

Where Is Your Treasure?

Sermon, March 6, 2022

Scripture Reading: Malachi 3:6-14 & Matthew 6:19-34

Golden Verse: *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Matthew 6: 21

With this passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is talking about one of the most pressing problems of everyday life: the problem of managing our material wealth, managing our money. Talking about money is a delicate and uncomfortable issue because usually no one is willing to let someone else look into their wallet. However, Jesus has the power to do that, and this is exactly what He wants to do with us today as He talks to us. His word always challenges us, where it is necessary He corrects us and then uplifts us, giving a new and better direction. Let us stand before our Lord Jesus Christ with an open heart today so He might be able to talk to our listening ears and listening hearts. Let us accept His guidance in this confusing world about our financial issues.

The keyword that Jesus highlights here can be expressed in one word:
MATERIALISM.

This is a dangerous word which can cause even God's children many challenges. And if we don't know how to navigate this issue, then we will be in a danger. This is one of the most acute dangers in the world today.

Some people see only positive challenges in materialism and in money. Their goal often is only to have more and more, and they believe that if they have more, they will be happier.

Let me illustrate this with a funny but sad example. In 1955, an advertisement for a large car dealer appeared in one of the newspapers with the following words:

LIFE GOALS:

- in 1945, the most burning goal was to quench hunger;
- in 1948, our goal was to have a bicycle;
- in 1953 to have a motor bike;
- in 1955 to have a car.

That car dealer created this so called “clever advertisement” to sell as many cars as possible, and they did well. But with this advertisement, they not only promoted their cars, but also sold a certain worldview: a worldview about the purpose of life. They were selling a new purpose of life, saying that the purpose of your life should be to have a car. Nothing else, nothing less and nothing more.

Once, somebody did research among young people asking them one question: if a fairy appeared to fulfill just ONE of their wishes, what would they want?

The responses the researcher received were all about material goods. Most of them had only financial desires such as a lot of money, luxury homes, cottages on the Caribbean, yachts, and they went on and on. Only 6% named spiritual values such as contentment, solid character, spiritual peace. The danger is that most people’s life goals are only to collect treasures on earth.

Please do not take me wrong and try to understand me correctly. It is not a problem that we have goals and we want something better, a more comfortable and better quality life. Jesus does not want to discourage any of us from working to create and to provide, or even from saving. But He wants us to do all these things in the right way. Jesus does not say: do not gather treasure on earth. What He said is: *“Do not gather treasures ONLY for yourself on earth”* (Matthew 6:19a). The key word in this sentence is for “yourself”. The major problem is that we tend to gather goods ONLY for ourselves.

So, the treasure hunt is dangerous only if we want everything and only for ourselves, and for this we sacrifice higher values for it. If we want to earn treasures with a selfish heart and only the treasures will fill our hearts, then we are in trouble.

Jesus said: *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (Matthew 6:21). The human’s greatest temptation is to pile up earthly treasures and money. The problem is that, after a short while, money can rule over our hearts, our feelings, and our relationships, over thoughts, aspirations, desires, emotions, and moods. In this case, we might have only ONE GOAL and purpose in life: MONEY, and we will do everything to have more. Money will rule over our souls and we will become slaves of money. Money will tell us what to do.

It's staggering how much power money can have over us. Money is associated by Jesus with Mammon, which in the pagan world was the evil god of money. This is why Jesus said: "*you cannot serve God and Mammon*" (Matthew 6:24c). Jesus Christ portrays Mammon almost as a competitor to God. You could ask: is that not an exaggeration? Certainly not, because by nature we put our trust in money. People think that if they have enough money, they have everything. This is why we think that we need MORE money. And if we have more money, we feel more secure. We tend to think that, if we have more and more money, we can have everything. For this, money is practically God's greatest rival for us, because it occupies our minds and our hearts. After a while, we start to love money and we have no other major thoughts except around the money. But God wants us to love Him, trust Him, and believe in Him. Also, money says: just love me more; I am a more secure foundation for your life than any nice speculation about divine providence; with me, you get whatever you want; I can fulfill all your wishes; everything is available for money; love me, get me for yourself, then you will do well. Who has not heard this whisper of Mammon somewhere in the hidden corner of his heart? The whole world lives under the spell of this power.

Indeed, money is quite a mystical power. Let's take a bill of \$100. Imagine if this piece of plastic could talk about its journey, what it could say.

- How many hands touched this already to earn it?
- How many hours did you work for it?
- Maybe somebody worked too hard to get it and ended up with a heart attack.
- Maybe somebody used this bill to buy some goods for his family.
- Maybe somebody cheered up a sad person by buying them a gift.
- Perhaps somebody was paying for medication.
- Maybe somebody paid with this for killing drugs.
- Maybe somebody was stealing this money.

How many happy or sad mysteries can be in a single bill? And how much power and desire are around money? How much good and how many bad things can people do to have money or to spend money?

You have money in your hands. What are you doing with money? What is money doing to you and with you? Money is a mysterious power. If you want to solve this problem, please subordinate this great power, your money, to a greater power. You

cannot serve two masters, God and Mammon. Your money, instead of being a goal, can be a tool for good in your hands.

Once, I heard about a surgeon who always, before a surgery, lifts up the surgical instruments high, holding them in front of the healing Jesus, and he prays with a loud voice and then starts the surgery.

It would be so nice and desirable to stand before Jesus with everything we have, and to say to Him: “Lord, everything I have I got from You; everything I have is Yours; help me to do with my goods what You want me to do with them. I don’t want to put my trust in my money but in You. You can multiply my money, or you can take me home to your eternity in one second and I have to leave everything behind.”

Jesus does not want us to hate money or to turn away from it, but to use it in a spiritual way. With our money, we can collect for ourselves everlasting treasures in God’s kingdom. Your money can be a blessing in your hands, if you will do with your money how God wants to use it, sharing with others in need and building His Kingdom on this earth. The kingdom of God is love, justice, goodness, joy - pure joy - peace on earth.

God will prove that, if we give everything we have to him, we will not be short-changed. He will give us more. We cannot overpay God.

We can give to God as we donate to our local Church or to our National Church for their missions. We can share with a person locally who is in need. We can help people from Cuba or people who are refugees in Europe, leaving everything behind as they run away from war.

God is saying to us now, “Try Me with this. By not clinging to your material possessions so tightly, but by delivering them, you submit to My disposal.” If we will dare to do so, with faith, trusting Jesus, loving God, we will surely experience the immeasurable blessing of all aspects of God’s blessings and will see entirely new perspectives on faith. Sharing and serving are two of the most vivid forms of practicing our faith. Let it be. Amen