

Fairview Memorial Winter Bible Study
Lesson Delivered: February 28th, 2022
By: Bradley S. Hicks

Heavenly Investments

Matthew 6:19-34

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

-Missionary Jim Elliot-

Introduction

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus provides the most extensive and uninterrupted teaching on discipleship of anywhere found in the Bible. He does not shy away from the brutal realities required of His disciples, but seeks to bring them into clearer focus. His words are concise but weighty, hard but inspiring, blunt but captivating. We will be hated. We will be persecuted. We must turn the other cheek; go another mile; give our cloak also. We will be falsely accused. We will be misunderstood and maligned. We will fight our flesh, and every power and principality with which our flesh seeks to form an alliance. We must love our enemies. We must serve in secret. We must defer judgment. We must not hear only, but do. Just like the Master, the disciple's life will not be easy.

Yet, flawlessly interwoven with these hard truths are divine promises of eternal proportions. Promises which inspire us to look beyond the temporary to the eternal, beyond the applause of men to the glory of God, and beyond the earthly to the heavenly. God calls us to go beyond ourselves and promises that, with His help, we will inherit promises the world is neither worthy of nor capable of receiving. He promises that if we strive to live as His disciple, we will:

- Inherit God's kingdom (Matthew 5:3)
- Be comforted (Matthew 5:4)
- Inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5)
- Be filled with righteousness (Matthew 5:6)
- Receive mercy (Matthew 5:7)
- See God (Matthew 5:8)
- Be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9)
- Be rewarded openly with an incorruptible treasure which cannot be taken away (Matthew 5:12; 6:4; 6:20)
- Be heard by God (Matthew 6:5-13)
- Be forgiven by God (Matthew 6:15)
- Be provided for by God (Matthew 6:25-34)
- Receive what we ask for, find what we seek, and for the door we knock upon to be opened unto us (Matthew 7:7-8)
- Withstand all of the tragedies and sufferings of this life (Matthew 7:24-27)

When we, the disciples of Christ, read this sermon with the same Spirit Christ gave it, its mesmerizing effect causes, "the things of earth to grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace." We understand in part the hard path Jesus is calling us to travel; but we are nonetheless moved – yea compelled – to voluntarily pursue it regardless of the personal cost, because whatever sufferings we experience as a result of this pursuit, "*are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us* (Romans 8:18)."

The cost *is* real. This portion of Christ's message contains what most 21st-century American Christians seek to avoid. Standing alone or in its larger context, this portion of the sermon is radical and opposed to every instinct of our carnal minds and the wisdom of our present culture. In order to understand it the way Jesus intended, we must prayerfully proceed with the knowledge that,

¹⁴...*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because **they are spiritually discerned.***
¹⁵*But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.* ¹⁶*For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but **we have the mind of Christ*** (I Corinthians 2:14-16).”

Investing in Heaven

¹⁹*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ²⁰But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: ²¹For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. ²²The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. ²³But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness* (Matthew 6:19-23).”

Having just given us instruction about the disciples' religious exercises, Jesus pivots to affairs which are generally considered carnal, and thus assumed to be outside the purview of religious authority. He tells us plainly that our hearts must be set upon spiritual matters and not worldly ones, and by implication, (re)directs the focus of our time, talent, money, and life toward the kingdom of God. He gives three reasons to make heavenly investments:

1. Vs. 19-20: Heavenly investments are eternal and incorruptible whereas earthly investments are temporal and corruptible (see Jim Elliot quote).
2. Vs. 21: Our heart begins to value the things we “lay up;” and thus, those things become the center of our lives. The cost of seeking to “lay up” earthly treasure is our lives and the heavenly treasure we would have laid up had that been the focus of our lives.
3. V. 22-23: If the heart of a disciple centers upon accumulating earthly treasure, the whole of his life will be affected by spiritual darkness.

This part of Jesus' message reveals that seeking wealth is a far reaching-endeavor. When we pursue earthly treasures, we are doing nothing less than squandering the God-given life we have been made a steward over for *nothing of lasting value*. ***This instruction isn't about money, it is about your life!***

Split Allegiance

*“²⁴No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. **Ye cannot serve God and mammon** (Matthew 6:24).”*

“If I cannot spend my time laying up treasures on earth because it will prevent me from laying up treasures in heaven, maybe I can do a little of both,” says the compromising Christian’s heart. It is as if Jesus anticipates the next place our minds will go and removes any possibility that we can have the best of both worlds. You CANNOT seek God and wealth. God does not want disciples with divided allegiances. He only wants those who will forsake all and follow Him.

Jesus knows that seeking wealth will only lead to pain, sorrow, disappointment, and destruction (I Timothy 6:9-19). He calls us to seek Him not because He wants to deprive us of earthly pleasure, but because the pursuit of earthly pleasure and security lead to both earthly and eternal ruin. He calls us to seek Him because true riches are found there.

God is Our Security

“²⁵Therefore I say unto you, ‘Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.’ Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?’ ²⁶Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not much better than they? ²⁷Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? ²⁸And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. ²⁹And yet I say unto you, ‘That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.’ ³⁰Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? ³¹Therefore take no thought, saying, ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘Wherewithal shall we be clothed?’ ³²(For after these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things (Matthew 6:25-32).”

The most fundamental reason people seek earthly riches is to provide security for the unknowns of tomorrow. The “what ifs” and anxieties surrounding the anticipated turmoils of tomorrow will control our lives if we let them. Our greatest problem is not the uncertainties of tomorrow, or our ill-preparedness to face those challenges; actually, seeking security in the natural provisions we accumulate is the cause, not the cure for our anxiety.

"Be not anxious! Earthly possessions dazzle our eyes and delude us into thinking that they can provide security and freedom from anxiety. Yet all the time they are the very source of all anxiety. If our hearts are set on them, our reward is all anxiety...(The Cost of Discipleship, pg. 178)."

We are presently in times of immense economic uncertainty: high inflation, market manipulations, the war in Ukraine, 30 years of government mismanagement, high taxes, currency manipulation, and much more reveals the truth of Jesus' words and the insecurity of earthly investments.

When a person's heart, and as a result, their life has been fixed on earthly wealth, the loss of it results in the devastating realization that they absolutely wasted their life for things they no longer possess (Matthew 16:26). When we invest in heavenly treasure, it cannot be manipulated, inflated, stolen, or corrupted. Heavenly investments last for eternity. It seems certain that in the near future, Christians who sought earthly riches will be confronted with the painful reality that their lives were wasted on things of no enduring value. Let's pray that they realize it on Earth while they still have time and spend what remains of their life laying up treasures in heaven.

Seek God's Kingdom

"³³But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. ³⁴Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Matthew 6:33-34)."

Where are the men and women who seek first God's kingdom? Where are the missionaries who go to foreign lands and lose their life for the kingdom's sake? Where are the George Muellers, Adoniram Judsons, Ann Judsons, William Careys, Elizabeth Elliots, David Brainerds, and Henry Smiths? Seeking God's kingdom sometimes requires the disciples of Christ to lose everything in this life to invest in heaven. Other times it requires us who are not called to lose all, to support those who are, and give of our abundance.

May we believe more than ever, that God's call to seek His kingdom above all else is still in effect today and the need is as great now as ever to surrender to that call.

Conclusion

The applause men obtained when they gave alms to be seen will be silenced in heaven; those who prayed to be seen enjoyed their reward on Earth; those who fasted to demonstrate their righteousness will be forgotten in eternity; and every ounce of wealth accumulated, God given or man striven, will be vanquished on that great and final day. Nobody in heaven will know how

wealthy you were, they will not admire your industry, nor will they desire the storehouse of Solomon's gold. In Heaven, those who sought Christ's kingdom, forsook all to follow Him, pursued righteousness, sought God's glory and loved the souls of men – those who laid up heavenly treasures – will enjoy them for all of eternity. May we do as Jesus commanded and as He lived, investing not on the earth, but in heaven!

Jesus does not condemn people for making money. God's Word, especially the Proverbs, are full of exhortations to work, be frugal, save for the future, and make wise investments; the naturally resulting in the attainment of some earthly wealth.

But, God's Word, especially the words of Jesus, forcefully condemn those who spend their lives pursuing worldly riches. Furthermore, God condemns the pursuit of riches which leads to an unhealthy attachment to earthly possessions so that disciples refuse to give generously and sacrificially, and who trample God's will for their life in order to obtain the false security the attainment of wealth appears to provide.

It is true that there is no virtue in poverty, unless of course that poverty is the result of a person's absolute surrender to God's will. Then, it is the most virtuous quality a man can attain. It seems strange that in a nation bursting with earthly wealth that so few are called to be like our Savior who, "...for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (II Corinthians 8:9)."