

Real Treasure and the Rest

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[0 : 00] I don't know if you saw the pictures in the news this past week of three mansions in California. They're built in a kind of complex. The location was chosen for the stunning sea view.

They are dream homes. The biggest one is worth about \$16 million. The others are worth \$13 million and \$14 million.

But heavy rainfall last week caused a landslide, and all three are now hanging off the edge of a cliff. Three homes, \$43 million, this close, this close to being swallowed up by the sea.

They have been deemed safe to live in, but put it this way, I wouldn't be rushing back in. Now, that kind of thing doesn't happen every day, but it is a reminder that our stuff on earth is not safe and secure.

And it's easy, isn't it, for us to feel a bit smug when that happens to the super rich? But we don't know those people. We don't know their families.

[1 : 18] And disaster, accidents, weather, decay, cruelty can come on anyone. It doesn't matter how much stuff we have. None of it is safe.

What that story illustrates is that having more stuff doesn't make it more safe. But how much stuff do you have to have for it not to go up in smoke?

We can get a secure job and invest our savings. We can ensure our possessions get security for our homes, but we cannot guarantee that it is going to last.

In fact, it is guaranteed not to last. This morning, Jesus reminds us of that reality. And he is here to teach us as his followers how to live in a world where we have stuff we can't keep safe.

And needs that we ourselves can't necessarily meet. He does that by asking and answering two questions.

[2 : 31] Firstly, where is your treasure? Secondly, where is your trust? Firstly then, where is your treasure?

Just see that from verse 19. Here again, Jesus says, So there's that reality in black and white, which those California homeowners know all too well.

But we struggle to get until it happens to us, don't we, that our treasures on earth are not safe. We live in a place where moths and vermin destroy and thieves break in and steal.

Deliberate acts of vandalism and theft. And natural decay and damage. You might be more familiar with a translation where moth and rust destroy.

Here it's vermin. That's because the word there is simply eating. Our stuff gets eaten away. You might call it wear and tear.

[3 : 58] Stuff gets scratched, torn, lost, broken. One of the reasons that wedding rings are traditionally made of gold is that gold doesn't rust.

But it's amazing what five years of marriage does to a wedding ring. I was horrified the first time I got scratched. Now it's all scuffed up, scraped, bashed. That is a little picture of everything we have. Most of it is not gold. But even what is gold gets eaten up by wear and tear, even cliffs and mansions.

Okay, you say, but we live in a digital world. Numbers on a screen don't decay today. Everything is password protected. But bank accounts still get emptied.

And identities still get stolen. It does not matter how many numbers on a screen you have. Thieves can still break in and steal.

[5 : 07] Perhaps this morning, you're not sure yet what you make of Jesus. But whatever you believe, what he says here is undeniable, isn't it? None of us can deny what he says is true about our stuff in this world.

It's unsettling. But he's absolutely right. So whoever you are this morning, what do you do about it? Most of us bet our lives, don't we, on the possibility that our stuff will not get lost or damaged or stolen.

Our stuff won't get destroyed. But even if that is you, there's still one problem. But none of us can stop the worst thing from happening to us, can we?

One day, you and me will die. Your stuff might not get eaten up. But you will. How much of your stuff can stop that happening?

In 1913, John Rockefeller gave his name to the Rockefeller Center. It was worth \$900 million. Today, that would be about \$23.5 billion.

[6 : 20] It's not a big figure on today's rich list. But at the time, as a proportion of kind of global wealth, that made him far more rich than anyone living today.

And so when he died in 1937, a journalist asked one of his aides, how much did he leave behind? And the reply would go down in history.

You know what he said? All of it. All of it. And so if that is how far your treasure on earth can get you and no further, what do you do?

Jesus says, do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth. But rather, verse 20, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where that can't happen.

Where moth and vermin do not destroy. Where thieves do not break in and steal. We sometimes think as Christians that we shouldn't want treasure at all stop. But that's not actually what Jesus says, is it?

[7 : 28] He says, do store up treasure. Do store up treasure. But store it in the right place. Where there's no decay or theft.

Now that is not some sort of irrational, pious statement. Because we've seen in Matthew's gospel so far that Jesus came with good news that the kingdom of heaven had come near.

That God's good and loving rule and reign had broken into world history in and through the person of the king himself. So when he says, store up for yourself, Jesus. So when he says, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

He's talking about a concrete reality that has entered our world and our lives. The rule of God here in person. And so Jesus says, invest in his kingdom.

Invest in his kingdom. Invest in his kingdom. Invest in his kingdom. Invest in his kingdom. Invest in his kingdom. Invest in his kingdom. Invest in his coming age. Where decay and sin and death will be no more.

[8 : 31] That is where you want your real treasure, isn't it? Not here where it won't last. And where you won't either. So friends, where is your treasure?

Your real treasure? Is it in this age? Or the age to come? Is it in your little kingdom?

Or is it in God's kingdom? Is it here on earth? Or is it in heaven? I think even as Christians, we can have a hard time with that.

Disentangling our hearts from what we can see. Right? The numbers on a screen. The bank balance. The home. The food and drink. And investing our hearts fully in what we can't yet see.

A new world. Treasures in heaven. We think of that as a sacrifice, don't we? But brothers and sisters, it is not a sacrifice. Because keeping hold of what we see isn't an option.

[9 : 49] One way or another, your bank balance and home and possessions will one day stop being yours. Jesus is saying, whatever you choose, whatever you do, that will happen to you. It's not an option.

So this is good news for us. Because Jesus is saying there is somewhere we can store up treasure for ourselves. Where we will not lose it.

And that is the kingdom that he rules over. The kingdom of heaven. So that investing everything we have in his kingdom is not a sacrifice.

It is a gain. You sometimes hear about people coming into life-changing money. I sometimes put on North Sound 1 in the car. They're constantly giving away life-changing amounts of cash.

But here is a really life-changing investment. For us, Jesus, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[10 : 50] Where you invest is where you will be found. Where you place your real value is what your thoughts will revolve around.

And what your heart will be drawn to like a magnet. Where your treasure is, there your life is built. And it is either in the kingdoms of this world. Or it is in the kingdom of heaven. And we tell ourselves, or at least we live, like we can have it both ways. But Jesus points out that that is impossible. No one can have it both ways. No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other. Or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. If we try and split our investment, friends. I'll store up some treasure here and some in heaven. I'll hedge my bets. I'll have the best of both worlds. Well, Jesus says we will end up only serving one of those interests. [11 : 51] Because what he demands and what your money demands will sometimes be incompatible. When Jesus commands generosity and reliance on God's provision.

Well, our money demands to be guarded and grown. We will either, in the end, put our money in the service of God. Or we will put God in the service of our money.

That's what we do, isn't it, when we take on the wisdom of the Bible, but not God's will. The Bible does teach us to be wise with our possessions.

But it also commands us generosity and hospitality. The same pound in your pocket, in your bank account, can either be saved, invested, or spent.

And sometimes God commands that money be spent or given away. That financial good sense or the textbook would demand to be saved.

[12 : 59] Our God commands, doesn't he, that we forego income so that we can invest in his kingdom in other ways. That's what being here is about, isn't it, on a Sunday and not being at work.

And so if we sit on the fence between the two, we will come to resent God's call. To be generous towards others. To spend in the service of his kingdom.

Or to give freely. To see the gospel go forward and the church build up. Because our money will be screaming at us. To build up our portfolio. And get back to work.

We will grow in time to hate God. And to serve our money. So then how do we use our treasure on earth to serve God?

How do we invest in his kingdom and not our own? Well, that's what verses 22 and 23 are doing here. I tell you, when I started on this passage in the week, I thought these were pretty random verses.

[14 : 03] But as so often, it's the bit you don't get, which is actually the key to the whole thing. Jesus helps us see that by putting these verses in the middle of two sayings to do with money.

See that? And the key to understanding this middle bit is knowing what he means by healthy and unhealthy eyes. If your eyes are healthy, he says, your body will be full of light.

If your eyes are unhealthy, your body will be full of darkness. So what does that have to do with money? Well, in Proverbs, a healthy eye is a way of speaking about generosity.

So Proverbs 22 verse 9. Whoever has a good eye will be blessed, for they share their food with the poor. By contrast, an unhealthy eye is a way of speaking about stinginess.

So Proverbs 23, 6 and 7. Do not eat the food of one with a bad eye. Do not crave his delicacies. For he is the kind of person who is always thinking about the cost.

[15 : 09] Eat and drink, he says to you. But his heart is not with you. We don't need to know how eyes work to see the point, do we? Which is that being generous with our stuff.

Having a healthy eye comes with a lightness and rightness in our hearts towards God. Being stingy with our stuff. A bad eye comes with a darkness and a wrongness in our hearts towards God.

So that the real tangible material payout and measure of where your treasure really is and who you really serve is... How generous you are with what you have.

If your real treasure is in heaven, brothers and sisters, what do you do with the rest? Big question, isn't it? Where your real treasure is will be seen in how readily you open your home up to others and have people around your table to feed them and show hospitality.

It will be seen in how freely you share your possessions with others. When you have something that another person needs that you can lend or give away without wanting anything back for yourself.

[16 : 20] We should hold our homes and our possessions with an open hand. Open to everyone and particularly to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul in Galatians 6 says, As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people and especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

And perhaps most radically of all, where our real treasure is will be seen in the money we give away to the church.

You other kinds of generosity we get to be kind of associated with, don't we? If we have someone to our home or we let them use our car, well they know who to thank.

But in our giving, we let go of all ownership of our money. People won't know who has benefited them by giving. And you won't know who you have benefited.

That is why I say it is radical generosity. Because in giving to the work of the church, we are investing literally in what we can't see. God's work in people's hearts.

[17 : 35] People hearing the gospel. Some people coming to believe it. Believers growing in maturity and faith. Them being trained for service. So let me be bold.

And say if your real treasure is in heaven, pour as much of the rest as you can. Into the service of the gospel in your local church.

We're all in different circumstances. Only you know what you have and what you can share with others. But when was the last time you actually thought about it? That you reviewed your giving? Here's a chance. Are you giving in that way? If you're not sure how, ask someone. They'll point you in the right direction. If you're young, maybe you're a student.

You feel like you don't have much to play with. But if every student set aside ten pounds a month, price of a few coffees for the collection box, well, that would be investing in the kingdom of heaven.

[18 : 43] Those of us a bit further on might be thinking about our wills. That's possibly the biggest opportunity any of us will have to give our stuff away, isn't it?

How much of it will be left? All of it. All of it. So where is it going? How much is going back into the work of the gospel this side of eternity as you come into your inheritance on the other side of eternity?

Your income changes from time to time, doesn't it? Generally, in life, it goes up. So is that reflected in your tithing and giving? The question we should ask isn't, does the church need more money?

It's how much of my money can I spare for the work of the church? Brothers and sisters, the church here, our church, if you added up every church in Aberdeen and the Shire, the church is tiny.

The church is minuscule. Norman led us in prayer for the national church. It's tiny. A couple of thousand Christians in a city of a quarter of a million people and another quarter of a million in the Shire, the work of the gospel always needs more money.

[20 : 01] And our giving should reflect not the size of the church, but the size of the need for the church and the gospel.

So let me be really clear. I'm not asking you, nobody's asking you, to give what you don't have. But Jesus presses us to ask, doesn't he, of what you have on earth, how freely do you give?

Where is your real treasure? And what do you do with the rest? Store up treasure in heaven, serve God with your money, and be generous with what you have, says our King.

But the natural hesitation in us is, what if it all goes wrong, right? I know what I have right now. I don't know what I'm going to have tomorrow or next month or next year.

Jesus has said on earth things can go wrong. So how can we be radically generous with what we have if we can't guarantee our day-to-day needs? Well, to that Jesus asks, where is your trust?

[21 : 13] Notice verse 25 begins with the word, therefore. Therefore, it's telling us that what comes next is building on what we've just heard.

So what therefore are we supposed to learn? Verse 25, therefore, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear.

He says it again in verse 31, so do not worry, saying what will we eat or what we'll drink or what will we wear. Verse 34, therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.

What therefore does Jesus want us to learn about our worldly possessions and our day-to-day needs? Do not worry. Do not worry.

It's easier said than done, isn't it? But now Jesus fills out why it is we are free as his followers not to store up treasures on earth or to serve money and worry about it.

[22 : 18] How can we be free from that anxiety and financial stress? Again, that's not something that's unique to followers of Jesus, is that even people who do invest in things on earth and store up treasure here and serve money get anxious about it.

Maybe even more so than followers of Jesus. So this isn't only an answer that Christians need to hear as we seek God's kingdom first, it's an answer that the whole world needs to hear.

So whoever you are this morning, hear this wonderful good news about King Jesus. In his kingdom, God is our Father who will meet all of our needs.

If you want to see how God provides for his children, says Jesus, look at how he cares for the most ordinary things in his world. Look at the birds of the air.

They do not sow or reap or store away in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Look at the flowers of the field, how they grow.

[23 : 27] They do not labor or spin, yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. He's saying, God personally and lavishly provides for birds and grass to be fed and to grow.

We would soon notice, wouldn't we, if birds stopped existing and grass died and withered, but you don't need to worry about that, says Jesus. And in the same way, you don't need to worry about your life.

In fact, you need to worry even less about your life than about those other things, not because your life is less important, actually the opposite. Are you not much more valuable than they?

If that is how God treats birds and grass, how much more will he feed and clothe you, O you of little faith?

We can worry less, says Jesus, about our own lives because we are more precious to God. Our lives as his people are underwritten by a greater and a deeper love and commitment than the whole rest of creation.

[24 : 43] So do not worry, says Jesus, about your life. There are all kinds of pressures on us, aren't there? I don't know what you've come in worried about today.

Whatever it is, whatever it is, you can trust God with it. But, you can trust God with it. If your Father in heaven cares so lavishly for birds and grass, how much more will he care for you, his child?

Has your Father ever let you down? Think back, have you ever gone hungry? Have you ever lacked things to wear? Have you ever been without a home, without people who love you?

Has he ever not found a way to serve you what you needed to live? Look, he says, at the birds and the grass. Look at the things that we can see so we learn to trust God with what we can't see and let the worry lift from your heart.

Eight billion people on earth are all looking for the same things. The pagans run after it all. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. So where is your trust?

[26 : 01] Do you trust your heavenly Father to provide for all you need, the basics of life? Or are you trusting in your own wisdom and wealth and work to do it for you?

Wisdom is needed, but true wisdom recognizes its limitations. only a few verses ago, Jesus taught us to pray to our Father, give us today our daily bread.

How often is that prayer on our lips? We should pray that prayer to God whenever we open our bank accounts, whenever we go to work, manage our finances, or think about the future, because brothers and sisters, we can't control any of that.

but we trust in a God who can and who does manage all of it for your good and your provision. I remember once reading about a minister and his family shortly after the disruption of the split in the church in 1843.

Lots of ministers lost their homes and their incomes when they left the established church. And one evening in one of these ministers' homes, someone was over for dinner and they had a small meal, a few fish and a couple of potatoes.

[27 : 14] It wasn't very much. But the visitor wrote down the prayer that was prayed. This has always stuck with me. Father, you have scoured land and sea to put this meal on our table.

You have scoured land and sea to give us this food and so we give you our heartfelt thanks for the food we now receive. There are lots of things that we want.

that God may or may not give us but what we need he will provide. We might go through seasons of not knowing where the next meal is coming from but he promises there will be food for tomorrow.

We might not feel we have the right things to wear but he promises that you will have something to put on and be warm and clothed. Part of how God supplies those basic needs for his people is through his people's generosity.

in a church family like this and around the world we meet each other's needs in Jesus' name and we care for the church in poorer parts of the world especially where they're persecuted but this is where it all comes full circle doesn't it?

[28 : 26] In verse 33 Luke seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you as well.

this is where we tie together where our treasure is and where our trust is. We will only store up real treasure in heaven if we trust our father to provide the rest of what we need on earth.

We will only seek God's kingdom and righteousness first if we trust him to give us all these things as well. If our lives are spent worrying worrying about what is going to happen to us next year or next month or tomorrow well we are going to end up serving money out of a fear that it will let us down but if we serve God and trust him never to let us down we will be free from that fear and free to use our money generously to invest in his kingdom.

So where is your treasure well where is your trust where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

So this morning brothers and sisters friends let the good news of the kingdom of heaven still your heart and free you from anxiety about tomorrow knowing that if you are following Jesus the king you have a father in heaven who cares for you and meets your every need so give your life to serve him and not your money seek his kingdom first not your own needs store up treasure in heaven not on earth and use the rest of what you have to share give to the work of his kingdom the care of his people the spread of the gospel the building up of his church let's pray and put our trust in him now as we do that let's pray together our father in heaven how we thank you and praise you that your kingdom has come our father your kingdom turns our lives upside down and turns our world on its head and we pray father forgive us when we live as the world lives and we look after our own needs like the rest of the world does and we do not look to your kingdom and righteousness your kingdom that has come in your king

[31 : 22] Jesus and so order our lives and so depend on you and so use what we have to serve you our father teach us we pray that that deep and abiding faith in you for today and tomorrow father father we pray for those who who do have worry and father we pray that you please would lift that burden that you would meet the need of every believer here and father that you would teach us love for one another that we might serve and bless and care for each other in the name of jesus build your church we pray and teach us to follow him we ask in jesus name amen let's be closed we're gonna sing what do a way

Jes we we will hear we here the will we see