

## **The Teaching of Jesus**

### **Choosing the Right Treasure**

#### **Matthew 6:19-24**

### **Introduction**

In verses 19-24 of Chapter 6, Jesus teaches about the relationship between God's treasure and material wealth. The key verse is 24, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24 NKJV)

One of the most prominent gods of America is money. An appropriate question to ask in our culture would be, "Who do you serve? God or Mammon?"

Mammon in the Aramaic means "riches" – in Hebrew, it means money. "Mammon" refers to material wealth. According to scripture, the idea that you can serve God and obsess over material wealth is an illusion.

Only one can be your true master, and the one you choose shapes the course of your life. Unless you consciously choose to serve God, you will serve the God of this world by default.

In verse 19, Jesus contrasts two treasures and two eyes. First, He says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Matthew 6:19-20 NKJV)

Jesus isn't against laying up treasures for yourself. He just wants to make sure you are laying up the right kind of treasure.

### **I. Identify the Real Treasure**

1 Timothy 6:17 says that serving mammon is not making more money, having a higher income, or enjoying material possessions. The Apostle Paul writes, "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy." (1 Timothy 6:17 NKJV)

There's nothing wrong with being wealthy, having a good-paying job, or owning many material things. It also doesn't mean we don't need to prepare for things like vacations, college education, and retirement. We also need to help our family and friends. Proverbs 13:22 says, "A good *man* leaves an inheritance to his children's children."

1 Timothy 5:8 says, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

## (1 Timothy 5:8 NKJV)

Those who serve mammon put their faith in themselves and trust their future to this life. In verse 25, Jesus says, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you, by worrying, can add one cubit to his stature? "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith? "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble." (Matthew 6:25-34 NKJV)

Mammon makes a person a money hoarder who amasses a lot of material possessions. Mammon causes you to strive for things well beyond what you need. Mammon produces greed that causes a constant desire for more. Mammon is the same thing as greed; Jesus says it is idolatry. We call it the American Dream. Many people work hard to get to where they are so self-sufficient they don't need God.

Walter Williams, the distinguished professor of economics at George Mason University, writes, "What's the noblest of human motivations?" He responds, "Some might be tempted to answer: charity, love of one's neighbor, or, in modern, politically correct language, giving something back or feeling another's pain. In my book, these are indeed noble motivations, but they pale in comparison to a much more potent motivation for human action. For me, the noblest of human motivations is greed. I don't mean theft, fraud, tricks, or misrepresentation. By greed, I mean being only or mostly concerned about getting the most one can for oneself and not necessarily concerned about the welfare of others. Social consternation might cause one to cringe at the suggestion that greed might possibly be seen as a noble motivation. 'Enlightened self-interest' might be a preferable term. But I prefer greed since it is far more descriptive and less likely to be confused with other human motives."

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Deuteronomy 6:4 is often called the pivotal passage in the Bible. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your

children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." (Deuteronomy 6:4-7 NKJV)

Greed has destroyed our future posterity. The Old Testament warned us about this. And so did Jesus! Why? Because material wealth is not permanent. You can lose things in this life in a variety of ways. Jesus cites corrosion and theft. But to this, we could add inflation, stock market crashes, bank scandals, war, ill health, government takeovers, insurrections, and on and on.

The truth is that any one of us can be wiped out at any time. It happens all the time. Even if you're fortunate to avoid loss in this life, you will certainly have to give it all up when you leave this life. In Luke 12:13, someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' "So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:13-21 NKJV)

You cannot take your stuff with you. You came into this world with nothing, and you will leave this world with nothing. There are no trailer hitches on hearses. "How much will you leave behind when you leave this world?" - "All of it!"

Would you invest in a stock in a company you knew would fail? Why would you invest your life and talent to pursue material wealth that won't last and will be taken from you at the end of your life?

So, what's the alternative?

## II. Invest in the Real Treasure

Jesus says to "lay up for yourself treasure in heaven." Look at verse 20, Jesus says, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:20-21 NKJV)

This is what Jesus called becoming "rich toward God" in Luke 12:21." How can we do this? First, you must establish a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:16). When you give your life to Christ, you are guaranteed eternal life with God. It is the most essential choice you can make in your lifetime!

Have you done this yet? And if not, why not? We become rich toward God by developing godly character. We also become rich toward God by reaching out to other people as a representative of God's kingdom. 1 Timothy 6:18 says, "Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy 6:18-19 NKJV)

Being "rich in good works" involves sharing your faith and freedom in Christ with others and teaching them God's ways. It involves being generous and sharing some of your financial resources to alleviate the bondage and human need and advance the message of God's love and relationship to those who will receive it.

No one can take what you invest in God's kingdom from you. Everything you invest in God's kingdom will be waiting for you (with interest) in the next life. And you can accumulate as many eternal blessings as you want regardless of your financial resources!

### III. Inspect the Treasure

The final observation Jesus calls upon us to make is one of vision. Verse 22 says, "The lamp of the body is the eye. If, therefore, your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23 NKJV)

In this parable, Jesus gives us one other reason to serve God and not mammon. Even though it is a small organ, the eye is the key to functioning smoothly. (Try fixing a meal or driving a car with your eyes closed.) Just as an eye condition can severely affect the well-being of the rest of your body, the treasure you seek will significantly influence your life.

The treasure you pursue greatly determines the type of life you live in this life as well as your ultimate wealth in the next life. Those who have "bad eyes" from seeking only material wealth have the illusion of being enlightened. But in the end, Jesus says it will lead to greater and greater darkness (misery and damage).

In 1 Timothy 6:9, the Apostle Paul writes, "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Timothy 6:9-10 NKJV)

You don't even need to believe in the Bible to realize that the end result of materialism delivers just the opposite result of the expectation! Probably, nothing illustrates the way serving mammon promises you a quality of life like commercials and advertisements. Have you noticed the non-material values linked to material goods? (If you buy our product, you'll feel good or experience love!)

People in our culture have an abundance of material possessions, yet they are empty inside. Our culture leaves people with unrealistic expectations, shopping addictions, chronic stress, fractured families, skyrocketing bankruptcies, and painful social scars. Although the average American has more money today, there is less happiness, more depression, more fragile relationships, less community commitment, less vocational security, more crime, and more apathetic and depressed children than ever before.

Jesus says you can develop a "good eye" by serving God and pursuing spiritual wealth. If you do, you won't avoid suffering, but your life will definitely become more fulfilling. You will begin to experience a healing and satisfaction in the areas of your life that really matter. Things like:

- The satisfaction of knowing you are honoring your Creator and accomplishing His will.
- That you have a clean and clear conscience about your goals and motivation in life.
- The joy of developing fulfilling friendships and meaningful relationships.
- That you are confident that God can be trusted and that serving Him will be rewarded.
- And that God's promise and hope that the future will be perfect and free of evil and sin.

## **Conclusion**

In verse 24, Jesus says, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24 NKJV)

The choice you make about this is gigantic! But the Holy Spirit will show you how to do it if you ask him to. Which treasure are you seeking? And which master are you serving? Which God do you love?

Here are some simple questions that may help you:

- "What do you do with your spare time?"
- How much time do you spend with your family, ministry, and spiritual growth? Versus time spent on work, TV, shopping, hobbies, etc.?

Only you can choose what you treasure most! Jesus says to each of us: "Choose the right treasure – Choose a life that leads to eternal joy!"