KINGDOM *of* HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Matthew 6:19-34

(Sermon from Sunday 18 June 2023, Richard van Lieshout)

1. Information

a) Read the passage, perhaps twice using two different versions

b) Fill in any info that didn't make it into the sermon.

- There are no additional notes on this passage on anger in the CG guide.
- Following are some important additional notes for y'all.

- The context of this week's passage in relation to the Sermon on the Mount can be seen in the following structural outline:
  - A) Introduction: The call to Gods people (5:3-16)
  - B) The body: Greater righteousness for Gods people (5:17-7:12)
    - Greater Righteousness in relation to **Gods laws** (5:17-48)
    - Greater Righteousness in relation to piety towards God (6:1-21)
    - ***Greater Righteousness in relation to the world (6:19-7:12)***
      - **Introduction (6:19-21)**
      - **In relation to goods of this world (6:22-34)**
      - In relation to people of this world (7:1-6)
      - Conclusion (7:7-12)
  - C) Conclusion: Three warnings regarding the prospect of judgment (7:13-27)
    - Two kinds of paths (7:13-14)
    - Two kinds of prophets (7:15-23)
    - Two kinds of builders (7:24-27)

- Thus we are still talking about the subject of 'righteousness' and how it relates to being 'perfect' (5:48). You may recall from my sermon two weeks ago that this idea of 'perfect' is related to the idea of 'wholeness' ie inside & outside being in sync.
- This theme continues in the passage for today, where Jesus addresses how people can not serve both God & money (6:24), and advocates a singular pursuit of God and His kingdom (5:33).

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- Following are some exegetical notes for the verses, most of which were not used in the sermon.

Exegetical notes on the text

V19-21:

- On '*treasure*' compare:
  - "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matt 13:44)
  - "And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."" (Matt 13:52)
  - "Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."" (Matt 19:21)
- The accumulation of wealth is a precarious pursuit due to natural laws of deterioration and fact that we live in a fallen world.
- 'I do not cling to these things. They do not become the centre of my life and existence. I do not live for them or dwell upon them constantly in my mind; they do not absorb my life. On the contrary, I hold them loosely. . . .I am not governed by them; rather do I govern them; and as I do this I am steadily securing, and safely laying up for myself, "treasures in heaven." (Martyn Loyd-Jones)
- 'Invest your life in what God is doing, which cannot be lost' (Dallas Willard)

V22-23:

- A helpful translation (Jonathan Pennington):
  - "The eye is the lamp of the body. Therefore, if your eye is whole and generous then your whole body will be enlightened. But if your eye is evil and greedy then your whole body will be darkened. Thus, if the light that is in you is darkness, what darkness that is! No one is able to serve two lords, for the one he will hate and the other he will love, or he will be devoted to the one and think little of the other. You are not able to serve money and God"
- On the '*healthy*' eye:
  - ἁπλοῦς - haplous
  - We may note that the related adverb haplōs can mean "generously" (James 1:5) and the noun haplotēs can communicate "generosity" (Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13).

V24:

- This verse is not a new idea or separate proverbial saying but the climactic point of 6:22–24—one must be singular in devotion to God.
- In the sermon I talk about how a 'love' for money can lead to a 'hate' for God, referencing 1 Timothy 6. To explore this idea more you could look at Mark 10:17-27.
- On '*mammon*'
  - The term 'money' is used to translate 'mammon', the Aramaic term for wealth or possessions.
  - In Greek this is actually a transliteration of the Aramaic word referring to property, possessions, or money. Why Matthew chose to retain an Aramaic transliteration rather than translate it himself into a Greek word for either "money," "treasure," or "material possessions" is impossible to know for sure. Maybe it is simply the power of the well-known phrase from the Jesus Tradition in his own day. Or it may be that by keeping the foreign word as a transliteration it adds an element of personification—God is pitted against Mammon, reminiscent of ancient Israelite showdowns between Yahweh and the false idols of the world (Pennington)
  - This means more than "physical money" here, but the broader sense of "the goods of the world that money can buy."
  - The point is not that money is inherently evil, but that it is often misused so that it is a means of evil (see 1 Tim 6:6-10, 17-19). Here "money" is personified as a

potential master and thus competes with God for the loyalty of the disciple. The passage is ultimately not a condemnation of wealth (there is no call here for absolute poverty) but a call for unqualified discipleship. God must be first, not money or possessions.

V25-34:

- Turner sums up the issue well in saying that God does not promise an easy life for his children (cf. 5:10–12) and that his care "may entail poverty for some and wealth for others. Wealthy Christians are not necessarily greedy, and poor Christians are not necessarily free of anxiety about possessions"
- *'Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing'*
    - Avoid the reductionist mindset: you are more than what you eat and what you wear
- *'Your heavenly father feeds them'*
    - Compare with the Lord's prayer 'Our Father…give us this day our daily bread'
- *'And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?'*
    - Worry reduces our lifespan (effects of stress), it doesn't increase it!
- *'O you of little faith'*
    - 5 times in the Bible, 4 in Matthew (1 in Luke, who picks up on Matthew in a parallel passage)
    - Matt 8:26 "And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm"
    - Matt 14:31 "Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?""
    - Matt 16:8 "But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread?"
- *'Consider the lilies of the field'*
    - 'It seems . . . that the flowers stand there and make us blush and become our teachers. Thank you, flowers, you, who are to be devoured by the cows! God has exalted you very highly, that you become our masters and teachers.' Martin (Luther)
- '*For the Gentiles seek after all these things'*
    - The characteristic tendency of those without christ is to be bound by the horizons of earth. Everything is crammed into the visible. This, in turn, promotes worry about secondary matters such as food an clothes
- '*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you'*
    - 'First' is to be understood logically more than chronologically; the first thing is that one's heart is the singular aim and goal.
    - Ie 'hunger and thirst for righteousness' (5:6)

V34:

- 6:34 and its exhortation to not worry about tomorrow is a conclusion to the warning against storing up earthly treasures in 6:19–21.
- 'No man ever sank under the burden of the day. It is when tomorrows burden is added to the burden of today, that the weight is more than a man can bear' (George Macdonald)

Sermon Outline

- I outlined the sermon as follows:
    1. **The Spiritual Danger of Materialism (v19-24)**
        a) Storing up treasure (v19-21)
        b) The healthy eye (v22-23)
        c) Two masters (v24)
    2. **The Scourge of Worldly Worry (25-34)**

2. Activation

- Below are some activation questions based on the sermon.

- **The spiritual Danger of Materialism (v19-24)**
    a) I used the Cambridge definition of Materialism, which says that materialism is:
        - '*The belief that having money and possessions is the most important thing in life.'*
        - *'The belief that only physical matter exists and the spiritual world does not.*'
        - How well do you think this definition corresponds with Jesus's teaching in these verses?
    b) How have you experienced the loss of treasure due to 'moth, rust & theft'?
    c) In the sermon I spoke about the fact that having material possessions usually leads to increased desire for more possessions, ie never being satisfied with what we have. How have you experienced this in your life?
    d) As a group wrestle with the concept of 'the eye as the lamp', considering the extramission/intromission views, summarised as:
        - The difference between these views concerns whether ancient people thought about light/images going into the eye from outside (intromission, as modern people think of it today) or rather as the eye reflecting and projecting what is inside (extramission) (Pennington)
        - Note**:** You will need the sermon context for help here!
    e) In the sermon I do a little exercise with Jesus's 'Two masters' rhetoric (v24), where we interrogate the implications of his statement by considering:
        i. If you Love money, will you end up hating God?
        ii. If you love God, will you end up hating money?
    Wrestle through this again with your group!
    f) As part of exercise (i) above I mentioned 1 Timothy 6:6-10 & 17-18. Read these scriptures again and discuss them[1] You can also discuss Mark 10:17-27.
    g) Why does Jesus contrast God with money as opposed to something else? What about money makes it particularly capable of being a master over people?
    h) How do you lessen your desire for money and earthly treasure and increase your desire for God and heavenly treasure?
    i) How is Jesus's previous discussion about prayer and fasting connected to Jesus's teaching about treasures and money? How do prayer and fasting (or the lack thereof) affect what you treasure?

[1] I did a sermon on this passage in May 2021 which can be found here https://sermons.ruc.org.za/sermons/godly-contentment/

- **The Scourge of Worldly Worry (v25-34)**
    a) Reflect on the three repetitions of 'Therefore do not be anxious' (v25, 31, 34)
    b) Reflect on the concept of 'Our heavenly father knows' (v31-32), comparing it to the opening line of the Lords prayer (6:9&11), as well as Jesus's teaching on 'True Religion', where the concept of our 'Heavenly Father' appears four times in this section (6:1-18)
    c) In the sermon I was clear in delineating what Jesus is **not** saying:
        i. He is not saying all worry is sin
        ii. He is not saying we don't need to work
        iii. He is not saying we shouldn't plan or care about provision
        Discuss these with your group.
    d) How does Jesus's instruction not to worry about what you eat shape how you think about diets, eating lifestyles, and food choices? What is the difference between wise eating and worry eating?
    e) What in your life creates the most worry? Why does that event or item cause you to worry? What does the gospel say about that issue that can help you trust God?
    f) Discuss Jesus's conclusion in v34, and especially consider why he didn't just end this section with the epic v33?

3. <u>Implementation</u>

- Be sure to end your session by outlining practical steps the group can take to practise this outlook in their lives in the week.