

Great Verses of the Bible
Treasures in Heaven
Matthew 6:19-21
July 16, 2023
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This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! Good morning, Church! So, last week I was asked a very interesting question. That was: Since we are not having a prelude from the choir, am I going to preach longer? The answer to that is no. George Burns was right. All good sermons should have a good introduction, a good conclusion, and the two should be as close together as possible!

I'm reading from Matthew, chapter 6, beginning with verse 19, as we continue our series of sermons on great verses of Scripture. Jesus speaking: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, your heart will be also." May God bless the reading of His Word.

Treasures are a relative thing, aren't they? It's been rightly said that one man's trash is another man's treasure. Now, this morning I have Show and Tell. It's not gonna last long, but I do have Show and Tell. Now, you can't really see what it is, because it is so small and delicate. For everyone else in the world, this is trash. But for me, this is treasure. This is an ultra, ultra, mini-spin fishing rod and reel. I bought this 28 years ago in Chehalis, Washington. I used it for two years, just had an absolute blast with it, and I decided that my dad needed it. He used it for the next 10 years and just had a blast fishing with this thing. Now, if you are a serious fisherman, this is not for you, because this is something you play with. If you are going seriously fishing, you don't take this. If you are wanting to catch fish for supper, you don't take this. If you want to just go and play, you take this. Now, everyone knows that the only difference between men and boys is the price of their toys. And that's this. I gave it to my father, and I re-inherited it after he passed away. And this is kind of one of my treasures. I don't need it; I may never use it again; but, Baby, I need it. This is one of my treasures.

Now, this is a little tool. I'm told it's called a 5-in-1. Now, I'm not handy. We were told by a relative that this was the most handy tool to have in your toolbox. And our relative said they used it every single week. Now, we bought this, I unwrapped it, I looked it over, and I put it where I put my tools that I use. That was eight months ago, and the first time it moved is when I brought it here. This is not one of my treasures. Treasures are a relative thing. Now, that tool, I'm sure, is very useful. I have a good friend by the name of Al, who has passed away now. He was one of the most creative and resourceful people in the world. And I'm sure that Al could have taken that tool and built a house. But for me, it's more or less useless. Treasures depend on the individual, and we know that a tool is only as good as the hands that wield it. Now, Ember took that cello, earlier in the service, and made it sing. That was beautiful. But you put that same instrument in the hands of someone who doesn't know what it is, and the sound is probably going to be different. Not all, but most treasures are treasures for seasons of our life. Age robbed my father of his dexterity and his sight and his coordination. And he was no longer able to use this little rod and reel, and so he put it in a storeroom away from the rest of his gear, so he wouldn't be reminded that he could no longer use it.

No matter how special treasures may be, they are fleeting in nature. In our passage, Jesus addresses the fleeting nature of earthly treasures and the need for us to invest in treasures of an eternal nature. Do not put your trust in earthly treasures. They will fail you. Jesus uses three classic illustrations from His day. In His day, clothes were harder to manufacture and harder to come by, and many people measured their treasures by the clothes they owned. Nobody would do that today, right? Now, it hasn't happened to me since I have been out West, but in the South, you would hang stuff up in the spring and go to get it out in the winter, and you would find holes all in it where the moths got in, and you didn't even know you had 'em. The same thing happened in Jesus' era. And the word that is translated in our Bible as "rust," is actually "corrupt." In their era, one of the ways you measured your treasure was by how much grain you had in your barns. But there are all types of threats that might corrupt your grain: rats, and mice, and bugs, and mold, and mildew. And in the old King James Version, it says: "Don't store up treasures for yourself where thieves can dig through and steal." You see, the walls were made out of mud and straw. And literally, if a thief wanted to break into your house, they wouldn't bother going through a window or a door, they would just get an instrument and dig through your wall. You can lose treasures in all manner of ways; they are fleeting in nature.

Jesus said, "Store up for yourselves eternal treasures. Build up heavenly treasures." Now, this is a very common theme among Jewish people. They talk about storing up treasures in heaven. How do you do that? They believe that deeds of kindness, done on the earth, build up treasures in heaven. What you hoard up, you lose, but what you give away, you gain. You may have it in this world, but you lose it in the next world. If you give it away here, you have it there. If that is true for our Jewish brothers and sisters, how much more is it true for us? In the early days of the Christian church, just after we began to build meeting houses, one Roman army sacked a particular town for a particular reason, and I have forgotten the reason why. And they went to the different temples to raid those temples, because that's where people's treasures were stored. What was true of the Jewish temple was also true of the Jewish synagogue and was also true of all the other pagan temples. That's where treasures were kept. And so, when an army sacked a particular town, that was the first place they looted. They came to this Christian church and they said, "Where are your treasures?" They said, "We have no treasures, as you think of treasures." "Where are your treasures?" And finally, the leaders of that particular congregation took them to a back room where, huddling in a corner, were widows and orphans. And they said, "These are our treasures." Deeds of kindness.

Treasures in heaven are our personal character and our personal integrity, the only thing that is uniquely yours. Good works are the only possessions, and your personal integrity is the only possession that will accompany you to heaven. There's a Spanish proverb that says: "There are no pockets in shrouds." If our eyes are on the eternal, we have a tendency to take the things of this world more lightly. But if our eyes are on earthly things, we tend to take the things of eternity more lightly. Now, don't mis-hear me. Jesus never said this life and this world were not important. They are important. Jesus sanctified this life by living it Himself. But this world's importance is only because of what it prepares us for. A long time ago, in a land far away, when dinosaurs still roamed the earth, I can remember when contemporary music was just beginning to be a thing. And there was a particular contemporary song that said, "I want to get so close to

Him that it's no big change on that day, when Jesus calls my name." This world is a stage on the way. Don't lose your heart to this world.

Store up your treasures in heaven. How do you do that? This simple answer to that question is: Follow Jesus. If you follow Jesus, you will be storing up treasures in heaven. If you follow Christ and follow His way, you will automatically be storing up treasures in heaven. But let me offer a few other suggestions. Number one, be generous. Be generous. Be generous with your time. Be generous with your money. Be generous with your possessions. Be generous. This comes with a disclaimer, though. If you are generous, you will be taken advantage of. You hear me? If you are generous, you will be taken advantage of. Get over it! Seriously, get over it! It may irk you, and maybe it should, but a day will come when you're faced with an opportunity to be generous, and if you're dwelling on the time that you got taken advantage of, you may not take advantage of that opportunity. And if you don't take advantage of that opportunity, and you find out that it was genuine, and you missed an opportunity to do a vast amount of good, that will haunt you. Store up treasures in heaven by being generous with your time, with your money, with your other resources.

The second one, I have been having trouble all week putting it into words. It's kind of like being asked to describe beauty. I don't know how to describe beauty, but I know it when I see it. This particular trait, I'll try to describe it. Invest in good and lasting things. What are the good and lasting things? When I think of good and lasting things, I think first and foremost, as your pastor, I think of this church. This church has outlasted the people who originally built it. That generation is gone. God willing and the creek don't rise, and according to His will, and if we are faithful, this church will outlast you and I, and it will be a lighthouse in this community for years and years and years to come. This is something that is lasting. This is something you can invest in for eternity. As this church, we are investing in the future. Our motto is to get the church out, and get the community in. This pays lasting dividends. We are working on our reputation in the community. When people think of a place to learn about God, when they think of a place to be loved, when they think about a place to make a difference in this community, we want them to think of Central United Protestant Church. Did you know that there was a point in time in this community, when this community thought about the spiritual hub or the spiritual center of the Tri-Cities, they thought about this church? We're investing in making that the case again. Invest in this church. Invest in your kids and your grandkids. I have had the privilege of pastoring churches where I had as many as four generations of one family under the same roof. And you can see traits passed down from generation to generation to generation. And some of those traits are very good: The whole family is generous and kind, and they have the same kind of a disposition. But you can see the opposite, as well. I've seen families where negativity and pessimism and jealousy and those kinds of things are passed from one generation to another generation to another generation. Invest in your kids and your grandkids. And make sure it's a good investment, because they will be picking your nursing home!

Be generous. Be generous; invest in what is good and lasting; and concentrate on your personal character. Concentrate on your personal character. I have been privileged to know many saints through the years. And when I think of some of those dear old saints, I can't help but smile, because of their personal character. And there's one I'm going to share with you about. His name was Algie. He was in my second Southern Baptist Church. In the Southern Baptist Church, you worship three times a week: Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. And Mr. Algie was at every single

service. I mean, every service. He did not miss. And if he missed, it was because he was sick, and I knew I needed to go see him. I had been at this particular church for two years, and I think going on three, when I found out that Mr. Algie, for two and a half years at least, had never heard a song, a scripture read, or one of my sermons. He was stone-cold deaf. And he never missed a service. And I asked him, "Mr. Algie, you know, I really appreciate it. Why do you do that?" And he said, "These young people need to know that it's important to go to church." And he attended three times a week just to make a statement that it is important to go to church. That is personal character and integrity.

Store up treasures in heaven by being generous, investing in good and lasting things, and concentrating on your personal character. Last, but certainly not least, a guy that I admire a good bit, a guy by the name of John Wesley. John Wesley was very fond of rules. He had the General Rules for the Church. He had twelve rules for his pastors. He had Simple Rules for Living, which are three: "Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God." And then he had something that is just called John Wesley's Rules. And it is rumored that John came up with this, but there are others who say that maybe not. But this is what they are: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." Jesus admonished us not to store up treasures here that, no matter what they are, no matter how much you like them, are not going to last. But store up treasures in heaven that will.

Let's pray together. Jesus said, "Where your treasures are, there will your heart be also." Where are your treasures? Where are you building up treasures: here or there? Let us pray.

Lord, You know our hearts and You know where our hearts are. If they are not on eternal things, make that known to us right now. And if we are not storing up treasures in heaven, make that known to us as well. Lord, help us to see very clearly where our treasures are, and help us to store up treasures in heaven. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.