

Treasure in Heaven

I've instructed the ushers to *barricade* the doors, because we're going to talk about **money**. We'll let you out in about 30 minutes.

The Bible, as a whole, references money a lot, and Jesus, specifically, talked about money quite a bit as well. So we shouldn't be at all surprised that as we walk through these Words of Jesus from His *Sermon on the Mount* (in our series that I'm calling *The King's Speech*), that King Jesus, when describing His Kingdom, would talk about money.

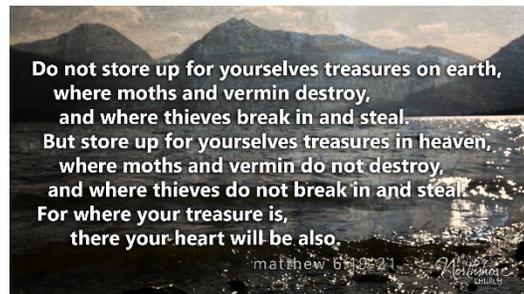
Let's stand and read aloud this first portion of today's text from Matthew chapter 6, starting with verse 19.

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. ¹

"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." This tie between our heart and our treasure, our desires and our money, is undeniable.

We might ask each other what is most important to us and we would get answers that are reliable. But if we were able to simply take a look at the transactions in each other's bank accounts... that would present raw and honest answers that might be considerably more reliable. The way we spend money reveals that which is most important to us.

Of course there are all sorts of things on which we spend that does not have our hearts. But we know what we *like* to spend money on; that is the stuff that has our hearts. I don't like to spend money on taxes and utility bills... but I do like to spend money on coffee and restaurants.



¹ The New International Version. (2011). (Mt 6:19–21). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

So when it comes to our treasure, Jesus encourages us to store up for ourselves treasures in Heaven. Treasures on earth deteriorate; they are even destroyed and stolen, but treasures in Heaven are safe for all eternity.

The saying goes, “you can’t take it with you.” And it has been said that you’ll never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul trailer.

Whoever said that does not have the Internet, because I found this image in mere moments. But the point is still valid.

We may not be able to *take it with us...* but we can ***send it ahead.***

We do that by giving, allowing our treasure to be used in God’s work (in ministry).

We don’t have a secret, magical way to actually send cash to Heaven; we use it right now and right here on earth. But our intention is to use it for eternal purposes.

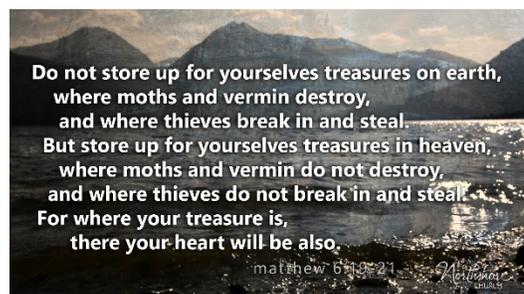
Our hope is that the work we do will impact eternity, whether that is here in Kenmore directly through the work of Northshore,

or through the hands of our World Missions staff around the world. That’s how we get our treasure to Heaven, through **souls** headed to Heaven for eternity.

Our giving has that eternal impact on *others*, and it has an eternal impact on **us** too... especially if we give the way the Bible teaches.

Throughout the Scripture, our worship through giving is generally described in these two transactions: tithing and first fruits. This sums up the way the Bible teaches us to give, at least in terms of the *how*.

Tithing is the *easier* of the two. It simply means a routine portion, usually 10%. In an agrarian society, it was a tenth of the livestock or a tenth of the grain. In our economy, it is a tenth of the money, a tenth of our income. Some think of that as a lot, others not so much. When we give we acknowledge God as our provider... so if it is **all** his, 10% doesn’t seem like much; I suppose it could have been the other way around.



I've actually met a few *reverse* tithers... ones who give so generously that they live on 10% of their income, giving the rest away. They found that they cannot *out give* God.

I said tithing was the easier of the two. Maybe it doesn't sound easy, but it really is once you get the hang of it. I've never met a tither who complained that it was *too hard*. I've met plenty of people who imagine it is too hard, or find tithing hard at the very beginning... but never anyone who is in the routine of tithing. If you are not a tither, try it out; I dare you. After you've been at it for a while, feel free to tell me if it is too hard.

I suppose *tithing* requires a certain amount of faith, but it is this matter of ***first fruits*** that really requires faith.

Over and over again in the Bible, God calls His people to give their first fruits. The first of the harvest, and the first born of the livestock. In the Old Testament, God even called for special dedication of the first born children with designated gifts to redeem those first born.

In our day and in our economy, giving *first fruits* for most of us is still pretty easy. For the most part, Laurie and I get paid twice a month. We each have some business income that fluctuates, but the biggest chunks come on the 1st and 15th and it is always the same. So making a first priority of giving isn't much of a leap of faith.

But the way our economy generally operates with a reliable and steady stream of income is *unusual* in the context of all of human history, a relatively recent phenomena. For most people over most of time, productivity fluctuates. When you ask for the ***first*** fruits from a farmer or a shepherd, there is an obvious big problem: they can't be sure that there will be ***second*** fruits. It is reasonable to believe there will be more on the way, but for a long list of reasons (disease, theft, economic crash) one cannot be sure.

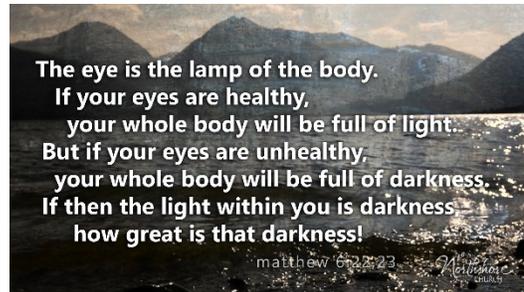
I suppose none of us can really be sure that the next paycheck is coming, but some deal with more volatility than others. Some *eat what they kill*, whether they run their own business, operate on commissions, or gig for a living. It requires faith, and confidence in God, to give first fruits, even if we are not guaranteed that more is on the way.

Giving as God calls us to give, with a tithe and first fruits, changes us. It calls us to live by faith, and demonstrates our trust in God. I suppose it demonstrates our trust in God to those *around* us, but more importantly, it demonstrates our trust in God to ourselves.

Jesus said it, our heart and our treasure are found in the same place; we can know if our heart is with God and His work by taking an honest look at how we deploy our treasure.

Jesus went on to say:

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! ²



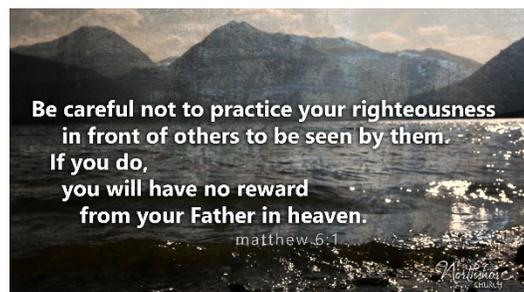
When I first read this, I thought, “What does that have to do with treasure?” We might think that Jesus simply changed topics, but we’ll see in a moment that He hasn’t, as it comes right back to money in the next verse.

Here’s a basic Bible-study tip: When we think that something in the Bible doesn’t make sense, try harder. We should always assume we are wrong about that.

Here’s another basic Bible-study tip: When we think that something in the Bible doesn’t make sense, consider the context.

In our week by week, chunk by chunk, even verse by verse approach, we sometimes lose track that this *Sermon on the Mount* is a **sermon**... one *power packed* string of profound truths (that we are considering in smaller chunks).

So if you have a Bible, look back to what is before. Or if you were here last week, think back to what we covered last Sunday.



² The New International Version. (2011). (Mt 6:22–23). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Before talking about *treasure in Heaven*, Jesus talked about *acts of righteousness* like giving, praying, and fasting. Specifically, Jesus called us to do those acts of righteousness with the right motive and intent, not to impress others.

Considering that context, isn't it obvious that when Jesus spoke of treasure, he wasn't just talking about money, or commodities that we use like money, including livestock and harvest? Our treasure includes our time and attention as well. Our treasure even includes the things we cherish, like admiration and respect.

With that broader understanding of what treasure includes, then these words of Jesus fit right into our understanding.

He said that our eyes are the lamp of the body. We naturally think of a lamp as something that light comes out of... but when it comes to our eyes, it is where the light comes in.

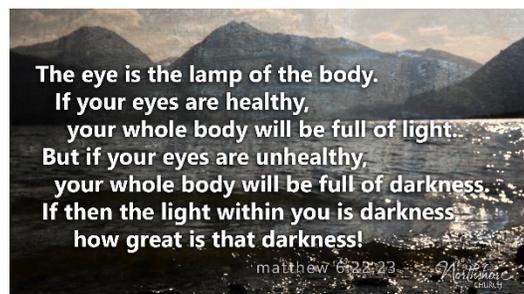
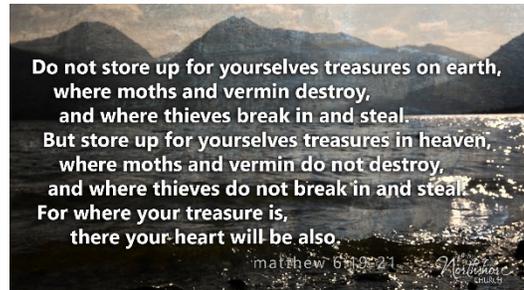
You see, we fix our eyes on that which we treasure. That which we treasure captures our gaze, our lasting and intentional attention. What do we treasure, what has our intention, what light from that treasure is occupying our very being?

When our eyes are fixed on God, His work, His plans and such, then we are full of light. When we treasure God and all things Godly, we are healthy and full of light.

But when we treasure that which comes from our own greed, pride, or lust, our being is full of darkness. When we treasure darkness, we make our souls sick.

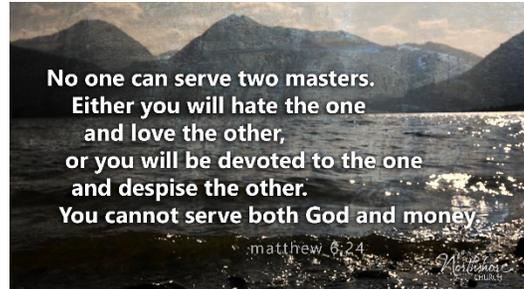
The good news is, of course, light always wins. We are called to treasure the light, that which heals our souls.

We conclude knowing that just because this *treasure in Heaven* isn't merely money, it certainly includes money.



Jesus said:

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.”³



Jesus spoke to an undivided heart. Of course we all have responsibilities to all sorts of authorities, all sorts of masters. We report to bosses and boards. We obey long lists of rules and laws. We have responsibilities to various leaders (like pastors). We function in families and marriages and such. But the question is who, or what, is the **supreme** authority?

In God’s Kingdom, citizens have only one supreme authority. Whatever the other responsibilities, whatever bosses or rules or family members... God has the supreme authority.

Jesus knows us, and knows that we are so easily consumed by our appetites. We so easily serve money, and all that comes with it... from sustenance, to security, and even luxury, power, and prestige. Even with all that money can do, it cannot secure our relationship with God, neither now nor for eternity.

So Jesus asks this implied question: Who will you serve? God, or anything else? God or money? Will we trust in His provision, or hoard what we can to secure our own support? Will our focus be our present, or even our futures... or will our focus be our eternities. We can know our focus by auditing our treasure.



We can’t buy our way into the Gospel, but I think some of us can give our way in. I’m certain we can give our way in deeper.

Here’s what I mean.

³ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Mt 6:24). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Some think of faith and our relationship with God as primarily a heart thing. We feel God's love, experience His power, and sense Him drawing us close.

Others think of faith and our relationship with God as primarily a head thing. We read God's Word and understand His ways. We think theologically and find our relationship primarily a matter of the renewing of our minds.

There are those, too, who think of faith and our relationship with God as primarily a hand thing. We know God by His work through us. Our relationship deepens as we are involved in what He is doing in His world... that may be involvement with our direct activity or even through our giving.

Heart, head, and hand (or wallet) are all ways that build our faith and relationship with God. So when it comes to giving, I'll say it again.

We can't buy our way into the Gospel, but I think some of us can give our way in. I'm certain we can give our way in deeper.

Our treasure not only follows our hearts, sometimes it leads our hearts. The discipline of generosity trains us to trust God, and invigorates us as we are involved in His work in these ways.

Today is a day to believe. Believe that God cares for you, even your treasure. He cares for your heart, and those two are routinely found together.

So as we take a few moments to respond to God, His Word and His Holy Spirit, let's apply what we are hearing. Listen to God today. Hear His call, both from His Word and through the call of His Spirit.