the God of Israel. So God sent lions among them, and many of them were killed.

And the Assyrian immigrants, sent word to their king, telling him what had happened, and telling him that, they thought it was because, the God of the land in which they lived, was offended.

Because they themselves, didn't know how to worship this God, of that land. They wanted to find out, how to worship the resident God.

The God of that particular land. And it was because, they had offended this God, that the lions came. And the king, immediately sent, a Jewish priest, whom they had captured.

And this Jewish priest, began to teach, these Assyrian settlers, about the Jewish religion. Giving them a general, outline of the Jewish religion. Telling them, about Jehovah, the God of Israel.

[18 : 46] And the people listened. And the people thought, that things would now be alright, because they understood, who Jehovah was. And they reckoned, that they would give, a fair share of worship to him.

And we read about them. So these nations, feared the Lord, and served their graven images. They simply added Jehovah, to their list of gods, and gave him a share, of the worship, that they were already giving, to other gods.

And they carried on, in the same way as before. And they carried on, offering the same sacrifices, to all the different gods, but oh yes, including Jehovah, in it as well. They even offered sacrifices, they offered their own children, as sacrifices.

And we read about them, they feared the Lord, and served, their own gods. Spurgeon calls this, a mongrel religion. A mongrel religion.

And it's a very, very dangerous religion. It's a very deceptive religion, because, like all mongrels, it has its good points, and it has its bad points. You see, first of all, these people, did recognize the God of Israel.

[19 : 54] These people would claim, that they were believers. They say, we believe in God. And they didn't deny his existence at all. They didn't write him off. They didn't say, like Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, who is this God, that I may come to know?

In other words, what nonsense, are you telling me here? No, they believed, that there was a God. They believed, that there was a God in Israel, and they were willing, to try to please him. Because they recognized, he was a powerful God.

A God who was able, to punish them, by sending lions upon them. And they even feared him. They were afraid, of his power. But these people, were not unbelievers. And these people as well, were willing to be taught.

They sent, a great message to the king, asking for help. They told him, that they thought, that they had offended, the God of that land. And please, could he send somebody, to teach them, about this God.

So that they would be able, to worship him, to please him, and to turn his anger away. Yes, these people, were definitely, going on the right track. And then we read about them, that they listened, and they learned, and they appreciated, what they were taught.

[21 : 01] They even came to the stage, that they feared the Lord. Ah, but, they went on, serving their own, graven images. They went on, worshipping their own gods.

They went on, doing their own things. Sadly, can it not be said, of a lot of people today, they fear the Lord, and serve their own gods.

They come to church, they sit listening, to the word, they appreciate, a good sermon, but they still, carry on, their own lifestyle. Serving their own sins.

They still go on, pandering, to their own tastes. They still accommodate, they still mould, their Christianity, round their own desires. They still, do their own thing. It is Christianity, and, my lifestyle.

They don't pick up, the cross of Christ. They don't follow Jesus fully. They just, take, the name of Christianity, on their lips, and they do, their own thing.

[22 : 02] We can understand, the person who stands up, and says, I don't have any time, for any of that. I don't believe in God, so I don't want to worship him, I don't want to know, anything at all, about religion. I do what I please, because I don't believe in God.

We can understand that. Oh yes, we mourn the foolishness, of the person who says that, but we can understand it. But how can we understand, the person who keeps, the outward part of religion?

How can we understand, the person who attends services, and professes, that they know the truth, and yet, they have no heart, no heart of love, for Jesus.

They have no acceptance, of what Jesus did for them, and they have no care, to serve God. They are a complete mystery, to us.

And we must leave them, as a mystery, because we cannot, understand them. Just as Judas Iscariot, was a mystery. Judas Iscariot, he was an apostle.

[23 : 03] He was chosen, by Jesus. He listened, to the words of Jesus. He preached, at Jesus' command. He performed miracles, in the name of Jesus.

He was the treasurer, of the group. He kept, the money side, of the disciples' work. He kept the band. And he does everything, so carefully, he behaves, in such a way, that no one guessed, what he was really like.

Judas, professes, to serve Jesus, but all the time, he was doing his own thing. He was really, serving himself. You see my friends, the mere fact, that we believe in God, the mere fact, that we call him, Lord, Lord, is not proof, that we are serving him.

It's not proof, that we have given ourselves, totally to him. And I can't tell you, your condition. You've got to examine yourself, and I've got to examine myself, and see, if Jesus is really, king of my heart.

Of my heart. Or am I just, accommodating him, because it suits me, to be a Christian. And it suits me, to follow the Christian, way of life. Am I really the Lord's?

[24 : 17] Do I really, love the Lord Jesus Christ? And am I willing, to serve him? And is he, first in my life? Or are the cares, of the world, the things, of the world, my own plans, my own things, around about me, money, and overtime, working, all of those things, sport or whatever.

Do they come between me, and the Lord Jesus Christ? Well Jesus tells us, ye cannot serve God, and mammon. You can't do both. You can't serve, and please yourself, and still think, that you're pleasing, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the strange thing is, that if you put Jesus, first in your life, then all other things, fall into place. And you will be, the happiest person, of all. But let us all, examine ourselves.

Do not let us be, overtaken, by the things of the world, by our own, natural inclinations, but rather, let us see Jesus. And no man, save Jesus only.

Amen. Let us pray. O Lord, O Lord, we give thee thanks, for the warnings, that thou hast given us, and the commands, and the explanation, the trouble, that thou hast go to, to teach us, the right way.

[25 : 31] And we ask, O Lord God, that each one of us, on bended knee, would be able to acknowledge, that thou art the way, the truth, and the life. And that no man, cometh to the Father, but by thee.

O Lord, become king in our lives. Come in, and take us, we ask of thee, so that each one of us, will serve thee, fully, each day. That we would not be, part time soldiers, of the cross, but that rather, we would serve thee, fully.

That we would not try, to serve God, and mammon. We ask in Jesus name. Amen.