

"Picking Your Pathway" Matthew 6:19-24
Wednesday 7/31/19 – Jeff Lyle

When the clock runs down and we find ourselves in the last days of our lives, we will be crossing the finish line that will have been defined by all of the countless choices we made during our lives. We ultimately arrive at the point of death in the place where we consistently aimed during our days of life. Taking nothing away from the sovereignty of God, the bottom-line truth about our lives is that we reap what we sow. Life is defined by our choices - what we did with what we were offered by God. In this portion of Jesus' message on the hillside, He exposes one of the most familiar choices that all of us are faced with daily. Will we live our lives for the material world or the invisible world? Will we aim the trajectory of our lives for temporary treasures or eternal ones? We must answer this question while we are still living because the ultimate truth is that our own finish line does not actually occur when we die. We have an appointment after death with Jesus who will assess the full value of our lives and then dispense eternal rewards for us based on how we trusted and followed Him. It is in that place that we discover if we actually truly lived. In the end, we pick our own pathways.

I. Two Types of Treasure in Life (19-21)

A. Our temporary treasure is addressed (19) - "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal..."

Jesus, as He begins to teach the crowd about the differences between earthly values and Kingdom values, unpacks the issue of how we regard wealth and material possessions. He begins by giving a firm commandment for His followers never to live for earthly treasures. This is our responsibility as Jesus followers. When He commands, "Do not lay up for yourselves...", Jesus is telling us not to live for our won wealth and pleasure. He describes this type of life-philosophy as creating our reservoir to hold "treasures on earth." Jesus then explains why this is an unfit way for us to live. He explains that, for those who live to accumulate earthly treasure, the end result is that the very things we worked, saved and lived for will perish during this earthly life. He uses poetic language, saying of these types of treasure that they come to ruin as "moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal." Living for temporary, earthly wealth and possessions is beneath the vision and purpose that Jesus has for us as His followers.

B. Our true treasure is addressed (20) - "...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."

As Jesus has already told us how *not* to live, He then immediately empowers us for living in the way that God designs for all His children. Again, Jesus place the responsibility squarely upon us for this type of living. He does so by commanding us to intentionally live for eternal treasure, not earthly treasure. He tells us to "lay up for yourselves" treasures in Heaven. Notice that the reservoir for our assets moves from earth to Heaven in His teaching. Jesus does not teach us to avoid gaining wealth. He teaches us to gain wealth and to invest it in the Kingdom of God. That means that Christians are to constantly consider what we are doing with our wealth and possessions. There is a way to work and gain wealth that only benefits us on earth while costing us our eternal rewards. There is another way - a better way - that costs us our personal use of wealth on earth while storing up rewards for us in Heaven. Jesus is calling us to live in a way that amasses "treasures in heaven." In order to do that, we must invest our earthly treasures into the kingdom while we are still alive. In the end, Jesus teaches, the Heavenly rewards and riches are resiliently preserved for us. They cannot fade nor fail. The Father safeguards those investments and, in some mysterious way, these rewards impact the way that we live in the Millennial Kingdom and the eternal state. That's right, there will be different capacities between us in the coming Kingdom. The capacity in which we reign in the Kingdom is somehow tethered to how we invested our earthly lives. Jesus is teaching us to live for the eternal Kingdom and not the temporary earthly realm.

C. Our most trusted treasure is addressed (21) - "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Here is the unquestioning diagnostic tool to discern whether or not we are living for temporary riches or eternal ones. Jesus teaches that you can trace your allegiance by tracing how you spend and invest your earthly treasure. The wise son of God reveals that we will place our money into those things that we prioritize most. If we are constantly spending our money and using our assets for temporary earthly pleasures, then we should believe Jesus and honestly confess that we are more aligned with earth than Heaven. If we are generous toward the Kingdom and invest in its eternal priorities and opportunities, then we can rest in deep contentment that grace has so shaped our hearts that we are now living in alignment with the invisible Kingdom of God. None of us can get a free pass on this principle. Jesus declares that wherever your money is most heavily released, that is the arena of your heart's greatest trust and pleasure.

II. Two Types of Vision in Life (22-23)

A. The spiritual vision for life (22) - "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light..."

In the next couple of verses, Jesus is not impersonating an eye-doctor. He begins to speak to us in terms of our *spiritual vision*. He is addressing how we view our lives. Using the physical eye as a metaphor for our Kingdom vision, Jesus lets us know that we need to cultivate and maintain a healthy focus in life. He desires our vision to be singularly focused on the kingdom, and for us to view everything about our lives through the lens of God's eternal vision. Jesus describes our capacity for healthy vision as the source of light that enters and then characterizes our lives. He is teaching that if we live with His vision, our whole life will be filled with spiritual light. **Jesus is giving us a secret to living a life that matters for eternity.** Our own vision, our personal views and our active values must be shaped by the light of the Gospel and the Kingdom. Jesus promises that, when we open our eyes to His vision, our own lives will be filled with Kingdom light and life.

B. The blurred vision for life (23a) - "...but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness..."

What is true about us if we live with a committed Kingdom perspective is also conversely true if we live with a non-Kingdom view of life. Jesus speaks of those who live with a material lens over their vision for life as people who have bad spiritual eyes. This does not necessarily mean that these types of people are corrupt, evil or malicious. It simply means that they are living with unhealthy vision and are walking in differing degrees of darkness. In essence, when we live for this temporary world, we have blinded ourselves to the Kingdom because everything which comes into our mind is rooted in temporary pleasures, riches and rewards. Jesus says emphatically that, if the light that guides us is sourced in this temporary world, then our whole lives will be characterized by great spiritual darkness. This is so important, because this type of darkness is embraced by so many who say with their mouths that Jesus is their Lord. Their theology recognizes Him as the King, but they are still being lured and led by the priorities of this temporary world. They live for momentary pleasures, temporary treasures and non-Kingdom priorities. Jesus wants His followers to regularly check their spiritual vision for their lives. What is driving us? What foundation are we building our lives upon? What is our primary motivation for being who we are becoming and doing what we are doing with our lives? Surely, we are not being led by the darkened philosophies and priorities of our culture. We are not being driven

by the desire for wealth, comfort or self-preservation, are we? Jesus calls us to address any blurred vision in our lives.

C. The blind vision in life (23b) - "...If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

If any of us is walking according to the course of this world system, we are actually cooperating with the pull of spiritual forces of darkness (Ephesians 2:1-3). We might go to church on Sundays, sing worship songs, live out a morally committed standard, and try to do some good works every now and then...but if our heart is hungry for the world and our lives are motivated by the temporary treasures of this age, then Jesus declares that a "great darkness" is at work within us. This is an intense teaching from the King!

III. Two Types of Masters in Life (24)

A. An undeniable fact - "No one can serve two masters..."

Here, Jesus is now bringing this portion of the Sermon on the Mount to a climactic closure. He summarizes all that He has just taught in the context of who are actual Master is. Leaving no wobble-room for us, Jesus is teaching that the thing we serve the most is actually our functional master. We cannot serve two Masters. In Jesus' day, the Master of the house owned the servants. He provided for them. He protected them. But He also owned them. In ancient Rome, a massive part of the population functioned in some form of slavery. Some historians indicate that there may have been up to 30-40% of the empire living as slaves in the century before Jesus was born. All of Jesus' audience understood the context of the slave/master paradigm. **Jesus did not come to offer Himself as a casual companion to those who might have interest. His offer is one of total Lordship alone.** Though He is a friend, counselor, leader and savior, He never offers us these aspects of who He is apart from His unilateral position as Lord and King. The Sermon on the Mount is, in part, a radical call for all of us to consider whether we have truly bowed before Jesus as Lord of all. It is a Kingdom impossibility for us to serve Jesus as Master while serving anything else also as master. He compels us to choose and commit.

B. An undivided loyalty - "...for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other."

Now, Jesus explains why the idea of serving two masters is impossible. Eventually, the two masters will come into conflict with one another. They will offer and demand opposing things to their servants. Both the world and

the Lord require our full allegiance if we are to truly belong to them. The person of the world who wants to dabble in Christianity will find themselves moving in and out of sin, guilt, fear, temporary pleasure, empty dreams and deep spiritual hungers. This type of person is unable to enjoy the world nor the Lord. They are lost, wandering and vacillating between two opposing forces. The true Christian who is still seeking to find identity in money, success, fame, relationships with others or accomplishments will learn soon enough that none of these things is able to fill up the deepest spiritual hungers which God has placed within them. They may be spiritually saved, but they live in frustration and dissatisfaction because they are still investing a large part of their lives in the temporary nature of this world system. They say that Jesus is everything, but they turn to the world to discover who they are and why they are here. In the end, each of must choose. A master demands full loyalty. We have to say Yes to one and No to the other. We have to embrace one fully and reject fully the other one. We have to love the one and hate the other.

C. An uncomfortable truth - "You cannot serve God and money."

In what may seem like a statement that is incomplete, Jesus reduces this war for the loyalty of our hearts as being between God and money. The nature of the world system is that, ultimately, it bows to the false god of money. Money falsely promises everything that God truly promises us. Money is an idol for those who trust in it and live for it. In and of itself, money is not evil. Yet, the lure of money causes many people to spend their lives trying to accumulate as much of it as possible, therefore it becomes evil to them. Living for money demands your thinking, your strategizing, your longing, your time, and your wholehearted pursuit. Most of the Western world is trained by our culture to believe that the person who has the most money is the most successful. The Bible scoffs at this hollow idea! Most wealthy people are inwardly distressed. They live in anxiety of not having enough or losing what they have. They also know that the money and possessions they have attained cannot in any way fill the emptiness of their hearts. Conversely, the Christian has fully surrendered himself/herself to the Lord and, as a result, become the master of the money which God entrusts to him/her. Money becomes our servant and cannot rule our lives as Master. We do not trust in uncertain riches (1 Timothy 6:17). We invest our finances in the Kingdom and trust that it will bring forth fruit while we are living and secure a reward in Heaven for us when we pass from this life into God's presence. Mark the dogmatic words of the king when He declares, "You CANNOT serve God and money." This is a Kingdom fact. We may earn money as believers. We may save money as believers. As Jesus-followers we are allowed to invest money. **But we cannot serve it.** If we serve it by living for it, denying Kingdom investments in fear of losing money, hoarding it or being motivated to gain more of it...mark it down, money is our master. When we truly bow before Jesus as the Lord of ALL of our life,

then money becomes a resource by which we sustain our material needs and sow into Kingdom purposes. These teaching from Jesus require all of us to examine our lives today and turn more fully to His Lordship in any place where temporary treasure has become more important than eternal treasures.