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Matt. 6:19-34

Seek the Kingdom of God and Trust in Him

While in college, I had the opportunity to participate in ministry work in China for several months. While there, I visited a couple of Buddhist temples to gain perspective on the religious worldview of people we were sharing the gospel with. I'll confess, I was not mentally prepared for the spiritual heaviness that fell upon me as we entered. There were foyers, courtyards, and shrines absolutely full of **man-made idols** of varying sizes: from small, handmade trinkets to large, grotesque, demonic-looking statues - and each one of them represented *false gods* and *false promises*. And it was heartbreaking, indeed, *quite sobering*, to not only see real, contemporary versions of physical idols, but even more so, to watch real, flesh-and-blood people bow down to demonic statues, pray and give at the shrine, and cling to man-made objects as though any hope could be found there.

It was quite sobering for me. It's tempting for us to think of *idolatry* as something that stays on the pages of the Bible or history books. It was very sobering to see real-life examples of idolatry still going on in the world today. After all, we live in the "Christianized" West. We know that a man-made object is no god or the representation of one. Yet, we would be *foolish and naive to think we are without idols here in America*. John Calvin, one of the Protestant Reformers during the 1500s, once said that the sinful human heart "*is a perpetual factory of idols.*" Our hearts are so prone to worshipping things other than God. We can turn *any created thing* into an idol - a *false god*. We can even worship many simultaneously. Anything we put our *hope* in, other than God, is an idol for us. When we live for something, and find the meaning and purpose of life in that object or idea, then *that is what we are worshipping*.

If you want to examine your heart to see what things you are tempted to make an idol, ask yourself: "What do I put hope and joy in? What do I schedule my time around? What do I work so hard for? What am I striving after that I think will satisfy my heart? What do I *spend time worrying about*? What are my greatest concerns in life?" The way we answer these questions will show us the God, or gods, of our life; it exposes what our *heart* is set on.

No, we don't have any less idols in America; our idolatry can just be more subtle. Maybe we set our hearts and hope on *money, good health, a long life, comfort and luxury*. Maybe we

believe the lie that if we just had *that car, or that house, these clothes, those decorations, this job, that financial security* - if we just had more and more, nicer, bigger, and better things - **then** we would truly be happy and satisfied! As if the purpose and meaning of life could be found in physical objects - the things and treasures of this world! But this is simply *idolatry*, isn't it? Or when we catch ourselves growing *anxious and overly-concerned about our physical welfare and material possessions* - then this, too, can show us that *our hearts are set on, hoping in, and trusting in **this world**, maybe even ourselves, more than God and His Kingdom.*

Our hearts will either be set on **God and His Kingdom**, or the **Kingdom and things of this world**. This is the message of **Matt. 6:19-34**. In this passage, Jesus addresses the motives of our heart once again, this time focusing on *where our greatest priorities lie: in this world? Or in the Kingdom of God and eternal life in Heaven?* And the way we answer this question reveals whether or not we live *by faith in Christ* or by sight and unbelief.

I. Set Your Heart on the Kingdom of God, not this World (vv.19-24)

In verses 19-24, Jesus gives **3 different illustrations** to show how we will either live **for this world** or for **God and the world to come, in eternal life**. There is no middle ground; whichever one we set our hearts on reveals what we truly believe, will determine the way we live our lives, and reveals who, or what, we ultimately worship and serve.

A. Treasure - Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (vv. 19-21)

First, Jesus tells us about *Two Treasures*, in **vv.19-21**. He commands us: *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.”* Why not? Because *such treasure is temporary; it does not last!* Earthly treasures - such as money, material goods, houses, any resource we have, or even fame and power - such things are prized and highly valued in this life, and they do have a certain level of importance. And yet, *“moth and rust”* destroy them, *“thieves”* break in and steal them; this speaks to any kind of decay, corruption, or loss of earthly treasures! Money can be stolen. Good reputations, fame, and power can collapse. Houses and cars can fall apart or be destroyed by a natural disaster. Even if we work hard our entire lives to build a fortune - what good does your 401k or stock market investment do you when you die? We cannot take any of it with us.

By contrast, we're commanded to *“lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,”* for such treasure *lasts forever*; it cannot be destroyed, nor can anyone take it from you! Instead of living our lives centered around the purpose of amassing wealth, possessions, and prosperity in *this life*,

which is fleeting, the only *wise and sensible* thing to do is to *build up treasures that have eternal significance and value, in the Kingdom of God!*

Illustration: We can think of it like this: Would you rather win a free night in a hotel, or be given a free mansion for the rest of your life? No matter how fancy the hotel, *we would be insane to choose the hotel over the mansion*, wouldn't we? It offers a place to stay, sure - *but only for one night*. The mansion is a home, that lasts for the rest of your life! And that is exactly what Jesus is saying here - *what he offers us in the Kingdom of God lasts forever! An eternal home!* No matter how durable that mansion is, *you cannot bring it with you when you die!* And 70, 80, 100 years - *it will seem like one night when compared with eternity!* No matter how fancy and comfortable that mansion is, *it will not have been worth it if your next home is an eternity in Hell*. Therefore, what Christ offers us is *far greater than anything this world has to offer!* As we trust in Christ and live a life of loving obedience - growing in righteousness - we confirm that we truly believe and are headed to eternal life, *and we store up treasures and rewards in the New Heavens and New Earth - treasure that lasts forever!*

Therefore, we're commanded to store up treasure in heaven. How do we do this? By *living a life of faith, reflecting the righteousness of Christ, and obeying God*. We store up treasure by seeking God Himself, His glory, His Kingdom, to do His will, and walk in His righteousness.

This is not simply about which one gives us the better investment in the long run: *it reveals our heart*. Hear **v.21**: "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" If we truly **believe in God**, if our hearts have truly *turned away* from the idolatry of this world, if we're truly *trusting and hoping in Christ alone*, then **our heart and priorities must be set on His Kingdom, not this world**.

B. Two Lights (vv. 22-23)

The second illustration Jesus gives, in **v.22-23**, can be more difficult to understand: "*The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!*"

Basically, he's holding up **blindness** and contrasting it with **sight**. If our eyes are set on this world, it *corrupts and distorts* our vision, our minds, our hearts. It leads us astray. It justifies living *sinful, unbiblical lifestyles* as we pursue the things of this world that we set our eyes on.

Conversely, if we *set our eyes on the Kingdom of God and His righteousness*, if we have the right goal and priorities, then *we have clear vision for how to live our lives!* And rather than go astray, *we can see clearly to follow GOD's will and keep heading towards the goal of eternal life in God's Kingdom.* We show that our *eyes and hearts are set on the Kingdom of God*, and that that is where we are walking towards, *by living a life **that reflects** the Kingdom of God*

C. Two Masters (v.24)

The third illustration holds up **two masters**: “*No one can serve two masters*” (v.24). Unlike someone who can work two jobs, *a slave cannot serve two masters; the master demands complete obedience and devotion.* That's what's pictured here. And who are the masters? “*You cannot serve **God and money.***” Money clearly represents for us the sum of earthly treasure, doesn't it? There is a **powerful temptation** for us to live our lives in pursuit of *money* and all the things it can bring us. We cannot serve *God on Sunday* and the *god of money Monday through Saturday.* *Partial devotion* to God is *complete devotion* to this world. There is no middle ground.

D. Application

No, this doesn't mean that it's wrong for us to *work hard* to provide for our own basic needs or to provide for our family and others; this is a *good and godly thing to do*; we're *commanded to do so* in other parts of the Bible, such as *Prov. 6:6-8; 2 Thess. 3:6-12; or 1 Tim. 5:8.* Nor does this mean that it is necessarily wrong to *make wise investments* as we live in this world, such as a retirement plan, housing mortgage, or insurance. But it *does mean* that we must always think and live in a way that makes *the eternal values of the Kingdom of God* our **greatest priority, not the things of this world.**

So let us *store up treasure in heaven*, let us “***seek first the Kingdom of God and righteousness***” by setting our hearts on God alone, keeping our eyes fixed firmly on His kingdom!

By faith, we truly believe that GOD's Kingdom is *real, eternal, and far more satisfying and valuable than anything this world has to offer!* If this is true, then we truly believe that *the treasures of this world **pale** in comparison with the treasures of God's Kingdom!* Our hope is in God; our best life *is not now*, but is *in the eternal life to come, dwelling in GOD's perfect Kingdom with Him, forever!* If this is the case, then *it will be evident in the way we view and use **money and all are earthly treasures in this life!*** INstead of hoarding more and more riches and provisions for this life, we know that *such things really don't matter in the end!*

So instead, we pursue righteousness, seeking to hoard up more and more treasure in the Kingdom of God! We do this everytime we *obey God* out of a sincere heart, seeking His glory, to do His will, and to walk according to His righteousness. This should frame *all of our lives and all that we do!*

And this will *definitely be revealed in the way we use our money and other earthly resources!* **The way we use our money - our earthly treasure - shows where our heart lies; and therefore, who or what we are truly worshipping. This will determine the way we use our money now.** If we truly value the things of G^Od's Kingdom more, then we are freed up to *give generously, to meet others' needs, and to give generously **for the advance of the gospel!*** If our hearts are set on the Kingdom - if the Kingdom of God, His Glory, His Will - if this is our highest priority, then *we should give of our money and resources* for the purposes of *seeing the gospel go forth, making disciples, and strengthening the church!* This compels us to *give freely*, of our money, time, and resources for the sake of missions - both *building up our local church and fellow church members*, to reach our own community, *and for the sake of missions throughout our nation and world!* The way we view, budget, and spend our money will reveal our priorities; it will reveal where our *heart and hope lies*, both as individuals and as a church. So let us *store up treasure in Heaven, not Earth!*

But there's another way the *orientation* of our hearts is revealed: whether or not our hearts are marked by *anxiety and dependence upon the material goods of this life, **or** by complete trust and faith in God.*

II. Do Not be Anxious, but Trust in the Promises of God (vv. 25-34)

In **v.25** Jesus gives another, very similar command: *"Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on."* Throughout **vv.25-34**, we're commanded several times to ***not be anxious*** about: 1. Our lives, including our health and lifespan; 2. Our basic needs, such as food and clothing, or 3. About tomorrow and what the future holds (**v.34**).

Clearly, Jesus is commanding us not to *be anxious* about our basic needs. Let's note a few things about what this means. First, he is not talking about our *wants*, but our *needs*: water, food, shelter, clothing, good health and medical treatment, and so forth.

Secondly, he is telling us *not to be anxious, not to be obsessed and worried about how are needs are going to be met and provided for*. This does *not mean* we should not care about such things, as if to say our basic needs are not important; they surely are! In fact, part of what this passage tells us is that they are so important that *God Himself cares about your basic needs!*

Rather, he is warning us against **anxiety** - the *heart issue of not trusting God* with our lives and needs, but instead *only trusting in the material goods and provision* of this world. When we're truly anxious, we're not *having faith and trusting in God*, but we're *only trusting in ourselves and the things of this world*. Such anxiety can reveal that our hope is set on this world. This is not the response of faith, but the opposite; for so Jesus rebukes us in **v.30**: "*Oh you of little faith*" (**v.30**). One commentator I read said it eloquently: "The root of anxiety is unbelief."¹

Some people are more given to anxiety than others; sometimes, its for entire seasons. Yet I think its fair to say *this is a struggle for all of us*, to at least some extent, or at some point in our lives. When trials come, the way we respond is very revealing of our hearts. When we have legitimate concerns about how our *basic needs and provisions* will be met, we have **two choices**: will we *be anxious and worry*, or will we *trust God and live by faith*?

As we know, **to be a Christian is to live by faith!** And so, naturally, Jesus calls us to **have faith - don't be anxious, but trust in God and His promises!**

He could have just left it at the command and rebuke, but he doesn't: he is so gracious as to *give us several reasons why we shouldn't worry but can instead trust God and live in faith, not anxiety*.

1. (v.25b) God can and will provide for us. If he created us, he can surely care and provide for us, His people

We see this at the end of **v.25**: *Our life is more important than the food we eat; our body is more important than the clothes we put on them*. God himself created us and *sustains us* every moment; if he can do this, then of course He can provide for our basic needs!

2. If God provides for lesser creation - by feeding the animals and clothing nature itself - how much more so will he care and provide for us, the crown of creation!

In **v.26**, Christ tells us that God provides food for lesser creatures, such as birds, and yet *we are much more important than birds*. "**Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor**

¹ Carson, D.A., *Matthew*, p. 216.

reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them . Are you not of more value than they?” God loves you as your Father; you are His child! He is telling you, right now, from His infallible Word: *He loves you and considers you far more valuable than the animals of this world;* He will care for and provide for you!

Again, we see this in **vv.28-30: If God provides clothes for the grass and flowers, he will surely provide clothes for us!**

3. Anxiety is worthless

Being anxious and worrying about our needs and problems *doesn't help us or do any good!* As v.27 says, *“And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?”* Anxiety never fixes your problems; it only adds to them! Anxiety never increases your lifespan; if anything it decreases it! Worrying about your finances and physical health *doesn't help you, doesn't do any good, and doesn't make any of it better - it only makes it worse!*

Instead, rest in God, who *is in control!* He **can** handle and fix our problems! He's in control, not us; He knows what he's doing, and he cares for us. Therefore, don't worry about your life, but trust Him with it!

4. (31-32) God is our Father

In **vv.31-32**, Jesus contrasts the way *unbelievers* and *believers* live. **Unbelievers**, non-Christians **who don't know or trust God, live in anxiety.** But this should not be so for us believers! **We know God in Christ, and He is our Father!** As he says, *“Therefore, do not be anxious, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.”* He cares for us and knows our needs; therefore, we can *trust him.*

5. (v.34) Don't worry about tomorrow.

God gives us grace for *each day.* So much of our worrying is not about *today*, but about *tomorrow, next week, next month, or next year.* So many times in my life, God has provided in incredible ways for my pressing needs! But so many times, I have responded in the absolute worst way: *Great! This meets what I need for today! Maybe even this week! But what about next week? We have enough for food - but what about rent next month? What about the car that's going to break down in the next few months? Sure, its a temporary job - but what about when its over? What then?* God tells us not to worry about the future or what tomorrow holds - we know

our needs and problems today, and God gives grace and provision for each day; don't worry about tomorrow, God will give the grace you need then too.

6. (v.33) If you set your eyes and heart on the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, GOD promises to care for and provide for your needs.

This is the glorious **promise of God** that Jesus gives us in v.33, a promise to set our restless, anxious heart at rest and peace! ***“But seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you!”***

What is he promising here? Not that we will never experience lack or difficult times, nor that we will always get what we want. But he promises **that God will provide what we need.** But it's conditional: *so long as we're focusing on His Kingdom and righteousness.* In other words, if we're walking in such a way as to *set our hearts and eyes* on God, His glory, His will, and His righteousness. If we're storing up treasure *in Heaven, not Earth.* If we're striving to live a life that is *investing in the Kingdom of God,* seeking His glory and will, then *God will provide all that we need to keep living the life He wants us to!* Yes, there comes a day when every believer dies; and yet, on that day, the promise doesn't fail - *we simply receive the greatest treasure we've been looking forward to, the inheritance of eternal life in Christ Jesus!*

And until that day, we can strive forward in obedience by faith, not anxiously trying to scramble and bring about our “best life now,” but simply trusting God to provide as we seek to obey Him! This means we're free to *give generously* to the church, those in need, and gospel missions, *not worrying about tomorrow,* but trusting that God will provide what we need as we're walking in His will! This means that if God is calling us to sacrificial give or serve in some capacity, we don't have to anxiously worry about whether or not he's going to leave us out to dry! NO, He has promised to lovingly provide for us every step of the way, until He calls us home!

[Illustration] This has been a particularly painful lesson for me to learn at times, as God has called me and my family to step out in faith. And yet, every time, *God has provided!* Not always in the way I expected or prayed; not always in my timing. And yet *always according to His purposes of grace!* And when I look back over seasons that only seemed worrisome at the time, the Lord's hand of gracious guiding and provision is often so evident.

In short, Jesus is telling us this: **the life of faith**, that truly believes in the gospel of Christ, trusts God to deliver on his promises.

God already met our *greatest need* - spiritual salvation! He already provided *all that we need* to pay the *debt of our spiritual bankruptcy*; *the blood of Christ has already been shed to pay the **full price*** of our sin! Jesus Christ lived a perfectly righteous life in our place, died on the Cross for our sins and bore the full wrath of God, paying the debt of our sin in full, and was raised from the grave on the third day, showing that **God accepted his sacrifice and will clear the debt of all who truly trust in Christ alone! By grace through faith in Christ, we are forgiven our debts, our sins, and declared rich with the wealth of Christ's righteousness!** And if we believe this message, if we truly trust God to have done *the hardest thing*, then how we can not trust him to fulfill his promises and *provide for our earthly needs* - the lesser, easier thing? As **Romans 8:32** says, "*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*"

The only thing to *truly be anxious about* is the day when we will stand before God in judgment. But if you're trusting in Christ's grace, *then we do not have to be anxious about anything!* We already know, with *full assurance*, that *our plea, Jesus Christ*, will be *perfectly accepted by our Father*; we can rest assured that *Christ has payed our debt in full!* So let us be anxious in nothing, in this life or the next, and let us ***trust Christ as we pursue the Kingdom of God and His righteousness!***

But perhaps, this morning, the Lord has revealed to you that *your anxiety* is a symptom of *a lack of faith in your heart*. Perhaps you're not truly trusting in Christ, but are instead trusting *in the things of this world*. Perhaps you're serving not God, *but money*; perhaps the eyes of your heart are set, not on the treasures of Christ and His Kingdom, which are received by faith, but the treasures of this world, which are a false promise, will rust away, and will only return into the reward of eternal judgment. If that is you this morning, then I plead with you: ***turn to Christ as your only master and God! Turn away from the false hope of this world, and turn to the Kingdom of God by trusting in Christ alone!*** Trust in Christ, and you will be saved by God's grace!

If you have any questions about this, about how to become a Christian, or about baptism or church membership, I would love to speak with you. You can speak with me after the service, or can even come now. Let us pray.