

SPIRITUAL SECURITIES

Matthew 6:19-34

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 and steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

A treasure is that in which one places his chief delight. Treasures are those things which absorb one's thoughts, desires, time and labors.

These words of Christ about treasures are of the utmost importance in these days when the accumulation of possessions is the principle task of the masses. Up to a certain point, the pursuit of possessions is helpful. If it stops there, it is in accord with the divine will. But, if the getting of wealth becomes the object of one's affections, the main purpose of one's life and the end of one's activities, and all moral and spiritual values are made subordinate to it, then it becomes a menace to human well-being. Christ frankly warns against and forbids the getting and hoarding of earthly possessions as the supreme thing in life.

Treasures upon earth can be attractive, useful and powerful. Is it the teaching of Christ that their possession is wrong for Christians, and that, in no circumstances are they to seek them? Let us compare Scripture with Scripture, for one passage qualifies or completes another. It is not wrong to lay up for our children. "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I Timothy 5:8). "The children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children" (II Corinthians 12:14). We must seek to make provision for our own dependents.

It is not wrong to lay up for the needy. Ephesians 4:28 says: "Let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." It is the duty of every Christian to be diligent in business, not only that he may avoid owing others, but also that he may be able to help others, who cross his path, in their needs.

This passage does teach that it is wrong to lay up for ourselves. We are not to seek riches for our own ease, comfort, enjoyment, luxury and importance. Our possessions are to be looked upon as a trust for others --including the needy and the Lord's work. After all, the test lies, not in what a man possesses, but in what possesses him.

Christ commanded us to lay up treasures in the right place and for the right purpose. The proper place for treasures is not on earth but in heaven. Christ stated that "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." If that which a man values highly and sets his heart upon is on earth, then all of his interest will be upon the earth, and he will not have any interest in heaven and the world beyond this. Moreover, one's treasure will influence his heart and life. The very countenance of the miser or the gambler becomes repellantly metallic; his entire preoccupation with his money stamps its hardness on his character, behavior and face. On the other hand, if one's treasure is spiritual and heavenly, that will affect his living and his features. He who makes his investments in heavenly securities finds his heart turning longingly toward them. Our service for Christ on earth determines our treasures in heaven. What you invest in ministering to others for Christ is capital laid up in God's Bank.

It is simple wisdom to get only the things which will last. It is common sense to avoid shoddy goods, and to buy the things which have solidity, craftsmanship and permanence wrought into them. That is exactly what Christ is saying here. He is telling us to concentrate on the things which will last.

Christ says to avoid the things that the moth can destroy. Part of an Oriental's riches often consisted of fine and elaborate clothes. But it was foolish for him to set his heart upon such things, for the moths got at them when they were stored away and destroyed their beauty and value. There was not any permanence about such possessions. The fortune of other Orientals consisted of grain. But the mice and rats could get into the granary and eat away the grain. So, there was no permanence about possessions like that. Another kind of Oriental wealth was gold and silver. Coins would be placed in a jar and hidden in some unobserved corner. But if one lived in an humble dwelling, as most of our Lord's hearers did, the walls of the house were made of baked clay, so it was easy for the marauders or burglars to enter by literally digging through, and to steal the jar and its precious contents. There is no permanency about a treasure which is at the mercy of an enterprising burglar.

Christ warns us against three kinds of pleasures and possessions --those which will wear out like an old suit of clothes, those which can be eroded away and those which can be stolen. The wise man builds his happiness on things which he cannot lose, on things which are independent of the chances and the changes of this life.

Treasures on earth always lack something. They do not satisfy. They will not last. Christ forbids us to lay up treasures on earth because they are liable to destruction, by such creatures as moths; they are liable to inherent decay, as is illustrated by rust; and they can be taken from us, as is illustrated by the work of thieves. That the things of the earth decay or are taken from us is sufficient reason for not making them the chief object of pursuit. Gather not for deterioration and hoard not for thieves. Rather, let your desires and energies go after heavenly things. They are not subject to decay, nor can they be taken from us by fraud or by force.

The eye is regarded as the window by which the light gets into the body. The color and condition of a window determine what light gets into a room. If the window is clear, clean and undistorted, the light will come rushing through and will illuminate the whole room. If the glass in the window is colored, distorted or dirty, the light will be hindered, and the room will not be lighted properly. The amount of light that gets into a room depends on the condition of the window through which it has to pass.

The view we take of people depends on the kind of eye we have. Some things blind our eyes and distort our vision. Prejudice can distort one's vision. If any man is swayed by prejudice, his eye is darkened and his vision is distorted. Jealousy can distort one's vision. Many a friendship and many a marriage have been wrecked on the rock of a jealousy which distorted perfectly innocent incidents into guilty actions. Self-conceit can distort one's vision. Self-conceit affects a man's vision in two ways, namely, it renders him incapable of seeing himself as he really is, and incapable of seeing others as they really are. If a man is convinced of his own surpassing wisdom, he will never be able to realize his own foolishness; and if he is blind to everything except his own virtues, he will never be aware of his own faults. When he compares himself with others, he will always do so to his own advantage and to their disadvantage.

It is the generous eye which Christ is here commending. We must be generous in our judgment of others. It is characteristic of human nature to think the worst, and to find a delight in repeating the worst. There would not be nearly so many heartaches if we would put the best, instead of the worst, construction on the actions of other people.

There are three great evils of the ungenerous spirit. It makes it impossible to live with ourselves. In the person with a grudge there grows a bitterness and a resentment which robs him of peace, contentment and happiness. It also makes it impossible to live with other people. Regardless of how bad the person with a generous eye may be, there are those who will love him. Furthermore, it makes it impossible to live with God. There cannot be any fellowship between God whose heart is afire with love and the man whose heart is frozen with meanness.

Christ said, "No man can serve two masters." "No man can be a slave to two owners." In those days, the slave in the eyes of the law was not a person but a thing. He did not have any rights of his own. His master could do with him absolutely as he liked. The slave was considered as a living tool. His master could sell him, beat him, throw him out or kill him. In the ancient world a slave did not have any time which was his own. Under modern conditions a man has certain hours of work, and outside these hours his time is his own. In the case of a slave, every moment of his life belonged to his master. All his strength, energies and time were at the disposal of his master. Paul delighted to call himself the "bond-slave" of Christ, but he realized that this title signified the complete abandonment of his being—all that he was and had—to Christ. We owe complete allegiance to Him Who redeemed and saved us. Speaking to Christians our Lord said that they cannot lay up earthly possessions and heavenly treasures at the same time.

In the final analysis all things belong to God. God's Word says, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1). There is nothing in this world of which a man can truly say, "This is mine." Of all things he can only say, "This belongs to God, and He has given me the use of it." There is nothing of which any man can rightfully say, "This is mine, and I will therefore do what I like with it." Of everything he must say, "This is God's, and I must use it as its Owner would have it to be used." A little girl was taken from the city to the country for a day. When she saw a lot of beautiful bluebells, she turned to her teacher and said, "Do you think God would mind, if I picked one of His flowers?" That is the correct attitude toward life and all that is in the world.

People are always more important than things. If money has to be accumulated at the expense of treating people as things, then all such riches are wrong. Wealth is always a subordinate thing. A man may think that because he is wealthy he can buy his way out of any situation, or that with money he can buy anything; consequently, it becomes the only weapon with which he faces life. If a man desires material possessions for an honorable independence, to help his family, to do something for others, and to carry on the work of the Lord, that is good; but, if he wants it merely to heap pleasure upon pleasure, and to add luxury to luxury, then it has ceased to be a subordinate good, and has usurped the place in life which only God should occupy. The possession of material possessions is a grave responsibility.

With verse twenty-five our Lord turns to deal with a very common and a very great sin in the lives of Christians, namely, anxiety or worry. Under Roman Law, an owner was compelled to provide for the welfare of his slaves, to see that they were adequately fed, clothed and housed. How stupid, then, if the slaves themselves worried about such things! Even more stupid and inexcusable are God's children who worry about things. Inasmuch as God has given us life, we can certainly trust Him for the lesser things. Since God has given us life, we can certainly trust Him to give us

food to sustain that life. Life is far more important than food and raiment. Worry suspects God of forgetting His children or of overlooking their needs. It is proof that the worrier disbelieves God's Word and doubts His love. Anxiety or worry is unnecessary, senseless and useless. Therefore, why indulge in it?

As further proof that anxiety is unnecessary and useless, our Lord goes on to speak about the birds and the flowers, which do not have the advantages which human beings have. The birds neither worry nor try to pile up things for an unforeseen and unforeseeable future, and yet they live. Christ does not say that the birds do not work, for they do work hard to make a living, but the point that He is making is that they do not worry. He points us to the birds as evidence that God the Father provides the necessary food. Man cannot add to his height or to the length of his life by worry.

Do not be so anxious and disturbed about material needs that you distrust God and become distracted from doing His will. If we can trust God to save our souls and to give us a home in heaven, then why can't we trust Him for the lesser things in this life, such as food, clothing and shelter? Do not for one moment think that God does not care how we fare or what becomes of us. Trust Him from day to day.

"Make you His service your delight,
Your wants shall be His care."

In case you are anxious about raiment, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." The lilies of the field were the scarlet poppies and anemones. In their brief life they were clothed with a beauty which surpassed the beauty of the robes of kings. If God takes care of the flowers, how much more will He preserve His own? If God clothes the lilies with surpassing beauty, will He not take care of us, who are precious in His sight? If you will trust God and serve Him, He will provide for you what you need. He is fully aware of all the needs of each of His children. As a father, I have been aware through the years that our daughter needed food, clothes and educational expenses, and a multitude of other things of which these three are but specimens; and I did my utmost to provide them. It would have been unnatural not to have done so. Do you suppose, then, that our Heavenly Father, Who knows, will be less concerned for us who are His children? He knows, He cares and He provides for His own. To grasp this truth properly will do away with anxiety. Put and keep God first. Keep God's things first, and then He will look after your things. That will abolish anxiety.