

INTRODUCTION ()

A man had three friends: doctor, minister, lawyer. On his death bed he said, "I know people say you can't take anything with you when you die, but my money is so important to you that I want to be buried with it – I am giving each of you half a million to throw into my grave". He ended up dying and at the grave side the three men threw in the envelopes they had received from the man. Afterwards they were talking next to the cars and the minister was visibly distressed. He said, "I am feeling so guilty because I didn't throw all the money into the grave. Our church wanted to replace the pews with chairs and I used R150k for the chairs". The doctor also started to squirm and said, "I didn't put in all the money either. Our surgery needed some new equipment that will save lives, so I spent R250k of our dead friend's money". The lawyer looked at his friend with great disdain and said, "I am embarrassed by the two of you. I put it all in – a cheque for the full R500k"

The joke is amusing by also true. People battle with the reality of what happens with the treasures after death. People are controlled and do strange things when money and possession have a disproportionate influence in their lives.

We are in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is not primarily interested in reforming your actions if the change does not stem from true heart change. He is working internal to external; heart to action. In this passage Jesus will make the same point three times over by comparing two treasures, two eyes, and two masters.

READ [Matt 6:19-24](#)

TWO TREASURES: POSSESSIONS CONTROLLING THE HEART

Jesus makes a negative and then a positive statement about the durability of two kinds of treasures. He makes a point that his hearers would have understood better than us: because they didn't have moth balls, anti-rust paint and galvanising, or burglar bars. We are more at risk of dismissing Jesus' words because our possessions nowadays aren't as *vulnerable*. For example – there weren't banks – you stored your money perhaps under floorboards. The word for "break in" is to dig through a wall. Now when last did you read about a thief digging through a wall?

Please note: Is Jesus not condemning all wealth – owning private property, saving for rainy day, that we are to enjoy the good things of life. He is warning again that selfish accumulation of goods that makes us think that we are rich – that doesn't make you wealthy. Also: you don't need

to have millions to live as if your treasure is here on earth – it can happen to anyone, however humble their life is.

True riches / treasure is stored in heaven. Why? Job said “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart” (1:21). Whether you want to focus on the treasure of Heaven or treasures Christians will receive in heaven, the question is still:

- How important will our fame be?
- How important will that new couch be?
- How important will that promotion be?
- Where are you going to spend the most time? Earth or heaven?
- What is truly secure?
- Where therefore should you be working to build up treasure?

TREASURE AND HEART

This is key: he is not just making a logical argument – earthly treasure is temporal, heavenly treasure is eternal. Verse 21 says your treasure orientates your whole life. The word heart means: wellspring of life, centre of being, out of which emotion, thinking and passion come. Therefore Jesus is saying: where your treasure is there will your total being be.

MINI- APPLICAITON

Dr. R Kent Huges offers these questions that will help us discern where our treasure truly is:

- What is it that occupies our thoughts when you are relaxed? What do you day dream about?
- What are the things that we worry about the most?
- What is it that we measure other people by? Home education, dress, physical looks, success – we measure people by the things that we value.
- What is it that if we didn't have it we know we would not be happy? It is not so much about what you have it is about what you would do if you lost it. You can have a lot and actually be completely okay with not having it, but you can also have a lot and you would be devastated if you lost it.

TWO EYES: STINGINESS CONTROLLING THE HEART

The illustration is simple: because light that enters your eye you (your body) can get up out of your pew and walk out the service – you don't trip or fall. If your eyes are bad it does not matter how much light there, you are still unable to move your body without tripping and falling. Jesus is addressing the spiritual trap of materialism.

You really get the meaning of what Jesus is saying when you look more carefully at the words “Clear” and “bad”. “Clear” is most often translated *generous / gracious / free*. The word for “bad” is the word for *stingy or ungenerous spirit or selfish*. The text comes alive when you translate it: “If the eye is generous, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is stingy, your whole body will be full of darkness”.

The point: a generous heart leads to spiritual light and life; a stingy heart that is focus on getting and gaining and keeping leads to spiritual depravity. Materialism shuts out the life of Christ – even for the Christian. I don't know how to bring across the gravity of this any more clearly! You can know your Bible backwards and attend church every week, and even have a genuine saving faith in Christ, but if you have stingy eyes your prayer life will be shallow, your joy will be superficial and your communion with Christ will be trivial.

This darkness is a real thing and we get trapped by it way too easily. That is the point of verse: if then the light within you is darkness, how great is the darkness. I.e. if you think that you have light, but actually you have darkness then you have been deceived – and that make the darkness even darker because you don't realise you're in the dark!

Here is an illustration of this darkness and deception: my sons are at a soccer club. The boys can train with the social team or the development team. The social team costs about a quarter of what it costs for the development team. Here's the interesting thing: this is the first year the club introduced the two levels: social and development. The coaches are wilting (and some have left) under the pressure that the parent are putting on them for results and performance. What changed between last year and this year: they are paying more money. Handing over more money has made parents who were mostly reasonable last year into monsters [they have been deceived]. The coaches and the children bear the brunt of these parents distortion of happiness, other people's worth, a clear understand of what is success for their children, envy of other's success, and ugly ambition [and their darkness is more pervasive than they realise]. It is tragic.

The problem is that we all know of someone who is really materialistic and greedy and we compare ourselves with them and justify our relatively limited materialistic living. Who is the person that you think of: they used to be so committed to the church, but then they got a better job, they moved to a better suburb, got a better car and now they don't need God or the church. AND what do you say to yourself? 'at least I'm not like them.'

TWO MASTERS: WHO CONTROLS YOUR HEART?

Jesus points us to the core of the problem and tells us how we can find true life and light

YOU CAN'T SERVE BOTH (24)

You have to choose. It is impossible to serve both God and money. Why? God will not share his glory with anyone or anything else. Isaiah 42:8 "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. To try and share your loyalties with him is to choose idolatry.

'Men can work for two employers, but no slave can be the property of two owners' (McNeile). The first step to breaking money's power is not buying the lie that it makes a comfortable bedfellow with God.

YOU WILL TREASURE CHRIST WHEN YOU REALISE YOU ARE HIS TREASURE

Why would Jesus go to the cross for you? Because he treasures you so greatly. You see, a treasure is something of which you say, "if I could just have this it would make everything worth it and I'd be worth it" – in other words you are prepared to sacrifice whatever necessary to get it. Jesus said, "If by my death I could reconcile people to God then it would be worth it" – we are his treasure.

Every other treasure in this world will insist that you die for it. Our greatest treasure is the God of grace and love who sacrificed himself to purchase us. And when your heart really perceives that you will treasure him more than anything in this world, your life will be filled with light through your heart generous and not stinginess through deceptive materialism.

SERMON QUESTIONS

Please use / augment / discard these questions so that your group has a fruitful discussion

1. In our modern society, we are not as vulnerable to moth, rust and thieves (note: although crime is bad in SA, it doesn't compare to vulnerability of 1st century). How does this make people more inclined to store up treasures on earth?
2. Why is Jesus' message in this passage not just for the "rich"?
3. Grant asked these questions in the sermon: How important will our fame be? How important will that new couch be? How important will that promotion be? Where are you going to spend the most time? Earth or heaven? What is truly secure? Where therefore should you be working to build up treasure?
 - a. How do they clarify the issue
4. Take some time to ponder these questions and then feedback to the group:
 - a. What is it that occupies our thoughts when you are relaxed? What do you day dream about?
 - b. What are the things that we worry about the most?
 - c. What is it that we measure other people by? Home education, dress, physical looks, success – we measure people by the things that we value.
 - d. What is it that if we didn't have it we know we would not be happy?
5. What do you think it means to have a generous or ungenerous eye?
6. What are the effects on a Christian's life of an ungenerous eye?
7. Why are money and possessions so deceptive?
8. Grant said, "Every other treasure in this world will insist that you die for it." What does this mean and how does it compare to Jesus what Jesus did for us?
 - a. How does this foster a deeper desire to serve only God?