

Putting Your Heart Where Your Treasure Is

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[0 : 0 0] Humans, that's us, are very good at focusing on the wrong thing, thinking it will deliver the very thing that we need. And if you've seen those videos where children are given, very young children, 3, 4, 5, are given a marshmallow.

And they get told, listen, don't touch the marshmallow. It's an experiment. Don't touch the marshmallow. If you don't touch the marshmallow, when the person giving instructions comes back, they're going to get two marshmallows.

And then you see these poor children scream and squirm, and there's a timer running to see how long it takes before that first handful of marshmallows is taken. And the experiment is to find out how much self, how long you can handle not taking stuff and just staying there and saying no.

Now I've seen another video of a dad offering his 3 or 4 year old the choice between a plate full of cash, a pile full of cash and sweets.

Oh, you see, okay. And he's trying to convince the child, what is the value? Is the money valuable? Is the sweets valuable? And the child is like, no dude, the sweets. The sweets are the thing.

[1 : 2 0] The sweets are the thing. And he grabs the sweets. The thing is, we're not too different as adults. We think we wouldn't sell the best part of our lives for little baubles and treasures and sweets.

But Jesus warns us in our passage today that we can be exactly like that. That our eyes and our heart focus too easily on money and possessions and substitute that with the thing that's most important in our lives, and that's God and his kingdom.

So we too easily, our eyes and heart too easily focus on money and possessions and use that as a substitute for what God gives us himself and in his kingdom.

Now, of course, when we put it like that, that we use, as adults even, we use, we look to money and stuff as a substitute for God.

You know, none of us would say that we do that. We love God. Is it okay to say we love money? We love the stuff that God gives us.

[2 : 3 2] It sounds funny to say that we love money. We've got to work out what our relationship is between money and God and what priorities must come first.

And Jesus knows how easily our hearts are fooled, so he tells us what we need to do to make sure our hearts don't run after counterfeit wealth, counterfeit value, stuff that holds no actual value, and instead get our hearts to treasure what is of real value.

And we'll see in our passage there that the reason for that is when we allow our hearts to run after the wrong stuff, unchecked, it does real damage to our heart and real damage to our relationship with God.

We're like that, there's another experiment, lots of experiments, but there's where the monkey takes peanuts out of the jar, and he wants, he's not going to let go.

He wants his cake and he wants to eat it in a sense. And we're a bit like that. We want our cake and we want to eat it. We run out for the wrong stuff, but God is saying, look, you've got to make a choice between the stuff in your life and me, and he wants us to prioritize him.

[3 : 4 4] And the first thing to do is to make sure that you store up the right kind of treasure in the right place. To make sure that you're not damaging your heart and you're not damaging your relationship with God, the first thing to do is to make sure you store up the right kind of treasure in the right place.

So store up stuff that lasts, not stuff that doesn't last. Have a look at verse 19 in our passage today. Jesus is talking to his disciples, to the people gathered around as he's giving this sermon about the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven.

He says, do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, depending on your translation, it might read vermin, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, for where your heart is, sorry, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Now, this is literally some of the best investment advice you can ever get, ever. And it seems very straightforward and obvious. Don't save up treasure, stuff, possessions, money on earth because it doesn't last down here.

If you're going to save up stuff, save it stuff that lasts forever and save it in a place where it is going to last forever. Store up treasure in heaven where things last way, way longer than on earth.

[5 : 23] Now, it's easy for us to identify what the stuff is on earth, treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in. None of us is, if I have to ask hands up, who's had stuff stolen?

Pretty much all of us would probably raise our hands. Who's had rust eat something nice and shiny and new? Many of us. Who's had moths eat their clothes? You don't often see that, but if you take out your summer clothes, you might see that the moths have been busy in your cupboards. But what is treasure in heaven? And how do I store it up there? Well, Jesus doesn't tell us in this passage. But perhaps the best way to think of treasure in heaven is that it consists of everything that is promised in the gospel.

Treasures in heaven is really everything that is promised in the gospel. It's Jesus himself.

He is our treasure. He is our great reward. He is our high priest. He is our king. He is our savior and our friend. So it includes him. He's the number one offer in the gospel.

[6 : 36] It's about Jesus. But then it's more, it's also, it's not just about him. Treasures in heaven. It's also about the intangible relational stuff that makes it possible to have Jesus as our king and flow, to have Jesus as our king and have all the stuff that flows from him as our king and to him.

So it's his love. It's his mercy. It's his kindness, his forgiveness and patience, his faithfulness, his righteousness and his blessings.

And it's also the physical stuff that we'll get at the resurrection. So it's Jesus. It's the stuff that flows from having, from being in a relationship with him.

And it's the physical stuff that we're going to get at the resurrection. Our bodies. Our land. Land. Remember that that's what's promised in the Old Testament. And everything we need to live without working for it.

The new heavens and the new earth. So the stuff that lasts is Jesus. He's our treasure. He's our great reward. There's nothing better than him.

[7 : 48] But it's all the stuff that flows from him. All these good things that he promises in the gospel. The blessings that we've seen at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. As well as the stuff that we're going to inherit one day at the resurrection.

And you can spend lots of time thinking about the kind of stuff that you're going to get at the resurrection. I don't know if you do, but I do sometimes. What the land will look like. Where it will be. Who's going to be there. How we'll enjoy it together. But the nice thing is you can enjoy it together because it's going to be a place full of the stuff that we get from Jesus. Love. And mercy.

And kindness. And goodness. And forgiveness. And patience. And patience. It's going to be a land filled with people like that. And to top it off, Jesus is going to be there as well.

Now put all of that kind of stuff against what we treasure on earth. Not just money, but anything you possess or have value.

[8 : 51] Anything that draws your attention or your energy and your emotions. Your car. Your cars. Maybe you've got more than one car. Your kids. Your job or your relationships. And they have to pale in comparison to what we're being promised and offered in the gospel.

Even your children. Which of course, the parents will be the number one treasure in your life. I mean, you can have the most expensive car. The best house.

The most amazing job. But Jesus says, what good is it if you gain the whole world and you lose your soul? There's no good in that. It's pointless because this is stuff that you can't keep.

It's stuff that can't give you the value that you need. It's stuff that can't give you the food that you need for your life. Only Jesus can do that. Only God can do that. And we know that all this stuff can be gone in an instant.

We've got no control over it. They don't deliver the value that we think they will. They always leave us unsatisfied. You know that new car feeling that you get? Gosh, who last bought a brand new

car?

[9 : 57] So, but you know when you do that lovely new car smell? Mmm. And you feel so good and comfortable. But you know, there's a...

It peters off very quickly. Just a couple of days. Maybe a couple of weeks. And then it looks like your old car. To spend time working for treasures that don't last and not working for treasures that do last is the ultimate in folly and the ultimate waste of time.

So if Jesus and everything he promises us in the gospel are of an order of magnitude, better than anything I can desire or have here, how do I get that treasure?

I know how I get earthly treasure. I work very hard for it and I don't... You know, we don't get a lot of it. Get some of it. But how do I store up treasure there? How do I make sure I get more of the stuff that lasts?

That's the next point that Jesus makes in this section. And he says essentially that to... You've got to give to receive.

[11 : 14] To get heavenly treasure, you've got to give away your earthly treasure. To get this heavenly treasure that he's offering in the gospel, you've got to give away your earthly treasure.

You've got to give in order to receive. And he gives us totally counterintuitive advice. Actually, totally upside down advice. It's totally opposite to how our hearts work.

Because if we want to get something, we get it. We take it. We don't give it away. The very definition of having something is having it, not giving it away. We think if we give it away, we don't have it.

But in the economy of the kingdom, it works the other way around. To get heavenly treasure, we've got to give away our earthly treasure. In other words, Jesus wants his people to be generous.

Now, why am I saying that? Because the second section in our passage today doesn't sound like it's talking about being generous. So have a look at verse 22.

[12 : 17] The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness. Now, it may seem obscure to us, but what is Jesus talking about here?

Well, remember, he's Jewish. And he's using a Jewish metaphor for what happens to our eyes, how our eyes operate. And the Bible is actually full of these expressions about what having a good eye and having a bad eye means.

When I say full, it's got references to it. And essentially, to have a good eye is to be generous, and to have a bad eye is to be stingy.

In that passage we read earlier from Deuteronomy, where God is telling his people to be generous, where the law of forgiving debt every seven years is coming up.

[13 : 25] And he says in the passage in verse 9, I'll just read it for us. Deuteronomy 15, verse 9. Be careful, God says, do not harbor this wicked thought. Oh, the seventh year, the year for cancelling debts is near.

So that you do not show ill will toward the needy among you, and your fellow Israelites, and give them nothing. Give generously to them, and do so without a grudging heart.

Now, where it says, so that you do not, make sure you don't show them any ill will, the Hebrew is, do not show them a bad eye. Do not look at them skiff. Because now you know, you know what it's like when, I don't know what it's like when, when someone owes you money, yeah, you know what it's like when you owe someone money, you also, you sort of, but you, there are guys looking at you with an eye like, listen, I want my stuff.

And so, I'll just keep away from the mic there. So, to show ill will is to have an evil eye, to look at someone with a bad eye. Why? Because you're not looking at them well, you're not judging them nicely, you're judging them, and you want stuff from them.

You don't want to give them stuff. You want your stuff for yourself. And then later on, it says, give generously to them, do so without a grudging heart, that give generously is, have a good eye towards them.

[14 : 44] Look nicely towards them, smile, and give them the stuff that they need. And so, Jesus is saying, he wants his people to be generous, to store up treasure, to get more of the stuff that lasts, we must get rid of the stuff that doesn't last.

That's the stuff that we've got now. And that's where the rubber hits the road. I don't know about you, but this immediately puts my heart to the test. Whether I really treasure what Jesus treasures, and what he tells me to do, or if I treasure my stuff more than him, or even just more than others. Because if I treasure earthly treasure, I am going to be stingy. I'm going to hold tightly to my treasure and not want to share it, because if I share it, I lose it.

But as we said, the economy of God doesn't, the economy of God's kingdom doesn't work like that. It works the opposite way with him.

In his economy, it's more blessed to give than to receive. Because when you do that, you're showing that this stuff down here is not important, but that you're trusting God, and that his stuff is more important, and the stuff that he promises to give you is more important.

[16:07] Now, we don't like to be stingy or called to be stingy. It's not a nice word. But what God wants us to do here, what Jesus is saying, is he wants us to be generous.

And that's quite a difficult concept to get hold of, to be generous. You know, if he told us, listen, I want you to tithe, like in the Old Testament, then you would know how much you've got to give, and where you stand with receiving treasures in heaven, or storing up, I should say, treasures in heaven.

Oh, give 10%. There you know. You give a 9%. You're a little bit short. You've got to give a bit more. God doesn't want to work like that, especially not with us in the New Testament. So he gives it just a broad-based, you've got to be generous.

And that's actually a genius thing, is to not give us the answer, because what that does is it forces me now to think about being generous. Now, I'm not calculating, have I reached 10%.

Generous is much broader than that. It could be more. It could be less than 10%. It all depends.

You've got to force yourself to think, am I being generous with the stuff that God has given me?

[17:22] Am I a generous person? Well, the antidote to being stingy is to be generous.

If you're not a generous person, the thing to do is to practice generosity. It's actually a very easy thing to not be stingy.

It's actually quite simple. Just give stuff, even whether you like it or not, don't do it crumpily if you can help it, but God wants us to be generous. And so the way to be generous, it's not a difficult thing.

You just, I'm trying to find something to give away, but I've got to keep everything here. Not for me, just for the whole sound setup. But it's easy to be generous.

It's not difficult to be generous. The difficulty is us wanting to be generous. That's the difficult bit. But being generous is an open-ended question, and so it's forcing this kind of passage, when Jesus talks about what we must do with our stuff and being generous, it forces us to think whether we are really being generous, and how generous are we, and can we be more generous?

[18:39] I guess we could always be more generous. There's a thing that Jesus will be pushing us towards. The other thing you can do is to check with others. They will tell you.

They will tell you whether you're a generous person or not. It's just the best thing to do, very often in the Christian life, if you're not sure you're doing the things that you're supposed to be doing, or not doing them well, or could be doing them in a different way, the very best thing to do is ask another Christian.

Your spouse is your first port of call. Am I being generous in this situation, or am I being stingy in this situation? And you can have a discussion about that. So this idea of generosity forces us into community and conversation, which I think Jesus wants, because he doesn't want us just to sit there and calculate how much we're supposed to give, and we've done the 10% thing, and that's fine.

He wants us to speak with each other and spur each other on to acts of generosity, and you can only do that if you're asking and checking about how generous are we being. Another way to check your level of generosity, I guess, is to literally see what is your eye looking at.

Is it looking at stuff that you want to keep for you, or is it looking for need in others so that you can give stuff to them? Is it looking for stuff for you, or is it looking for opportunities to help others?

[20:05] And being generous with stuff, it's not just about money. We know that. Are you generous with your time? Are you generous with your car?

Are you generous with your food? Can you be generous with your data? Got lots of people, just in our church, that can use people who are generous with their stuff, not just with their money.

So, store up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Jesus is saying, store up, make sure you're storing up stuff that lasts, not storing up stuff that doesn't last.

Secondly, to store up stuff that lasts, give stuff away that doesn't last. Give your earthly stuff away. How much must you give away? Jesus says, be generous.

Don't look at the world with a bad eye, look at it with a good eye. But, if you find that you're not generous, you really do want to fix that problem, because it does way more damage, being stingy, being not generous, does way more damage to us than we think.

[21 : 33] So, we need to look at the cost of earthly treasure, the cost of holding on to earthly treasure. The price you'll pay to keep earthly treasure will cost you more than you think.

That's the last point we'll look at. And so, like all good investment advisors, Jesus tells us that what we will miss out on if we don't take him up on his offer. But, unlike worldly investment advice, if we don't listen to Jesus, it can cost us our very heart and soul.

Instead of just missing out on an opportunity to get rich, it's actually going to cost you more than you think. And so, Jesus gives us, in fact, in each section of this passage today, he gives a warning, a really, quite a heavy warning, gets heavier and heavier as you go along in the passage.

So, not following Jesus' advice on what to do with stuff and how to, and to store up stuff in heaven will result in your ultimate ruin.

So, that last section, verse 24, he says, no one can serve two masters, either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other, and he just lays it out straight.

[22 : 44] You cannot serve both God and money. You cannot serve both God and money. So, to focus on storing up treasures on earth means you end up having money as your God because you're looking to it to supply you with eternal treasures, peace, joy, contentment, safety, comfort, security.

So, no one saves up money to have money. Like, no one saves up money just to have little pieces of paper. That's not why we have money. We have money because of what it can do for us, and what we want it to do for us is give us security, give us joy, give us peace, give us comfort, give us pleasure.

And God is saying, no, but we must get those things from him first, not from the stuff in the world, because when you get it from the stuff in the world, it does very, very bad things to you, and it does very bad things with your relationship with him because it means that you love that stuff more than him.

And we all know that gods are jealous. You can't, here you can't have your cake and eat it. You need to choose one or the other. You can't be both a Bok and a New Zealand fan. You know that you're going to hate the one team and love the other team.

You cannot serve both God and money. But Jesus gives us other warnings before he ends in that last section, so I don't know if you noticed, but take that first bit about verse 19, verse 19, don't store up yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, where things get eaten, and where thieves break in and steal.

[24 : 27] Store up yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust don't destroy, where thieves don't break and steal. For, he ends that little bit, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. You think, okay, well, it's fine if my treasure's in heaven, then my heart will be with my treasure in heaven.

But what he's saying is that your heart is going to run after treasure of some kind. Where your treasure is, your heart will be. We think where our heart is, that's where our treasure is going to be. He's like, no, your heart is going to run after stuff. Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is going to be. And so what's going to happen to your heart if it's following earthly treasure?

Because what happens to earthly treasure? It gets eaten. It gets wasted. It fades away. It becomes nothing. It becomes useless. It becomes dead. Your heart chases after treasure, but it doesn't know what is good or bad.

It just wants stuff, almost anything. You need to direct your heart here. If it goes after treasure, earthly treasure, treasure that's destroyed, it is also going to be destroyed.

[25 : 39] Okay, well, how do you direct your heart? Well, that's what he says in the next few verses. Depends on what you do with your eyes. Your heart seems to follow what your eye is looking at.

Verse 22, the eye is the lamp of the body. That's also strange. We think of the eye as a window of our body, not as the lamp. So, eyes are shining out. But maybe the eyes, it's difficult to know what Jesus means there, but the eyes are, maybe they're shining in.

Maybe that's the metaphor. Because, he says, if your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. We know that our eyes are connected to our brains, not our bodies.

Our bodies are dark. If you open up, our bodies are dark. But it's a metaphor. You will be good if your eyes are focusing on the right thing. But, he says, if your eyes are bad, if you're stingy, if you're not generous, if you're stingy, if you just hold on to stuff, and we think stingy, yeah, that guy's a stingy guy.

He's just a, he's a, yeah, just a stingy. It's not bad. It's not, we don't think of it that bad a thing. Jesus says, it's really, really bad. If your eyes are bad, verse 23, your whole body will be full of darkness.

[26 : 48] And if then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness? No one is quite sure what he means by that darkness, but I think you can agree with me, it doesn't sound good.

It's not something that you want in your life. We do use phrases like, that person is full of darkness. When we say that, we don't mean something nice by that.

That means that person is, there's something really wrong with that person. That person is full of darkness, full of evil. You can't trust them. They're going to do something bad. Or maybe it's someone who's a shallow shell of their former self, like someone on drugs.

Or like Gollum from Lord of the Rings, whose eyes are only fixated on this one thing, and he can't think of anything else. It's the only thing he can think about. You become like the living dead.

That's what you become if you chase after stuff on earth. You'll have lots of stuff, but you'll be dead inside. You'll be dead to God, of no use to his kingdom.

[27 : 57] And then, like we saw at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, if you're not, Jesus says you're the light of the world, can't be hidden, but he also says you're the salt of the earth.

And if you know, and he says if you're not salty enough, we're just going to throw the salt out, because salt has got to do stuff. And so if you're dead inside, if you're focusing on the stuff that you can get here, not focusing on the stuff that God can give you, through the gospel, through Jesus, you can't be of good use to the kingdom.

And then like salt that doesn't work, just going to throw us out. Because he wants us to be the light of the world, not the darkness of the world. So if you are focusing on earthly treasure, you destroy your heart, you'll lose your soul, this idea of darkness, and you'll cut off your relationship with God, or rather he'll cut off his relationship with you.

You can't serve two masters. Eventually, that tug of war becomes too much, and it's only by the grace of God that we learn to give up the stuff of this world.

Left to our own devices, this is all we can see, this is all you're going to go for. Rather, Jesus says, chase after God, think about what God offers you in the gospel, chase after those things, and you'll have light streaming into you, you'll then have light streaming out of you, and you'll know if you're doing it, when you're being generous with your stuff.

[29 : 45] Now, of all people, as we close, Paul, the apostle Paul, knew about getting rid of earthly things, and holding on to what is true. He recounts all the things that he had as a Jew before he became a Christian in the letter to the Philippians.

So maybe just turn to Philippians chapter 3, and I'll just give us a quote, and we'll end our time there. Paul's remembering all the stuff that he's had.

I'll read from verse 3, chapter 3, verse 3 in Philippians. If anyone else thinks he's reasoned to put confidence in the flesh, to boast in the flesh, to have treasures on earth, I have got more reason to boast about the treasures I've got.

I was circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law of Pharisee, as for zeal, persecuting the church, as for legalistic righteousness, absolutely faultless.

He had it all according to worldly standards. He was on the upper, he was going somewhere. Everyone knew him. He just had to follow that path, and he would have all the riches, all the security, all the influence.

[31 : 17] And then he met Jesus, and it changed everything. And he says this in verse 7, whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What's more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I've lost everything. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

That's of far more value to Paul than all the stuff that he used to have. Look at the stuff that he gets or that he's holding onto in the gospel.

Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, working hard to get that righteousness, working hard to get those treasures, but I've got that which is through faith in Christ. The righteousness of God is through faith in Christ. I've just been given it. Jesus just gave it to me. I don't have to work for it. I can actually relax. I can let go of the stuff that I've been holding onto. And now hold onto Christ.

[32 : 26] The righteousness that he gives that comes from God and is by faith, you just have to believe it, and there you've got it. That's also how you build up treasures in heaven, by just trusting Christ more and more with the stuff that he says he's going to give you.

And that he will do if you trust him. And that he will provide if you trust him. And then he ends with, I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Now he talks about suffering there, but we've all got to go through suffering. But look at the prize that he's thinking about. Christ himself, righteousness from God, and the resurrection. And so to avoid the deadly danger of overvaluing earthly treasure, we must be like Paul and treasure Christ above all things.

And that leaves us with one question that we're going to answer next week about stuff in this world, but what about stuff for daily living? How are we to relate to that and not worry?

But if you want to know how to get rid of worry in your life, then come and join us next week as Jesus helps us understand how to trust him better. Let me pray for us. Lord Jesus, you tell us to not hold on to treasures on earth, not to store up treasures on earth, not to treasure our treasures on earth, but to rather treasure the treasure that you offer us in heaven.

[34 : 09] Lord, thank you that that's you. Thank you for the promises of the gospel and the future of land and resurrection and all the good things that you promise us.

Lord, you want us to be generous with our stuff now. It's so easy for us to be stingy, Lord. We're sorry for that. Help us, Father, to be a church, to be a people, to be each individually generous towards others with our stuff, with our time, knowing that we've got plenty, plenty, plenty of stuff available to us in the world to come.

We're not going to lose out on anything by sharing what we've got now. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.