

# WEEK FOUR: “Treasures in Heaven”

## Opening Reflection

What is your most prized material possession? What makes it special?



Read **Matthew 6:19-24 (NIV)**:

<sup>19</sup> “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup> “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup> But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

<sup>24</sup> “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.

1. What do you notice in this passage? What resonates with you?
2. Matthew, though writing in Greek, uses the Aramaic term, “mammon,” which gets updated to “money” in most translations. Mammon means wealth as an object of worship. Amy-Jill Levine says this term was important to the original audience because it sounded more foreign, like a god or idol, set in opposition to God (96). Does this change your understanding of the text? If so, in what way?
3. In ancient times, the heart was thought to be the soul or mind, the center of a person’s will or character. The eyes were believed to project light outwards, and a person could emit either positive emotions or malice and evil intent through their eyes (Levine, 99). What is the connection between these parts of the body and Jesus’ teaching about treasures?



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**Listen in as Dr. Ragwan shares his insight on this text:**

The Sermon on the Mount was very important for Jesus' audience then and I believe for us too, both as individuals as well as the church if we are to be Kingdom people. It stands as the longest and most prominent section of Jesus' teaching. This last section, Mt 6:19-24, cuts into the heart of our culture as it relates to wealth, especially in the light of us being in the richest country in the world, it challenges us in our understanding of wealth.

A cursory reading of the text may suggest that Jesus is against wealth. A deeper reading reveals Jesus' emphasis on the connection of the heart and wealth. If wealth, which according to Jesus, is temporal, and is aligned with the heart, then it will remain on temporal things rather than on wealth that is eternal. It is said that Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, was laying down the principles of the Kingdom of God and so here he was moving his audiences' attention away from the temporal earthly principle of storing wealth here on earth to the eternal principle. As far as storing wealth here on earth, he says "...do not store...". His use of the word "not" in the Greek is emphasizing action. If we are busying (action) ourselves in storing wealth here on earth, such wealth has a limited life span where it is either consumed, gets worn out, stolen, or is destroyed. He challenges his audience to store up wealth in heaven and this is a command. The Greek suggests that he expects this to be followed not once, but as an ongoing process. And so, as Kingdom people, how are we involved in the ongoing yielding and applying of Kingdom principles as it relates to wealth? Are we as individuals and as the church investing in heavenly treasures that are advancing the mission of God here on earth?

Jesus then references the eye as being the lamp of the body. The eye is the lamp of the body: from it all the other members derive their light. The eye also regulates the motion of the body. And if God is challenging the audience to allow this singleness of vision on the heavenly treasure, then this will preserve us from the snare of having a double treasure, and therefore a divided heart.

As stated above, Jesus is not against wealth and to have money and property is not sinful; but what is meant is, that we should not allow these to be the master. We must make them serve us as we apply the principles of the Kingdom here on earth. I believe that once we do this, our heart will be in the right place.

1. What did you hear Dr. Ragwan say? Did anything challenge or inspire you?
2. In Matthew 19:16-22, Jesus tells the rich young ruler to sell all he has and give the money to the poor, but the man goes away sad because he was very wealthy. Though Jesus may not be against wealth, what might be the danger of it? How do we balance Jesus' warning to "not store" wealth on earth, with the practical, such as saving for retirement?
3. What challenge does this give to the church today? How are we "advancing the mission of God here on earth" (Ragwan)?
4. If you could ask Dr. Ragwan one question, what would it be?



### **At the heart of the matter**

"Worldly possessions tend to turn the hearts of the disciples away from Jesus. What are we really devoted to? That is the question. Are our hearts set on earthly goods? Do we try to combine devotion to them with loyalty to Christ? Or are we devoted exclusively to him? The light of the body is the eye, and the light of the Christian is his heart. If the eye be dark, how great is the darkness of the body! But the heart is dark when it clings to earthly goods, for then, however urgently Jesus may call us, his call fails to find access to our hearts. Our hearts are closed, for they have already been given to another" (Bonhoeffer, 193).

1. Where, in your own life, have you experienced what Bonhoeffer describes as a divided heart, combining devotion to Christ and earthly goods? What was the result? Where and how does the church struggle with this?
2. Jesus and Bonhoeffer urge us to consider our focus. Where do your heart and eyes need to be trained to focus on Christ? What spiritual practice might help you?

## **Closing Reflection**

Amy-Jill Levine suggests fasting as a spiritual discipline that helps us to identify our treasures and refine our focus (92). What might you try fasting from this week? Maybe food, TV, or social media? How might praying instead of eating, binge watching, or scrolling help you realign your heart towards Christ?