

Matthew 6 - Part 3 - The Greatest Investment

What is your treasure?

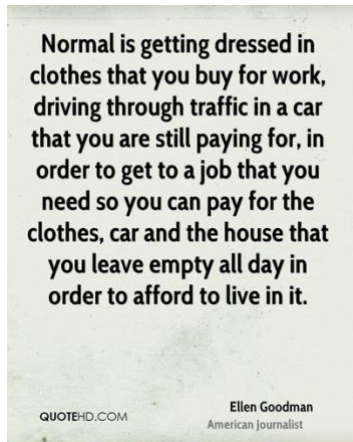
¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

I am continually amazed at how God is directing me to the very things I most need to hear in my life. Recently, I have been concerned about my retirement income. I've met with financial people who are supposedly smarter than me about investing money, and I've thought a lot about what kind of responsibilities and burdens I am going to leave behind for my loved ones when I'm gone. Probably the greatest irony of it all is that God has taken care of me **EACH AND EVERY STEP** of my life. He has continually shown Himself faithful to me, and He has continually shown me that He can plan for my future in ways that I can't even imagine. As I've told you for the past year, there are three basic needs deep within every human heart: 1) The need to be loved and accepted, 2) The need to have value and worth, and 3) The need to have an identity. Whenever we try to meet these fundamental needs with anything but God, the end is **ALWAYS FRUSTRATION AND CONFLICT**. No person can make you feel loved like you need to be loved. No person or possession can meet your deepest need for value and worth. No person, possession, or group can make you have the identity you desperately crave.

As a corollary of those needs, is the need to feel secure. I think that need to feel secure financially and emotionally is intertwined in those three basic needs. That need is not just psychological but it is financial as well. One of the great lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil, is that the accumulation of possessions can give you happiness and security. The odd thing is that we spend all of our lives accumulating, storing, securing, and trying to preserve more "stuff". An even odder thing is that we can't take any of it with us. Also, the irony is that the more we accumulate the more it ends up controlling us instead of the other way around. That takes away from our security bank. We store up stuff to feel more secure, and then it robs us of our peace and security by demanding more of our time to preserve what we've stored up.

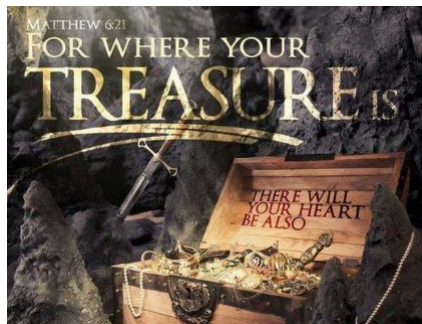
The Greek word "rust" here really is saying things stored are "eaten up" by all sorts of things. It totally exposes the reality of values and what is truly important. The first part presents the question of what is a treasure? In biblical times it was difficult to secure what you owned. Today we have bug spray, rodent chasers, and insurance, but we're still trying to acquire and protect that which we have accumulated. Since I began pastoring Union Grove, I've consciously

begun releasing things that I've accumulated. I am reorganizing my life to not "get more things done" but to have "fewer things" to do. And above all, I am choosing to prioritize those things that I believe God wants me to do. I've determined that one way to "store up treasure in heaven" is to invest in getting people there!



As a society, we have come to believe this cycle of acquiring, storing, and preserving is "normal", and "normal" isn't working out for us. Our society is coming apart chasing "normal". Families are falling apart. Couples are separating all because of the world's ideal of "normal". **The message of the Sermon on the Mount is that "normal" will not work for us, and we are called to live our lives in a way that is not "normal" to the world, because we are called to live our lives according to the Kingdom of God.**

In verse 20 the message to us is that "you should store up for yourselves treasures where the potential for loss is not so great". Jesus is telling us that the treasures we store up in heaven are not going to be stolen, have moths, rust, and experience loss that will eat them up. They are sound investments. They are eternal investments. I believe that one of the reasons that the Lord has allowed me to accumulate a comparatively large amount is so that Sandy and I can invest heavily in people at this stage of our lives. Jesus tells us that the things that we treasure reveal where our hearts really are! And our hearts will determine what treasure we will choose to pursue in our lives.



He says, "*For where your treasure is there your heart will be also,*" Our hearts will be either tied to heaven or to the earth. What is it that we treasure? **What we treasure is what we think about and where we put our efforts.** Sometimes we want things because we're told we should want them. It could be advertising or it could be peer pressure.

I recently bought a new truck, and after I made an initial inquiry on Google about the cost of a new Dodge truck, I began receiving all kinds of adds for trucks on Facebook. I got adds for Fords, Nissans, Chevys, and other kinds of trucks I've never even heard of. The world is chasing my money, and the world is trying to plant needs and desires in my heart that never existed before.

It made me conscious of how many things are trying to influence me. The real question down in my heart is **"how do I keep my heart from being taken captive by the things of the world?" I want to stay influenced and captivated by the things of God. I want Him showing me my real needs and showing me how He is going to fill those needs. I need to make Him my treasure instead of the things of the world. The world wants to get ahold of my heart. My heart's desire is for my maker to get ahold of my heart in every way.**

Jesus is telling us that there are treasures that last and treasures that don't last. Jesus is telling us that we have several different options for investment. One option is something that

will last forever, and the second one is investing in things that are going away. If we use our ability to reason, we will choose what will last forever. So, if we keep investing in the world, we really don't believe what Jesus is saying. If we did believe Him, we would be putting our efforts into the things of God, and our imaginations would be less often hijacked by the world.

How can we keep ourselves from being so captivated by the things of this world? We can start by believing what the Bible says. The Bible has A LOT to say about worldly wealth. We need to get quiet and ask ourselves whether we believe it or not. Solomon had huge wealth. He had more women and probably a greater palace than anyone who has ever come along. And, he had more wisdom than anyone who has ever lived. Yet, this is what he said about possessions.

10 He who loves silver (money) will not be satisfied with silver(money); Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.¹¹ When goods increase, They increase who eat them; So what profit have the owners Except to see them with their eye¹² The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep. (Eccl 5)

This is not a call to poverty. It is not a call to laziness. The Bible is full of warnings against idleness and laziness. We are told to be industrious, and be prudent in how we save and how we spend. This same Solomon wrote,

⁶Take a lesson from the ants, you lazy fellow. Learn from their ways and be wise! ⁷For though they have no king to make them work, ⁸yet they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter. (Proverbs 6:6-8 TLB)

The problem is that we can easily direct our focus in the wrong direction. I remember when I sold my business my dad told me, "You didn't sell it for enough". The question is, "How much is enough?" Most Americans don't believe they are materially well off. Most believe that someone who has more than they do is rich. Yet, each of us from a material standpoint is wealthy in historical terms. Most people living in the world live on less in a month than some pay for cable TV. If you're making \$25,000 a year, you make more than 90% of the rest of the people in the world, yet many making that believe themselves to be "poor".¹ If money is your measure of success, you can never have enough. It is strange that we're never satisfied with what we have, but we always think we need just a little bit more to be secure.

There are so many relevant passages I could teach on this for hours. Paul tells Timothy that "the love of money is the root of all evil". The Bible is FULL of information about wealth. Most of us don't lack information about what the Bible says about wealth. What we lack is conviction about what the Bible says. We must remember that anything we run after in the world is only temporal. It is for the here and now. So where is your heart? What treasure do you seek? The answer to this determines where you have your eyes (heart) focused. What do you perceive as the treasure? An eye (a hunger) for the things of the world will introduce progressive darkness into your life. An eye for the things of God will flood your soul with light to overflowing. Jesus

¹ <https://dailycaller.com/2011/11/09/the-top-1-percent-of-the-world/>

talked about this as the "lamp of the body". Where is your attention focused? It matters because it will affect your body, soul, and spirit.

The Lamp of the Body - What is influencing you?

²² *"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ 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!"*

Jesus is using a metaphor here. He is speaking about influence. If you're looking to the things of the world to satisfy you, you will be filling yourself with darkness. He is saying when your eyes/heart are focused on the things of God you are filling your soul with light. When you open your heart to acquiring, securing, and storing the things of the world you are opening yourself to darkness and the influence of the world.

In Greek this term of your eye being good can equally mean "your heart is good?" Is your eye looking after the world or is your eye/heart looking at and seeking after spiritual things? This is a question of vision. It is a question of what you are setting your life on. What are you chasing after? What are you focused on? What are you dwelling on? What is your heart set on? Are you captivated by the love of Christ? When we focus on what Jesus did for us on the cross, our hearts and souls are filled with light. I know personally I don't do this enough. I need to keep my eyes totally focused on Him so I don't fill myself with darkness. **What my heart is seeking is the treasure that I am pursuing!**

You Cannot Serve God and Riches - Question of Worth? What are you trusting in?

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 (money)."*

What is Mammon?

Mammon may have originated with the Aramaic word "mamon" which meant riches or money or a Hebrew word meaning "that which is to be trusted"



Jesus is talking about what is behind the two treasures that we might seek. Who or what is your master? It really reminds me of the Bob Dylan song "You gotta serve somebody". Jesus is saying that those masters are either God or they are material wealth. Jesus is saying that it is ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE to serve God and material wealth. So, what master are you serving? This word "serve" in Greek is where we get the word for "slave". Who is your ultimate master? Who do you belong to?

Remember the story about the Rich Young Ruler. Jesus challenged the young ruler's facade of devotion, the real motive and the real devotion of the young man was exposed. The young man was INSTANTLY sad because he realized that he had already chosen his wealth over his devotion to God.

God is not telling us to sell all that we have and give it away. Jesus was trying to show the rich young ruler what stood in the way between him and God. Likewise, God is not telling us to be idle or lazy or not make money. **He is telling us where our primary focus needs to be and why it needs to be there.** Jesus is once again **challenging the motives of our hearts,** and He is asking us where our devotion really lies.

There are just too many instances in the Bible that tell us to work hard, save hard, count the costs (budget) and yet still be generous. We can't be generous if we consume everything we make on ourselves. Jesus again is looking straight into our motives. He is challenging us to let him uncover the motivation behind the jobs that we have, the savings that we have, and what we're going to do with our jobs and our savings.

When our children were little, Sandy and I made a habit of telling our kids that work was a good thing, and earning money was a good thing. We taught them that they should use their abilities as best as they could to be able to support themselves. Secondly, they should not consume all that they earned so that they could save for a "rainy day". "Rainy days" are those times when needs go on but the income has run out perhaps temporarily. And lastly, we told them that they should have as a goal the ability to be very generous regarding the needs of others and their support for God's work here on earth.

When I was a young boy I read a book that suggested that I tithe to the Lord and tithe to myself and my family before I paid everybody else. I have sort of done that my entire life and it has created what I call the "swimming pool principle". The pool is the reserve. Sandy and I now drink out of the excess of the pool while having water for those unto whom we minister. I once heard Francis Schaffer say something like "whatever your wealth level, as a believer and follower of Jesus your standard of living should probably be less than someone of the world who makes or has the same amount of wealth as you do". I think he was thinking in the right direction. We are the light of the world. We are the salt of the earth. We are to be different. We are to influence the world around us by our relationship with God. So, what is it that you treasure? What are you most influenced by? And, lastly, in whom or in what do you put your trust? The only treasures that last for eternity will be those that we store up in heaven.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by

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