

## Live to Give – Treasure

*Matthew 6:19-24 Do not lay/store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay/store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Generosity – what exactly is generosity for a follower of Christ? Have you personally ever thought or maybe heard someone else say something like this - "After all, I give money to the church, to missions, and even other charities so what I do with my money is my business. Besides, I work really hard for my money so I can provide for my family. Don't you know what *1 Timothy 5:8 says? ...if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.* See, right there in good old ESV translation God tells me to focus my energy on providing for me and mine! Plus, the importance of saving for retirement is critical. Do you know how little income I produce and without a 401k or some other retirement instrument then I have to focus on squirreling away money for later."

Perhaps the scenario I've just mentioned is an extreme view - or is it? I wonder what the discerning mind of God would say about ME and about YOU given he sees every desire and knows every thought we have when it comes to what we treasure and how we utilize it?

### What is a treasure?

- Something of profound value
- Anything that you keep, safeguard, store up, or protect

There are many "treasures" in our lives but what are 2 of the most well-known categories we consider valuable in this world? (Besides our relationships)

- Money
  - Salary
  - Savings
  - Retirement
- Possessions
  - House(s)
  - Car(s), boat, bike, golf clubs, etc.
  - Clothing
  - Jewelry
  - Collectibles
  - Furniture
  - Property
  - Your body
  - Vacation(s)

### 1. Your one true treasure

*Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

- Why does Jesus link the connection of our treasure with our heart? Is the reference to these two objects a physical (matter of the body) or emotional (matter of the mind/soul) connection? The Bible mentions the heart between 500 and 800 times depending on Bible translations and Proverbs 23:7 states that *For as he thinketh in his*

heart, so is he. Proverbs 4:23 states *Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.* According to God the heart is a big deal and is the center of our mortal being. A person's real god is the thing that you counts as your "best," and for which you work most earnestly, which you most long to have, and trembles to think you will lose. That is his god, and his treasure.

- Where do you invest most of your personal energy in life? Take an inventory by listing your top 3 things as it pertains to your:
  - Thoughts - \_\_\_\_\_
  - Activities - \_\_\_\_\_
  - Money - \_\_\_\_\_
- What are some of the feelings (positive and negative) we experience when God gives us the opportunity to give away any portion of what we treasure? For me personally it depends. When I have plenty then I am very willing to give. In fact, I look for opportunities to give. But when I feel that what I have is either running low or just enough for my needs then I tend to fight the urge to be generous. And yet the gratification I receive by giving is beyond description. So why would I resist?

## 2. Ultimate Ownership

*Genesis 1:1-31* In the beginning \_\_\_\_\_...

- What does it mean to be the "owner" of something? You have ultimate and exclusive rights to enjoy, occupy, possess, rent, or sell, A lawful claim or title. Absolute authority and definitive power to control.
- What things does God own and what things do we own? (Psalms 50:1, 7 and 10-12) *The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. "Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."* Is there any doubt that I own nothing in this world?
- What is our "positional" relationship to God?
  - For sure we are His adopted child (Ephesians 1:4-7). What are just 2 implications of being adopted by God? Not only have we been given an eternal inheritance of the riches of Christ but we have been given God's very own nature. We've been bought with a price and so I am only His!
  - We are also asked to be a faithful steward of all that He entrusts to me – we are commanded to be His faithful servant (I Cor. 4:1-2). So everything in our lives is measured and accountable to our Master which is God!
- What are some things that you and I **possess** which are gifts from God? Abilities and talents, families, oxygen to breathe, physical strength, worldly possessions, EVERYTHING comes from God! *Deuteronomy 8:17 – 18a* you may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." **But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.**
- If God is our Father and everything we have is His then how should we view or manage our possessions? *1 Corinthians 4:7* for **who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive [from God]?** And if you did receive it, why do you

*boast as though you did not?* My temptation is to view all my wealth and possessions as MINE! Therefore, I spend most of my time often inadvertently trying to hold onto things for my own purposes. How different would life be if we viewed even the smallest and most insignificant object in my possession (maybe it's a toothbrush, food, a shirt) or more valuable objects (the car, the house, or the bank account) with consistent focus of it is all God's?

### 3. Who or what do we worship?

*Matthew 6:24 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 mammon.*

- What is mammon? Earthly wealth, material treasures – including money
- Do you think people have to sacrifice anything to become enormously wealthy? Where does wealth come from? What do you think you might need to sacrifice daily to become either well off or even really comfortable? Another way of saying that would also be – if being comfortable by this world's standards is a priority then what are the costs to you and me in order to achieve that? On a human level and perhaps at the very least I would think the majority of my thoughts, my time, my resources, and my relationships would be centered on the object of my own comfort. After all, doesn't wealth really amount to comfort? Far too often my motivations in nearly all cases tend to be devoted to the objective of elevating for myself what God originally granted to my stewardship and for His glory?
- Is there a link between what we worry about and what we worship? Yes, fret and worry are indicators of a lack of trust in God as the Ultimate owner and provider for all I "need." When we equate or elevate "mammon" above God we are serving 2 masters
- What are some ways that mammon can become an idol to us? It seems to me that the most obvious moments when I personally make mammon my idol is when I want more of it! Or the fear of not having it or losing it. And so that's when I've elevated it to the level of dependence that is reserved for God only. Mammon promises us those things that only God can give—security, significance, identity, independence, power, and freedom. *Job 31:24-25 says - If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, "you are my security"; if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, And because my hand had gained much; v28 - **this also would be an iniquity deserving of judgment, for I would have denied God who is above.** So how much trust and dependence do you put on what you have in this world – money, possessions, and comfort?*

### 4. What is true security?

*Luke 12:13-21 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."<sup>14</sup> But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?"<sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."<sup>16</sup> And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully,<sup>17</sup> and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'"<sup>18</sup> And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.'<sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."<sup>20</sup> But God said to him, "**FOOL!** This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"<sup>21</sup> So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."*

- Is it wrong to save? No, Proverbs 20:21 says “*a foolish man devours his precious treasures and his oil.*” Proverbs 6:6-8 speaks of the diligence of the ants who prepare their bread in summer so they can harvest food in winter. But for what are you saving? For your own enjoyment or for God and His eternal?
- How much money do you want left when you die and why? Ideally, I want nothing left because I cannot take it with me. I suppose you could argue whatever wealth remains can be designated to be given away but what passage of scripture compels us to **hoard what we have** in this life? Not one single passage advocates this.
- What is real security for a true believer/follower of Christ? The promises of God in His word reveal that as believers and followers of Christ we receive a laundry list of things such as **eternal peace, never ending mercy, joy, hope, adoption as sons of God** with an **inheritance** that is unmatched, **God is our protector**, His **Spirit dwells inside of us**, and **God will meet my every “need.”**
- What does it mean to become rich toward God? Does God need anything? (Acts 17:24-25) “*The Lord doesn’t live in earthly temples made by man nor is he served by human hands. He made everything and gives life and breath to all men.*” Then what does He ultimately want from me? He wants me to value knowing Him, pursuing Him, and reflecting Him in my thoughts, words, and actions as the most valuable treasure forever! It means using your earthly riches to show how much you value God. The rich man in the parable told by Jesus in Luke 12 valued what? *Vs 19 “And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; [therefore] relax, eat, drink, be merry.”* He only valued treasure for himself.
- Is the real issue guarding against being prosperous or wealthy? No, the issue to guard against is how we see our prosperity or wealth or possessions and what we do with it? **“God this is all yours. You made me prosper. All I have (whether much or little) is from you and to be used for your glory. Show me how to bless others. Give to others. And ultimately show you that I value you above everything!”**

##### 5. What does God say about earthly wealth and specifically about money?

*1 Tim 6:10a For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil...*

- What benefit does money bring us? Provision for daily needs, fees for goods and services (food, clothing, housing, transportation, education, etc.)
- Why does the Bible call the love of money “a root” of evil? (1 Tim 6:6-10) Loving anything to that level is the robber of contentment and verse 9 states that loving money or desiring to be rich in this world is such a strong temptation that it leads to greed and compulsion and eventually destruction! Not to mention that if we are so fixated on pursuing wealth or hoarding what we have then the concept of being rich toward others is unlikely. And finally this verse also declares that some will be drawn to stray from their faith in God. They pursue earthly treasure instead of God! The allure is overpowering and we must be careful! Ironically, one of the best TV examples of the corrupting influence that loving money has is a show called *American Greed* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_Greed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Greed)
- Self-reflection – take a minute and write down 2 of your most intense desires?  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ . How does money play a leading role in them?

## 6. So what is the antidote to storing up treasures on earth?

I Tim 6:18 Command them to **do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.**

- Does God command the rich to become poor? **No, the issue is not having money. As a reminder we've already seen scriptures that show everything is created by, owned by, and gifted by our Father in heaven. So wealth in this world is not what offends God. It is when we make it our idol. When we seek IT more than we seek HIM. Luke 12:48 is a sober reminder to every follower of Christ that God holds each one of us personally accountable for what we have in this world. To whom much has been given, much more shall be required. The lesson Jesus was making to his disciples in Luke is that no matter what we have – we glorify him most when we are willing to give it up for Him and the needs of others.**
- What is the purpose of our possessions or wealth? **Manage what we've been entrusted as a steward and be prepared to willingly and even sacrificially give it up for the glory of the Father, His Son, and His Spirit.**
- What, if anything does contentment have to do with storing up treasures in heaven?
  - Ultimately what does being discontent on any level reveal about our view/belief of God? (Hebrews 13:5) **That God himself and the lot He has purposed for my life isn't sufficient. Would you really say that directly to your creator and father?**
  - How do you feel about the statement that "Christians should be satisfied, not seeking for more than God has given them?" (I Tim 6:6-7) **Once we cross the line of contentment which Paul equates with "great gain" we have shifted our worship to something other than God. This is dangerous for the followers of Christ! Every desire must be from the framework of gratitude for the provisions God has determined He wants for us. **The only way I can conceive of asking God for more is IF my motive is so I can GIVE MORE!****
- What would you say contentment looks like for today's Christian? What about the promises of Jesus in Matthew 6:25-34? Or the encouragement from the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:11-13 and Philippians 4:19? **God is the source of all things for my daily needs! So why do I struggle to want beyond what He in His kindness and grace has blessed me and my household with? He promises to cover my needs – I consider that food, clothing, shelter. Anything else He provides is His remarkable kindness!**
- How does the antidote of being "rich in good deeds" combat our temptations or even natural inclinations toward discontentment? **The object of my affection is kindness, mercy, and grace toward others**

## 7. What is our motive and what should be our approach for being generous?

2 Cor. 8:9 For you know the GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

- What are 2 basic motives of generosity (giving)?
  - Obligatory (Romans 13:7-8a) **Give to everyone what you owe them and let no debt remain unpaid**
  - Love/Worship (2 Cor 8:1-7)
- What are the 3 basic approaches to being generous? (2 Cor. 8:1-3) Paul shares the example of the Macedonian church
  - Willingness to give – because God first gave His only son to us
  - Ability to give

- ✚ Proportionally - to what you have (Acts 11:29... the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers in Judea)
- ✚ Sacrificially – 2 Cor. 8:1-7 the Macedonians gave beyond their ability (out of their deepest poverty)
- Cheerful (derived from the word “hilarious”) – the Macedonians gave “out of the abundance of their joy.” Joy here means “surplus”. Even though the Macedonians were themselves in severe economic distress, they gave liberally because of their devotion to The Lord

## 8. Investing in God’s Kingdom

**Luke 12:33** Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail...

- Give expecting God to bless (2 Cor. 9:6 ...he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully)
- Give as God places the needs of the local ministry, global advancement of the gospel, and the spiritual, physical or financial needs of others (Acts 2:44-45, I John 3:17, Galatian 6:10)
  - Pray – ask God for specific leading on if and in what way you should respond to needs that God places in your path
  - Purpose in your heart to give and take the action you commit to God (2 Cor. 9:7) *so let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity (external pressure)...*
  - Give unto the Lord as an extension of His love to us – you are His and an instrument of His glory, power, mercy, and grace!

## 9. Who does God command that we need to meet the needs of?

**I John 3:17, 19** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;

- Meet the need of the saints/fellow believers in Christ (Acts 2:44-45)
- Meet the needs of those called to preach and teach (I Tim.5:17-18)
- Meet the needs of the poor (Luke 12:33a and Eph. 4:28b)
- Meet the needs of orphans and widows (James 1:27)

## 10. So now what?

- What are the treasures in my life that I am elevating to an idol status?
- What is God revealing/showing me about His power to create and own all things?
- What is my role as a faithful steward of God’s bounty? Am I playing the part of “owner” or “steward/servant”
- How does God want me to change regarding my generosity toward His kingdom especially through His vehicles of ministry?
- Am I hoarding the wealth God has given me in this world (my time, my talents, and my money) thereby disobeying His command to be content, avoid the love of money, and give cheerfully and generously?

**Conclusion:** When we are a blessing to others through our generosity ultimately that is praise and glory for our Father in Heaven and His son, our Savior. **2 Corinthians 9:10-15** He who supplies seed to the

sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. ***Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gifts!***