

Lesson #10: A Non-Materialistic Life

In this wide-ranging sermon, Jesus now shifts his focus from spiritual disciplines (benevolent giving, praying and fasting) to material issues (making money, physical possession, and material needs). Jesus is clear: he expects his followers to bring every area of their lives under his lordship. This includes their view and use of money. Having warned his follower against a twisted spirituality he now warns them against a twisted materialism. Don't be a Pharisee, but don't be a pagan, either. Don't escape legalism only to become worldly! Jesus gives us three commands to avoid being worldly.

For subjects of king Jesus, there is no distinction between secular and sacred.
For the Christian, everything is sacred.

Command #1: Stockpile a greater wealth.

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. —Matthew 6:19-21

We should not try to accumulate earthly treasure. (Vs. 19)

"Earthly treasure" refers to money and whatever money can buy - like possessions, experiences, and status.

This does not mean

1. That poverty is the path to spirituality.
2. That you shouldn't save or invest money.
3. That is wrong to be rich.

Jesus is telling us not to make the accumulation of wealth a priority in your life.

1. Material wealth cannot make you secure.
2. Material wealth cannot bring you satisfaction.
3. Material wealth cannot last.

We should try to accumulate heavenly treasure. (Vs. 20)

“Heavenly treasure” refers to reward awaiting us in the next life because of how we used our money, our time, and our resources. They are earned by doing works.

What are these heavenly treasures? While not specifically identified, here is what we can surmise.

- They are sources of everlasting joy.
- They include capacities and responsibilities in the world to come.
- They include people who will be in heaven in part through our efforts.

You will love the world your treasure is invested in. (Vs. 21)

- If you seek to stockpile material goods, you will love the things of this world more and more.
- If you seek to stockpile heavenly treasure you will love the things of heaven more and more.

“Where your treasure flows where your heart goes.”

Command #2: Grow a greater understanding.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” —Matthew 6:22-23

Jesus uses a metaphor, mixed with idioms of his day, to teach us about the different impacts that being generous (and laying up treasures in heaven) and being stingy (laying up treasures on earth) has on our hearts.

The metaphor: Your eyes enable you to see physical reality. If they work right, you see clearly. If they don’t, you can’t.

The idioms:

- The “healthy eye” referred to people who were sincere and generous.
- The “unhealthy eye” referred to people who were greedy and stingy.

The meaning:

- If you are generous you show that you perceive spiritual and eternal realities well, and are living wisely.
- If you are stingy you show that you do not perceive spiritual and eternal realities well, and are living foolishly.

Jesus also alludes to self-deception. If you think the darkness is light, you are truly blind!

Command #3: Serve a greater master.

24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. —Matthew 6:19-24

Two rivals: God and money.

The word translated “money” is “mammon”. It originally meant “that in which one trusts” and came to refer “treasures, possessions, or wealth”.

- Both make the same promises.
- Both demand supreme loyalty.

One reality: You will favor one over the other.

- You will love one most.

- You will be devoted to one more.

One result: You will serve one or the other.

- One will be your master.
- One will be whom you serve.

Notice the flow of these teachings. If you make it a priority to lay up heavenly treasure, you will love the things of heaven more. If you love the things of heaven more, you will be generous with your stuff, which opens your eyes to a greater, more accurate understanding of life. And with that greater understanding, you will see through the empty promises of money and put your hope for this life in God. Then you will be able to faithfully and fruitfully serve Him.

Reflect

- ♦ What do you do to lay up heavenly treasure? Are you satisfied with this?
- ♦ How do you think Jesus would rate your generosity?
- ♦ Does the evidence indicate you serve God, or money?

Do

- ♦ Do one random act of kindness in Jesus name that you are confident God will reward you for.
- ♦ Commit one act of true generosity this week.
- ♦ Surrender your finances to God and manage them as He directs.