

**February 19, 2012**

**Matthew 6:19-24 Part 2**

Alright good morning and welcome back. If you were here last Sunday, you know exactly what to do – grab your Bible and turn to Matthew chapter 6 verses 19-24.

We began not just these verses, but this sermon last Sunday. And I told you that we would only get through half the sermon last week and we'd have to pick up where we left off this week. So if you weren't here last Sunday, you absolutely need to go to the website and listen to or read what God showed us last Sunday in order to truly get all that Jesus is saying here. I don't have time to go back and rehash it all today. But before we pick up where we left off, let's go back to the text itself.

So in a nutshell, having dealt with what a treasure is and what it is not – having addressed the difference to some degree between necessity and luxury – having encouraged us with the potential of using earthly wealth to create eternal treasure – we saw Jesus begin a transition in his preaching from the external to the internal in verse 21 – that **Jesus says what he says because he wants our HEARTS to be in a particular place – that though we are part of a culture of creatures that are committed to things, Jesus has called us into a Kingdom that is committed to ETERNITY in the investment of our lives, our motives, attitudes, and thought patterns** – the concentration and preoccupation of our lives...that's where we stopped last week and left Matthew to see those points illustrated in the life of Job.

But now we pick up the thread in verse 22 with this odd metaphor of our eyes being lamps and our bodies being therefore full of light or darkness. And though this sounds confusing at first look, it really isn't. At a very basic level, what enables the body to walk is the eye. The simple fact is that what enables you to move through life – to walk through your day – is the ability of your eye to see.

I mean how many of you have contacts or wear glasses? Nicole and I both do and when we go to bed at night and take those contacts out it is a serious case of the blind leading the blind. You know what I'm talking about? Even in your own house – you get up in the middle of the night to do anything and it isn't the dark that's the problem, it's your eyes. What you can coast through when you have your contacts in or glasses on without even thinking now becomes a life or death situation doesn't it? I mean you basically grab everything you can get close to – the bed, a chair, the wall, the cat, anything - just so you don't kill yourself on the way to the bathroom. That's **the essence of his metaphor here. If your eye works – you WALK with no problem. If your eye doesn't, then problem.** Simple concept. But he's taking it deeper than that.

He just got through in verse 21 talking about your heart, remember? Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also? Now he's talking about your eye and in the context he is setting them up to communicate the same thing. **Just as your heart in verse 21 represents who you are and what you want and what you think, the eye represents how you SEE life and what you VALUE in your perspective.**

David does the same thing in Psalm 119. He prays, Lord open my eyes that I might see wonderful things in your word and then he says help my heart to be inclined toward your ways. Same deal – eye and heart – just to communicate who we are and what we want and think – our perspective is who we are.

Jesus says the eye is the lamp of the body. So the way you see life will illuminate the rest of your life. **Your perspective on life will affect your whole person – your emotions, your mind, your spirit – EVERYTHING is affected by how you see this world.**

So listen – if you embrace the way of righteousness that Jesus has been teaching, your entire life will be affected by that. If you adopt any other perspective, your whole life will be affected horribly by that lack of righteousness as well.

When we see life how our culture wants us to – through a perspective of I deserve it, I'm a victim, you owe me, I'm entitled to that, you should take care of me, who is going to rescue me, I need more, what I have is not enough – all of that is so contrary to the righteousness of the Kingdom of God that it will (for lack of a better term) de-illuminate your life in such a way that it will ruin you.

And if you see the treasures, the things that you are gathering up in this life as the purpose of your life, everything will be affected by that. But if you see your treasures as things in heaven, the ways of God, the purposes of God so you can give to him, everything will also be affected by that.

You see it? **The point here is that if our focus is continually on money or accumulation or materialism or even just self-indulgence, we will be BLIND to spiritual reality.** Our eyes are dark – our vision is

clouded. Greedy people cannot see spiritual reality – they can't see spiritual need – they can't see the value and joy of spiritual investment.

And when that's the case, verse 23 says if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! That's just Jesus exclaiming how total is the darkness of someone who should see spiritually but puts the blinders on through their own covetousness.

This echoes the call to exclusive heavenly mindedness – an eternal perspective in all things – an undivided laying up of treasure in heaven. Let me simplify this into one statement that aims at where Jesus is leading – **because of how deep these tendencies run and the affect they have on every area of our lives, how you handle your MONEY is the key to your spiritual perception.**

And before you over-react to that statement by saying I am over-emphasizing the point, look at what Jesus says next. He tells us there is a great deal more at stake than just our treasure. He says: *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."*

Some people may have an issue with such a strong statement. Sure people can serve two masters – I've got two jobs so I know you can serve two masters or I've got both my wife and my mother in law living me – so yeah - you can serve two masters. And the reason they miss this is because they don't understand the word serve. It isn't talking about being an employee – some 8-5 job. It comes from the word *doulos* in Greek which means bond slave. You can't be a slave to two masters. Why? Because slavery by definition means single ownership and full time service.

And when put in context, you cannot then serve God and at the same time serve money. **The love of money is EXCLUSIVE and therefore eliminates the love of God. On the other hand, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength is then to set aside the love of money. It's one or the other.** You've got to ask the question with Jesus – do I love God or do I love money?

John Calvin nailed it – he said "Where riches hold the dominion of the heart, God has lost his authority." That's true. Because where riches hold the dominion of the heart, when the Spirit of God prompts someone to give money to the Kingdom, to invest in the Kingdom in some way, the person resists that in self-indulgent prideful protection of his own investments and therefore the authority of God is blunted and ignored.

To be a bond slave is to be constantly and totally and entirely devoted in obedience to that one master. I want us to understand how real this is so turn with me to **Romans chapter 6**. I'm not going to add commentary here – we'll just read this and let God make it clear. Beginning in verse 8. God can only be served with single-mindedness and if you try to split that with money, you will either hate one or the other.

See there may be some of you sitting here today and even last week and you've been hoarding money. You've been selfish about it and you haven't been investing it in God's causes and you haven't been giving it to those in need and you've just been piling it up for yourself. So while I'm preaching on this and you are hearing God's Word, the Lord is saying do this and do this and you're beginning to resent God's claim on your life. You're fighting that. Because you can't serve those two things. And you're starting to justify yourself. To worm out of the deal and say this is just ridiculous. And you begin to resist and resent.

On the other hand, there may be others here today and everything you have you want to give to God. If every treasure you have in this world, you want to use for God's glory – you want to pour out to him - then you are also getting resentful today. You despise the systems in this world that take so much of it away from you. It bothers you that insurance prices are getting so high – that gas prices keep going up – that even the cost of stamps is going up and it bothers you for the right reason: because you feel it is infringing on what you want to invest eternally.

See you can't have both of those things. You have to choose your master because the orders of these two are diametrically opposed. One calls you to walk by faith, the other to walk by sight. One calls you to be humble, the other proud. One calls you to set your affections on things above, the other on things that are seen and temporal. One says be careful for nothing, the other be anxious about everything. You can't serve them both. Again – that's what Calvin pointed out – **where RICHES hold the dominion of the heart, GOD has lost his authority.**

So we step back and look at all these verses and we can see what Jesus has been building toward in verses 19-24. **There are two treasuries – there are two visions – there are two masters in this text.** In each of those three alternatives, you have the same principle hit from different angles. And we have to make a choice.

We make a choice in verses 19-20 whether we store up treasure on earth or in heaven.

We make a choice in verses 22 and 23 whether we are going to exist in light or in darkness.

We make a choice in verse 24 whether our master is going to be God or our master is going to be money – because it can't be both.

And yet **all three of those choices come down to one really – how do we HANDLE our wealth – our possessions, our money, our stuff – how do we handle the things of this world?**

And folks, God's church is struggling with this issue. All the recent studies say that people in the church really have trouble being generous. We have trouble giving our stuff for the purposes of the Lord.

Did you know that only 5% of people tithe? That among those who claim to read their bibles every day, only 12% of them actually give 10% of their income to the Lord.

And I don't care how you feel about those studies or numbers, but that shows we have issues with storing up treasures in heaven but don't seem to have issues with focusing our treasure on earth. We are either hoarding up our treasures for our own use or we are using them at such a rate that we have no reflection on eternity.

No wonder like I told you last week, Jesus talks about money and possessions more than he talks about faith and prayer combined – more than he talks about heaven and hell combined. Because we need this message – we need to remember that we have an eternity to experience that is somehow dictated by today – by how we live these short lives here.

And I want to just put this in context again of the Sermon on the Mount because it is really hard to not see that Jesus is talking about unusual generosity here. Think about what we have already seen in his sermon in Matthew 5-7. He talks about what the Old Testament teaches in his sermon here in Matthew. He says the Old Testament teaches that you should not murder. What does Jesus say? He says righteousness is don't be angry.

He says the Old Testament teaches you should not commit adultery. What does Jesus say? He says righteousness is don't even lust.

He says the Old Testament teaches that you should not swear falsely. What does Jesus say? He says righteousness is don't swear at all.

You see the progression there? And then in the Sermon on the Mount he talks about giving in two different places. And the question is do you think that when he talks about giving in the same sermon he has somehow changed his perspective on righteousness or would you agree that what he is really doing here is talking the Old Testament concept of the 10% tithe and saying if you want to be righteous, you need to be generous?

And frankly I can't believe that generosity is about 3% of our income when the Old Testament directive at the minimum was 10% tithe on your income. Folks where we start is 10% - but Jesus is calling us to be generous with everything we have and all that we are.

And I so want our church to be the kind of church that does not follow the statistical trend of American churches. And I'm so thankful that because many of you have already made the choice Jesus is presenting in Matthew 6 – because so many of you are not only being obedient – and being generous – many of you are being sacrificial – I'm not having to preach this as a disciplinary truth. Those of you who are making that possible – thank you for that.

But it is absolutely ludicrous that we would not reap the blessings that God has clearly laid out in scripture with our finances when it is so easy to do. All it takes is a little intention – a little planning. You do realize that **if you don't PLAN to give, you won't**, right?

You don't have to plan to hoard – you don't have to make a lot of plans to spend all you get on things you convinced yourself you need – you don't need a lot of plans to begin to think you need more than you've got. But you've got to make plans to be an intentional giver. You've got to make plans to obey what Christ has said.

And let me tell you – **if we will be a church that makes plans to be GENEROUS to the work of the Lord, it will totally revolutionize the way we experience God's presence in this place. We will not only be storing up treasures in heaven, it will change our entire LIVES.**

Because **there is so much more at stake here than just TREASURES. God is talking about who your master is. God is talking about every area of your life and your ETERNITY.** There is so much at stake here and Jesus is saying you cannot serve both God and money.

Are you familiar with the story of Oscar Schindler – the movie made about his biography, Schindler's List? In the closing scene in that movie, Mr. Schindler is coming out of a prison camp. There are literally hundreds of Jews lined along this road waiting for him to come out. He comes out and looks in the faces of hundreds of Jews that were supposed to die but he was able to purchase in order to save their lives in WWII when they were being exterminated. He came out and he saw their faces and it totally impacted his life. Because he saw all these lives that were supposed to be dead and now were alive.

He walked up to one of the leaders of the Jews and said to him – whispered in his ear – I could have gotten more. I could have got more.

The man embraces him, says no – look around. Don't you see it? Eleven hundred Jews are alive because of you. There are generations that will live because of you. He said no – I could have made more money – I threw away so much money – I could have gotten more. You have no idea.

He walks up to his car and he says this car – was 10 more people – why didn't I sell this car – it was 10 more people. He looks at the gold pin on his lapel – why didn't I sell this pin – this pin would have been 2 more people, at least one more person – I could have gotten one more person.

And then he falls down into a heap and he is crying – and all these Jews gather around him to comfort him and he is weeping – I could have got one more.

Church I pray Jesus' word in Matthew chapter 6 will so change the way we see our lives, our stuff, our money, and eternity, that when the day comes and all opportunities are over and our lives are done – and we stand before God, though we will all at that point find ourselves saying I could have done more – I could have spent more for the kingdom – I could have shared Christ more - I could have read my Bible more – I could have prayed more – I could have witnessed more – I could have given more away – I could have done more for the Kingdom. I pray that this so impacts us from this day forward that at that point God would be able to take us in his arms and he would say well done my good and faithful servant. And the only way we'll get there is if we make sure we store up our treasures in heaven. We make sure we live for eternity, not just for today.

I'm not against being wise and saving and preparing for the future – there is plenty of scripture on the importance of that. But what I am telling you is that **Jesus is telling us that we ought to make every plan for the future in light of ETERNITY. We ought to make every spending decision in terms of the fact that it is a SPIRITUAL decision.** We ought to make every decision about our money with eternity in mind.

Because here is what Jesus has been aiming at. This is the point of both last week and this week because this is the point Jesus is making. **The cost is infinitely GREATER to use our stuff for ourselves in this life than to use it for the glory of God even** (using it for the glory of God) **means we suffer a little bit more now for his sake.** The cost is infinitely greater.

Every one of us will feel sacrifice if we follow in what Jesus says. Every one of us will feel the pinch, particularly in these times of economic difficulty. But the cost is so worth it. We are storing up treasures in heaven. Storing up treasures for eternity. And where our treasures are, that's where our hearts will be. And **there's not a person in this place that can serve both God and wealth. So Jesus says serve GOD. Serve him. Your life depend on it and it will be worth it.** Let's pray.