

The Lamp of the Body

Call to Worship: Psalm 119:129-136

1st Scripture: Matthew 6:1-18

2nd Scripture: Matthew 6:19-24

Hymn #709- *I Will Sing the Wondrous Story*

Hymn Insert- *O Church Arise*

Hymn #574- *Have Thine Own Way, Lord*

Introduction

We've been considering the ungodly actions of the religious leaders, and how the Lord has been showing that those who are truly part of the Kingdom of God must have godly actions that proceed out of godly motives and a godly heart, with the intention of bringing glory to God and not man. The religious leaders performed their acts of worship (their good deeds, tithing, praying and fasting) in the presence of others, as a means of drawing out the praise of others, unto themselves, and not God.

And last time, we saw that the underlying motive, which drove the religious leaders unto pursuing their own glory, was that their hearts were in the world. They loved this world; they loved wealth, money and material possessions, and sought to amass them. This love for the material world, over and above, any alleged love for God, was further manifested then, in their desire to amass the praises of men. And so, the Lord warned His disciples, commanding them not to lay up temporal, unfulfilling treasures on earth (which break down and don't last), but rather, to lay up eternal treasures in heaven, which never break down, are most to be valued, and endure forever. And in fact, those who do lay up treasures in the earth, expose the true nature of their hearts, that they are, in fact, idolaters, who do not love God in truth. For, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be as well."

This morning, we continue on with this same theme, as we seek to unwrap the meaning of verses 22-24, within this same context. Now, we know that we are dealing with the same theme, because of what our Lord states in verse 24, which is certainly meant to reiterate (in a conclusive sense) what He has just stated in verse 21, concerning the connection between the location of the heart, and where one is amassing his treasure.

I. The Lamp of the Body: The Analogy as it Stands (verses 22-23)

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Vs. 22-24)

Now, what are we to make of this analogy that our Lord gives here, and in what way does this serve the general context, dealing with laying up treasures in heaven and not on the earth? Well, let us begin by considering the analogy as it stands, before seeking to unlock the specific, relevant, contextual meaning of the analogy.

“The lamp of the body is the eye.” What does our Lord mean by this statement? Well, very simply, our eyes are what guide and direct the rest of our bodies. We move and act, in accordance with what we see. They provide light to the rest of the body, in this sense. My foot pushes on the break pedal of my car, when my eye beholds a red light, and by this means I avoid getting a ticket, and more importantly, getting into an accident and endangering the lives of others and myself. I walk around cones and blocked off areas, as my eyes view the warning signs that are placed by others, indicating wet cement or some form of a hazard on the sidewalk or in the road. My eyes provide light for my mind, so that, I know to walk carefully down the stairs, perhaps holding onto the railing, so that I don’t fall and get hurt. All in all, the eyes provide us with the light that we need to process the environment around us, feeding our minds with visual presentations, so that, we can safely interact with our environments and live life.

“If therefore, your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.” It is good and ideal for the eye to work well, and when it does not work well, you can be hindered in life. You cannot go about as freely as you would like, when your eye is not working properly.

I recently had to get my eyes rechecked, because I have been starting to pick up some slight “double-vision” in my sight, particularly when looking at things from a distance. In fact, my ability to read clearly has decreased a bit, as well, for that matter; a problem which I never had in the past. The eye doctor had confirmed my concerns, informing me that reading vision tends to decrease the older you get, as well, because your eyes gradually lose the ability to focus correctly. The short-form, I’m getting old. That said, I had to get new glasses to correct this problem, so that, I can function well in society, and especially when driving. When the eye is

working well; when it is sending a proper, singular (not “double”) vision to the mind, the rest of the body is well-directed and able to continue on, functioning safely and comfortably. The environment is properly described for my brain, and my brain can then pass on the information to my body, so that, I can act accordingly. When the eye is good, the whole body will be full of light.

“But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.” If the eye is not processing the environment properly; if you are getting double-vision or inaccurate readings of your surroundings, your mind and your body are going to be effected as well. The problem with the eye, inevitably creates a problem for the rest of the body, because the eye is the watchman that informs the rest of the body, concerning what is going on. And when misinformation is sent to the body; even if the body is well-functioning, it will not be able to respond in a way that can ensure safety. What happens in a war, when your intel breaks down or provides you with inaccurate information? You can have the best army in the world. Disaster is going to ensue. You may position the bulk of your strongest troops in all kinds of unnecessary places, while the enemy advances against you.

If I can't accurately see a stop sign, a road hazard, a traffic light, other vehicles...etc, the potential for disaster can be great. Again, my hands can work great on the steering wheel, my feet can work masterfully on the pedals, my mind can process information wisely and in an instant, but if the eye is sending wrong or mixed messages, the whole body will be negatively affected by this malfunction, unless it is somehow corrected. Carry this dilemma back into the time of our Lord, when the ability to provide all kinds of corrective care was not nearly as advanced as it is in our day, and you can see why blind people were often left begging on the streets, for the duration of their lives. If the eye is bad, the whole body will be full of darkness.

Finally, “If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” It is bad enough to have a defective eye, or to see double in some sense; that can be a great hindrance, limiting the light that your body receives. But, what happens when the eyes are completely defective; when someone is completely blind without recourse? The normally well-functioning mind and body are left completely in the dark, with regard to the surrounding environment. Even in our present day, with the great advancement of technology, this is a very difficult

challenge for those who are completely blind. I have an uncle who lost his sight when he was a teenager, because of a botched surgery, where his optical nerve was accidentally clipped. Speaking to him a few years ago (he's in his eighties now), I'll never forget him saying to me, "You never get used to being blind."

And so, this is an examination of the analogy, as it stands in the analogy itself. Well, what then does this have to do with laying up treasures, and the connection between the heart and where one lays up treasures?

II. The Lamp of the Body: The Analogy Interpreted (verses 22-24)

Verses 21 and 24 will help us unlock the interpretation of our Lord's analogy, given here. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (vs. 24).

When our Lord speaks of the "eye" here, in this analogy, he is using it as that which represents the vision and focus of the individual's life and mind, put forth by the heart. It is that which controls and drives us, in all that we do. For example, when individuals are preparing for marriage, generally, a lot of what they do up until they reach the wedding day, is motivated by the desire to ensure that that special day meets all of the expectations that they have invested into it, ensuring that it is a day that they will never forget. They want it to be a memory that will last forever, filled with the trimmings of enjoying their "dream wedding." And so, much time is given to planning, making reservations, preparing decorations, ensuring all of the bells and whistles are in place, right up to the eve of the wedding. For at least a year, their lives are wrapped in wedding plans. It drives all that they do, and their actions follow that drive. Their minds, financial and material resources, energy and bodies are invested in preparing for that great event.

And so, in a much larger scale, generally, our lives are directed by certain aspirations which are governed by the desires of our hearts. And those aspirations and desires carry the rest of the machinery of our lives with them. The eye sets its focus on a particular direction (provided by the heart), and it issues out the map which will direct the rest of the body, in all of

its active focus. To this end, the eye then, is the lamp of the body. It sets the tone; it passes on the blue print of information, to the large “3D printer” of the body, which then processes and brings about the designs of the eye.

Well, when the eye is good; when the eye is set in the proper direction, governed by God-honoring and God-glorifying motives; when the eye views, and processes, and passes on, the light of God’s Word to the rest of the body, the body functions well, being filled with light. The aspirations are Godward and God-centered; the mind is heaven-focused (laying up treasures in heaven); the heart is in sync with the heart of God, and then the light-absorbed body, follows with God-driven actions. Where the treasure is; where the body moves; how it functions, what it produces; how it acts; what it clings to... all of these, speak to the condition of the eye/heart.

If the body and life are consumed with the world, the malfunction is not primarily with the body, but rather, with the eye and the heart. What is put into the body is what is brought out of it. You see, again, the Lord, as He has been doing all throughout the sermon on the mount, is attempting to show His disciples that everything is driven by the heart, which is why God is concerned with the heart first. The religious leaders didn’t merely have a malfunction in the actions (as they pursued the praises of men), but rather, they had a malfunction at the very core. They were driven by a defective heart and eye. Their “blue-print” producer was tarnished, and so, everything else followed suit. And that is why, merely adjusting the actions, would prove to be an empty and vain endeavor, leading to doing things (even acts of worship) with hypocritical motives. Only a heart change and a healing of the eye, could fix the body and life. And that is why the “Sermon on the Mount” describes those who *must* be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Only a supernatural work can produce, all, that as a general pattern, is described in this sermon. The natural, unconverted man cannot live in these ways. Like the religious leaders, their eye is set to the world. The religious leaders loved material wealth and money. They were worldly at the core, even though their actions were painted with religious overtones and exterior law-keeping.

Now, here’s a critical point which our Lord clarifies in verses 23-24. Here, He addresses a *wrong* assumption that many had made in His day, and continue to make in our day, which He wanted to dig up by the root and discard. And this is the great downfall of the health and wealth movement of our day, but it is not limited to the health and wealth movement, friends. Because,

the principle at hand here, further addresses a much more subtler form of the health and wealth movement, which many may give approval to, even using the health and wealth movement as a means of justifying their actions, thinking, “Well, at least I’m not that bad. I have the true doctrine. I don’t agree with the Osteens and the Creflo’s and the Joyce Meyer’s of the world. And so, I must be safe.” But here, our Lord is digging deeper than mere confession, and getting down to the very heart of the matter. Again, He is addressing our actions, because often, they can and will betray the true nature of our hearts, even contradicting what we profess with our lips. Here is our Lord’s, “If it walks like a duck, swims like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it’s a duck” declaration.

There is this “defective eye” category of people, who may, at least in their own mind’s eye, not believe that they are actually walking in darkness, because they do engage in many spiritual activities. However, what these individuals attempt to do is to embrace the best of both worlds. In other words, they are not just, entirely entrenched in the world, especially in immoral practices or in a complete exclusion of the notion of God and Christ in their lives. These individuals attempt, and maybe even with a great degree of self-deception, to invest their hearts in heaven and on the earth. They are not completely blind, in a sense, but rather, they have double vision, as it were. The eye provides some light, but it is quite distorted and sends a mixed message to the rest of the body. They are attempting to amass this world’s goods and heaven’s goods at the same time. And so, their hearts are not in the right place, in that, they do not have a singularity of purpose. They want the benefits of Christ’s salvation, but without all of the sacrifice entailed by bearing a cross. They sort of want to ride the fence, as it were.

But, here is our Lord’s declaration concerning such people. “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:22-24).

And so, here our Lord states the matter very clearly without the slightest bit of ambiguity. Simply put, you cannot have double vision. Your eye has to be focused in one general direction, and the whole of your life must be brought under the roof of the singularity of purpose, of serving God. You cannot possibly serve God and mammon/wealth. They are diametrically opposed masters, issuing forth contrary orders and commands. It is like the Israelites who often

sinned, not by rejecting YHWH altogether, but by attempting to syncretize the worship of the true and living God, with Baal and other idols.

In fact, look carefully at what our Lord states here. In reality, when you attempt to serve God and wealth, you will ultimately serve wealth, because loving God and remaining loyal to God, will automatically lead you to reject and despise wealth. When the heart is truly in sync with God; when the eye is singularly focused on God, inevitably that will drive you to flee from the love of money and material things. You will gather resources with caution, striving to guard your heart against loving, treasuring and idolizing them. You will, in fact, look for ways to wisely use your resources, as a means of bringing glory to God, the Master whom you serve. You can't have it both ways. You can't lay up treasures here and in heaven at the same time. You can't call Jesus "Lord," while offering a pinch of incense on Caesar's altar. There are only two settings on the human heart: Serve God or serve the world. Take up the cross, or give yourself over to the luxuries and enjoyments of this world.

III. What This Means for Us From a Practical Standpoint

Let us then conclude our time, by considering what this all means from a practical standpoint. How can we bring these general principles into the realm of specific application.

1) Without pretending to have all of the answers, brethren, concerning where lines need to be drawn...etc; admittedly, this is a very difficult and yet very relevant issue that needs to be addressed, especially in an American context. This is one of those texts that hits us head-on.

And so, is there a place to enjoy things in this life? Yes, I believe that is the case, and we can even give thanks to God for the things that we enjoy. But, but, how far do we go in a culture that is built upon amassing possessions, and equating success with obtaining the American Dream? At the very least, we ought to evaluate what, over the years, has developed into an "American Christianity," and hold that up, accepting whatever level of conviction comes along with that, to an honest assessment of what the Bible defines as "Biblical Christianity." And we have to bring our lives into that field of analysis, and we have to be prepared to reform and to get back to Biblical Christianity, in so far as we have drifted away from it, if indeed, we have drifted away from it.

Even as we study the Scriptures, with the intent of drawing out their meaning, concerning all of the doctrines that we hold dear, we have to faithfully, prayerfully and honestly deal with texts like this, and the many others that speak along these same lines.

A) “No one can serve two masters; for either *he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other*. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

B) “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:15-17).

C) “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it — lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’? Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace” (Luke 14:27-32).

D) “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. *And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content*. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

E) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

2) There are some here this morning who are in complete darkness. There’s no double vision even. You are just completely blind to the things of the Lord, and your heart is completely

bent on serving your own lusts and desires. It's as our Lord states here, when He declares, "If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

You have to understand that the path that you are presently on, is leading you to eternal destruction. The devil has deceived you and your fallen nature betrays you. Let the graveyard remind you that your time on earth is short, very short, here on this earth. But, let it also remind you that just beyond the grave, you will have to stand before God and give an account for how you have lived this life, which He has entrusted to you. The life that you have in you, is not yours to use, in whatever way you deem acceptable. You have a Creator and you must and will stand before Him...soon. And the ramifications for your life decisions will bring with them eternal consequences. The God, who has created all of this, is a Holy and righteous God. But, you are part of a fallen and rebellious creation, which has incurred the righteous judgment and wrath of God. But, the good news is that God has done something glorious and wonderful to reconcile sinners to Himself. He sent His Son! [The Gospel!!!]

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25