

WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE?

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:19-21.

In the sixth chapter of Matthew, which is part of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ deals with the relationship of the Christian to God the Father. Nothing is more important than this. To see ourselves as children of God, which we are, should enable us to overcome the temptation to live piously in order to be seen of men, and should cause us to refrain from worldliness, which is either a positive love of the world or a spirit of anxious care with respect to it.

Let us listen to these words of Christ with undivided attention because they are of the utmost importance. Speaking for the benefit of each of us, and touching us right where we live, Christ said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

The hour has come when every Christian needs to face this well-nigh forgotten passage fairly and squarely. Today the spirit of covetousness is paralyzing the Christian experience of too many of God's children. It seems that the accumulation of possessions is the principle task of the masses. The very atmosphere in which we live is contaminated with the money-making spirit, and the lives of people are being impoverished in so many ways. Many will say that business is business, and they seem to think it is a very wise statement. What they really mean is that in their cases business is master and all other interests are far less important and, therefore, subservient to it.

God created man with the disposition and ability to acquire property, to lay up in store material things for future use. The acquisition, organization, management and enjoyment of possessions are with him among the chief stimulants to activity. This desire of man to accumulate and store up material things for future use is God's method of preserving the race from want and economic disaster. Up to a certain point, therefore, the pursuit of possessions is helpful and makes for human development. If it stops there, it is in accord with divine providence. But if the getting of wealth becomes the main purpose of life, and all moral and spiritual values are made subordinate to it, then it becomes a menace to human well-being and meets with opposition in the realm of revealed spiritual truth.

By His statement, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," Christ does not mean that we are not to make any provision for old age or for our children. Christ does not encourage improvidence or indifference to the needs of tomorrow. No one should be wasteful with present possessions or indifferent about the future. In dealing with men about what occupies them from day to day, Christ does not say a word against their working hard or being diligent in the prosecution of an honorable calling. The stamp of

divine approval had already been placed upon that, as in the statement, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." It is the duty of every Christian to be diligent in business, not only that we may avoid owing others but that we may be able to help others in their needs. Christ frankly warns against the getting and hoarding of earthly possessions as the supreme thing in life. Christ simply forbids us to accumulate earthly treasures for their own sake, to make the pursuit of them the chief end of life, and to use them selfishly, forgetting our obligations to others. He does not condemn the accumulation of possessions, but He forbids the love of money. He does not lay any prohibition upon the getting of wealth, but only against making money the object of one's affections and the end of one's activities. One is entitled to all that he gets honestly and will use righteously. Possession and ownership are not the same. Possession belongs to man, but ownership belongs to God alone.

A covetous man, along with many others, heard John Wesley preach on money. His first point was: "Earn all the money you can," and he was pleased. It is right that people should be industrious. Those who will not work should not eat. Wesley's second point was: "Save all the money you can," and the covetous man was delighted. People should be frugal and not waste their substance in riotous living. Then, the great preacher's third point was: "Give all the money you can," and for the covetous man this statement ruined the entire sermon. Nevertheless, God's Word teaches plainly that Christians should be honest with God and generous with their means.

The rich young ruler, who came to Christ asking what he should do in order that he might inherit eternal life, is an illustration of what material possessions laid up for self on earth can do for a man. His riches got in the way of his salvation. He forfeited heaven for the things of earth. What should have been a blessing to him wrought his eternal destruction.

One's treasure is that in which he places his chief delight. Christ does not condemn the laying up of treasures. He exhorts us to lay up treasures in the right place and for the right purpose. The proper place for them is not on earth but in heaven.

Treasures are those things which are stored up. Treasures are the result of one's thoughts and labors. They are the things which one prizes above all else and which would break his heart if he were to lose them. Treasures are those things which absorb you and without which you think you could not live. The unsaved person makes the world, its business, pleasures, pursuits and possessions, his treasure. His horizon is bounded by it. He does not have any higher aim in life. It is the supreme object of his thought, desire and satisfaction. He lives for it and is willing to die for it.

The things we live for determine the direction and quality of our lives. Spinoza, the philosopher, said that the three things people want most are riches, honor or fame, and satisfaction of lust. H. L. Mencken gave his idea of living when he said, "To be happy I must be well-fed, unhounded by sordid cares, full of a comfortable feeling of superiority to the masses of my fellow-men, and unceasingly amused according to my taste."

Are these the chief ends of life? Are these the things for which we work and struggle? In our better moments we do not like to think so. But the fact remains that the majority make money the central goal of their lives. Our attitude toward material things determines the richness of our lives. The accumulation of material things is not the most important thing in

life. Our Lord is concerned about our attitude towards our possessions. All of us need this exhortation because we have treasures of some sort. They may be money or family or something else.

Money may be and is a curse to an individual if it lulls him into a false sense of security, distorts his vision, enslaves him -- for money is a wonderful servant but a terrible master, makes him worry, or robs him of a genuine faith in God. In their confusion some believe that money gives them their daily bread, rather than God. Chided by his hand-to-mouth existence, George Mueller replied, "Yes, but it is God's hand and my mouth."

On the other hand, money can be a blessing. We cannot take it with us, but we can send it on ahead. Money is laid up in heaven when it is invested in that which is going to heaven. He who makes his investments in heavenly securities finds his heart turning longingly toward them. Money is a blessing when it is used as a servant rather than a master. It is a blessing when it is used to advance the kingdom of God. Our use of money shows what is first with us. David Livingstone said, "I will place no value on anything that I have or possess except in relation to the kingdom of Christ." Right use of money brings rich rewards to a faithful steward. R. G. LeTourneau said, "Don't call me generous. I'm as selfish as anybody. I've just found out how to have fun with my money. Nobody ever had as much fun with his yachts and race horses and such as I have with my missions and hospitals and schoolboys."

This word "yourselves" has reference to those who are Christians. An unbeliever cannot lay up treasures in heaven. Because he is a Christ-rejector, he cannot possibly put anything on deposit in heaven. Sometimes he imagines he can and feels that he is getting something of an accumulation that will be to his credit at the judgment, but he was never more mistaken.

Why did Christ forbid us to lay up for ourselves treasures on earth? One reason is because they are liable to destruction by such creatures as moths. Any housekeeper is familiar with this figure of the invasion of a living intruder into garments that have been laid away. When the garments are taken out, it is discovered that part of their fiber has been eaten away. A second reason is because they are liable to inherent decay, as is illustrated by rust. Rust on metals is simply the product of atmospheric influence combined with neglect. A third reason is because they can be taken away from us, as is illustrated by the work of thieves.

Treasures laid up on earth are transitory. They do not last. They do not satisfy. There is always something wrong with them. They always lack something. There is an element of decay in all of them. We tend to tire of them. We may like them for a while, but somehow we lose interest in them, and they do not fascinate us as they once did. Moreover, earthly treasures blind our vision. Intellect, emotions and will are all affected in the wrong way.

When treasures are laid up in heaven their beauty never fades, they do not waste away and they will never be stolen. Our treasures in heaven are safe, lasting and permanent. The person who has received Christ as his Saviour, set his affection on things above, and lived for the Lord need never have any fear of losing his riches. "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Timothy 1:12).

There is a tremendous drawing power in our treasures. That is why Christ said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." As we face the days before us, may we catch something of the spirit of Charles H. Spurgeon. A lady had left him \$50,000 and his brother James said, as he informed him of the fact, "Charles, that will make a fine nest egg for your family." But Charles turned to him with a look of surprise and decision and said, "I guess not, James, I guess not. I am not such a fool as to dam up the stream of God's blessings to my family with \$50,000."