

Small Group Questions

Matthew 6:19-33

Sermon Title: MATERIALISM'S ANTIDOTE

Sermon Series: Treasure Principle #3

Week of May 14, 2017

THEME/ CONCEPT

THEME/ CONCEPT: We live in the tension of enjoying God's provision and being called to provide for God's work. We are especially vulnerable when it comes to enjoying "the good life." The danger comes when our "stuff" gets in the way of our relationship with God. It is short-sighted and spiritually draining to keep our money for our own purposes instead of responding to God's call to use our money for ministry. Giving is the antidote to materialism (Alcorn). Giving is a joyful surrender to God and to God's purpose. Application: Since our hearts follow our money, invest in God's work. Charge: Invest in God's work.

Opening Question

After making each individual feel welcome to the small group, a question or series of questions like the following can give everyone an opportunity to participate, start thinking about a concept from the passage and gradually share more openly the deep work that God is doing in our lives.

Q: The way we spend our finances is often a reflection of our priorities. What are some ways you enjoy spending money?

Scripture References: Matthew 6:19-33 (NIV)

Treasures in Heaven

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **22** "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy,^[c] your whole body will be full of light. **23** But if your eyes are unhealthy,^[d] your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! **24** "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Do Not Worry

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? **26** Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? **27** Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life^[e]?

28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. **29** Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. **30** If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? **31** So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32** For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Understanding the Scripture

A question like one of the following may help your group understand the content of the passage. Answering all of these questions exactly as written isn't necessary or recommended. Allow time for the application and Mission Statement questions.

- 1. Who is the book of Matthew attributed to? At what point in time during the life of this person was he inspired to write this book?**
- 2. What type of writing (History? Letter? Parable? Poem?) is Matthew?**
- 3. Consider reading another translation (particularly a paraphrased one like The Message) for a different take on some of the imagery used in this passage. Is there a particular phrase that resonates with you?**

Applying the Scripture

Small groups are a primary way of *building a community fully alive in Christ*. A small group facilitator can use questions like the following, adapted to the context of the particular small group, to help the group move beyond understanding the passage to allowing *Jesus Christ to fully change our lives* by the passage.

- 1. Verse 19 is, perhaps, a familiar verse to many of us. It advises us “...do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...” Living in Southern California, how can you concretely fight the mindset of “treasure hoarding?” Share a story of giving—whether you were the giver, or the recipient.**
- 2. “Lay up” or “store up” simply means “to amass or reserve.”¹ Verse 20-21 tells us to store up treasures in heaven, rather than on earth. This is an abstract concept- we cannot visit a literal bank and make a deposit into our “heavenly savings,” and leave with a deposit slip in hand, displaying our new balance. Yet when we choose to give of our time and financial resources, we can be assured that we are making literal deposits into a heavenly bank. Giving is not always easy—is there a time that you felt led to give something up, but it required a great deal of sacrifice? What came of it?**
- 3. Verse 21 says “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” In other words, the places we “spend” reveal something fundamental about ourselves. The Greek for heart is “Kardia.” One source extrapolates on this, saying “The Scriptures attributed to the heart: thoughts, reasonings,**

¹Zodhiates, Spiros, and James Strong. The Complete Word Study New Testament: King James Version. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1991.

understanding, will, judgment, designs, affections, love, hatred, fear, joy, sorrow, and anger; these things can actually affect a man's physical heart. Therefore, "heart" is used as a metonym for the mind in general." ² It's a five letter word, with a lot of meaning. Where do you spend your time, finances, and energy these days? What does it reveal about your own heart?

4. 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy,[c] your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are unhealthy,[d] your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" This metaphor is quite simple. Many of us have impaired vision, in one form or another. Those of you with "imperfect" eyes, please share about how your life is regularly affected by your need for assistance. How is literal darkness different for those of us with limited vision or blindness?
5. Verse 24 goes straight for the jugular. "No man can serve two masters..." Jesus says we can either love and serve money and material possessions, or we will be "...devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Obviously, we still need some form of currency to function in society; in Jesus' day and age, "hate" was a colloquialism that means, by extension, "to love less." Thus, a modern-day paraphrase could tell us to be devoted to God, while loving God more than our wealth. Jesus is drawing a line in the sand—if we love money more than God, we are not serving Him fully. Those of you who work under an employer, reflect on what it means to be fully loyal to your boss. Those of you who hold (or have held) leadership roles, have you ever had someone under you who was not acting fully loyal to you and your direction?
6. Re-read verses 25-27. This is a command—an imperative. We are not simply told, "Oh, it's really better if you don't worry." No— Jesus says, "**DO NOT WORRY...**" [emphasis added]. How often do we give in to the very real anxiety of facing "tomorrow?" Consider within yourselves: what are some current worries you are carrying today? If anyone feels led to share with the group, please confess a worry out loud.
7. Verses 28-32 cause us to reflect on the beauty God has created. If he clothes the lilies so royally, how much more will he provide for us? He gives good gifts to us, that we might be good stewards. The more we receive, the more there is to give. We are all aware of ways to tithe our finances, but what are other ways we can give of ourselves?
8. In verse 33, Jesus urges us to "...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." "...all these things..." According to one concordance, "*All*" means "*pas*": every, all.³ It can mean the individual within the totality and the totality of the individuals. It can stand alone as in the case of *pas*, anyone and everyone... It can refer to all things individually and in their totality..." Thus, Jesus is promising us that we will receive an eternal inheritance. While we are yet bound by time, He wants us

²ibid, 925.

³ibid, 946.

to seek after his kingdom by investing in God's work here on earth. Can anyone share how they have seen a "heavenly investment" (giving, time, prayer, resources) pay off, on this side of heaven?

Missional Strategy: Invite, Connect, Grow and Serve

Use questions like the following, adapted to the context of your particular small group, to work toward the milestone for the year.

Milestone: By this time next year each of us will have taken at least one step to become more like Jesus in our upward connection (connect), inner strength (grow) and outward focus (serve).

- 1. What are some concrete ways you can combat the anxieties of facing "tomorrow?"**
- 2. Jesus' message was counter-cultural then, and it still is today— "don't invest in the here and now, invest in eternity!" Do you have more ideas about how you can invest in the kingdom?**
- 3. Often, investments into eternity are not grand gestures. Many of them go unnoticed by others, but God sees what our hands and hearts surrender. What are some small ways you can have open hands this week?**
- 4. May we be encouraged by these stories of giving! Perhaps we will have seasons of earthly wealth; if we receive, may we continue to give abundantly, and may we hold onto our earthly possessions with open hands. Please take some time to corporately testify to God's gifts in your life. Share some of the big (or small) ways that you see his daily provision.**

Closing Prayer

If your small group prays together, some of the following concepts might be helpful to invite the Holy Spirit to help each member of the group grow in areas that may have come up during the group's discussion.

Pray through

- For each member of the group, particularly for those who this topic may be particularly uncomfortable;**
- For our faith to be placed squarely in God as our provider;**
- eyes to be opened to those who might be interested in joining your small group; and**
- clear direction from the Lord in taking steps of faithful service.**