

What To Do With Our Treasures

Dr. Dennis Leatherman

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Mountain Lake Independent Baptist Church
1005 Broadford Road
Oakland, MD 21550

Website: www.mlibc.org
Online Sermons: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/mlibc>

Matthew 6, and if you would, turn to verse 19. Is everything turned on here? Matthew 6:19. I would really like to read down through verse 34 but that's pretty lengthy. I'm not going to do that but I believe that is one section of this Sermon on the Mount the Lord is preaching but nevertheless for tonight, I want to read verses 19 through 23. Notice what the Bible says.

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 But 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!

I'm going to focus and really tonight I'm not even going to get into the verses. I want to kind of lay the groundwork for this whole section that the Lord is getting into and then, Lord willing, another couple weeks we'll get back and maybe look a little closer verse by verse.

Let's pray together first.

Father in heaven, we come to you this evening, I thank you Lord, again, for the privilege to be in the house of God on a Wednesday night. As pastor, Lord, I'm extremely grateful for every person that takes the time in their schedule to come to the house of God to pray together and to study your word. Please, I ask that you would please somehow fill me with your Holy Spirit, Lord. I present anew my body and I ask that you would, again, fill me and speak through me and challenge us from your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Of course, this is the Sermon on the Mount. I always say this every time, the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest preacher that ever preached. He is discipling his disciples. He is teaching them what it means to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Basically you could put it this way, he says, "If you claim to be my disciple, this is what

will be true in your life." He starts out with that in the first sections of chapter 5. Into 6, he's addressing another aspect.

Now, I want us to go back and remind us something from verse 9 of chapter 6. If you would, flip your page back there and look at verse 9 of Matthew 6, he says, "After this matter therefore pray ye," now he makes a statement that I think is very important on what we're addressing here, he says, "our," what? "Father." I believe that statement sums up the Christian's relationship with God. On Sunday mornings, we're talking about God. We've been preaching about God, what he's like, how we know he exists, different characteristics of what this God is out there, what he's like. Jesus says here that when we as disciples of Christ, we as believers, as Christians, when we address God, we should address him as our, what? Father. He's giving an important point here, an important principle I guess you could call it where we need to understand that as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the moment I accept Jesus Christ as my Savior, God becomes my Father. I am born spiritually into the family of God. Now, we hear that all the time. That's nothing new for any of us, no doubt, but you think about that, the God that spoke everything into existence, he considers myself, he is my Father. He is my Father and I believe that sums up the Christian life. My relationship with God is that of a Father and a child. My whole Christian life is me interacting with God as a child of God. I think it's the key to understanding the Christian life.

I was talking yesterday to a fellow at length through the phone about eternal security, about knowing for sure we are saved and then being secure in that salvation, and one of the points that came up was this, is that when I accept Jesus Christ as my Savior, I am born into the family of God. God becomes my Father and he treats me as his child. He interacts with me as a father does with his child and, of course, being a child of God, you become someone's child, you can never be, you can't be unchilded. Write that one down. That's for the Leatherman dictionary. But you can't be unchilded. I am God's child and so in chapter 6, he lays this down in this part of the sermon he's preaching to them, he's interjecting this, introducing this idea that God is our Father, we're his child. Perhaps a new concept for Israel, somewhat anyway. So he says that and he lays that groundwork.

Now in the whole chapter, I want to come back, I'm trying to lay some groundwork, I think, for what the last portion of this chapter says. In the whole chapter, I think he's addressing two struggles in the Christian life. In the first section up through verse 18, he uses a word and we highlighted this the other week, but he uses a word three times, he says we should not be as the hypocrites. And I think he's suggesting there, as we mentioned before, he's suggesting there that one of the struggles in the Christian life is that of sincerity. In my Christian living, in my Christian service, that of being sincere. In other words, not being a hypocrite. What I'm doing, I'm not doing to be seen of men. What I'm doing, I'm not doing to be thought highly of, that people think I'm a great Christian, that people think, "Boy, he really prays. Boy, he really gives to the poor. Boy, he really fasts." He goes, "Don't be that way. Don't slip into that thinking." And I believe and, again, we mentioned this before but I believe one of the struggles in the Christian life is falling into this just having an outward appearance without being for real inside; not being sincere; not being genuine. As long as everybody thinks I look good, as long as

everybody thinks I'm a good Christian, as long as I appear to be a good Christian, then that's all I'm concerned about. So that's a real struggle, even in our circles. We need to get where we are more concerned that I am what I should be than I appear to be what I should be, and I think very often we're simply satisfied with appearing to be what we ought to be.

So he deals with that in the first 18 verses. "Don't be like the hypocrites. Don't do this, do this. When you're praying, when you're giving alms, don't be like the hypocrites." And he goes through there. Now he comes to a second challenge in the Christian life and to be honest with you, I never really looked at it this way until I started studying this and I believe for the rest of the chapter he addresses this second area that's a real challenge in being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, being sold out to the Lord, and that is this, and I don't know how to really word it so I put it this way: that of focusing on eternity rather than the temporal here; or you could put it this way, focusing on spiritual realities rather than focusing on physical material things.

Look again here, he says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," verse 20, "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." And he comes down through here and in verse 24 he says, "No man can serve two masters." Verse 25, "take no thought for your life here," the things that make up this life, and I think he's contrasting here spiritual realities with physical realities and this idea. We get so caught up as a Christian, we get so caught up in the material things of the here and now, the physical world we live in, that we completely lose sight of the spiritual world. I think Demas fell into that trap. Demas was a faithful Christian. He was a devout disciple of Christ. He was a coworker with Paul, but Demas forsook Paul having loved this, what? Present world. That is exactly what Jesus is warning about here, getting so caught up in the material parts of life that it overshadows the spiritual aspects of life, and that is a very real danger.

So in the overall sermon, this whole chapter, this portion of the sermon the Lord is preaching, I think he's addressing, he doesn't specifically point one point do, say it that way, but you look at the content and he's dealing, one: with sincerity in my walk with God, that I am what I am, not just appearing to be but I'm concerned that what I'm doing is for God's glory, it's from what I am, not so people see; and second of all, I'm not caught up in focusing and emphasizing and investing in the temporal things of the world now but I'm focused on and investing myself in eternity, in the eternal things. So he addresses those two.

The word "materialism" comes to mind as I'm looking at this. I believe he's addressing the theory, I'm going to call it a theory, of materialism. Now, I want a little feedback. I want you all to get involved here. How would you define materialism? If you hear, "Boy, that guy is really materialistic or you've got to watch out for materialism." What are we talking about? Loving stuff. Things. Possessions. What else? Discontentment would be materialistic thinking, would be discontented. Yes, you can see it, you can feel it, you can touch it. Let me put it this way and I think he's addressing this...how many people would agree with me that you can see how that would be an issue in the Christian life? Good night. And to be honest with you and I had some statistics, I didn't bring them, but the

number of billionaires in the United States, I believe in a country like ours, we have incomprehensible prosperity, materialism becomes a very real danger in the life of Christianity.

I kind of have my own thinking on missions and these types of things that kind of developed over the years and just experienced and many other veteran missionaries and senior missions workers, Dr. K. and others, I believe we're on the same page and that is this: it's very dangerous to take a national missionary from perhaps a third world country and to bring them to the United States where there is unbelievable prosperity and overwhelming prosperity, and have them come here and raise support. What happens sometimes, not always and, you know, all of us would be prone to this, I'm not saying we're better than anyone else, but simply what happens is they get over-awed by the prosperity and that has destroyed more than a few good national missionaries that got caught up with this.

The first time I saw it, and I don't know that it affected this fellow, but the first missionary trip we were on, we were visiting a guy way back in the hills of Dominican, I mean, incredible poverty. He lived in this cement building was their church and he lived in the basement. It was probably about the size of our mission house. They had at basement down there, just some cots. He had two little kids about Harper's age, about there, a young preacher and he's on fire for God and he lived down there. So there was about 15 of us preachers and our wives and we visited and somebody preached, I don't think I preached there, somebody else preached at his church and had a great service and afterwards a couple of the preachers said, "Hey, let's take an offering up for this guy and help him, this poverty." So it just kind of happened, we took up an offering and we gave and our heart is out to him, we're excited what the Lord is doing and if I remember there were a few people baptized and Dr. K. when we left said, "You know, you gave to that fellow tonight over a year's income in one night." He goes, "That can be very dangerous."

Did anybody ever hear of somebody winning the lottery and it destroys their life? And he says, "That's a very real danger in somebody that is living in such poverty and all of a sudden they come into so much money," and to us it wasn't that much but to him, that was a phenomenal amount of money. So I believe, now that's maybe some extreme case and I don't know that it ever affected him. As far as I know, the fellow handled it properly and went on and served the Lord. It wasn't an issue as far as I know, that's the case, but can you see where that could mess someone up, coming into something like that?

So I believe that's what the Lord is addressing here. He's cautioning us about this matter of materialism. Now, here's my definition of materialism: it is placing physical well-being and possessions, it's considering physical well-being and possessions the greatest good and the highest value in life. Did you get that? I become materialistic when I begin considering my physical well-being and my material possessions as being the greatest good in my life. The best thing that can happen to me is I be physically well and have good material possessions. That, I believe, is materialism. I'll put it this way: materialism

is when the material part, the physical part has priority over the spiritual. When my greatest goal in life is physical, is material, then that becomes materialistic.

So we often use the word worldliness, worldliness and materialism are synonymous perhaps in a lot of ways. In other words, I begin sharing the world's values. Would you agree with me for the world generally speaking, for the world, having stuff is the most important thing in life? Getting more money is the most important thing in life. Getting more stuff. Did you ever see that little bumper sticker: he that dies with the most toys wins? That's the world's philosophy. You ask the average person in the world, "What's the most, what would you like most in the world?" "Oh, if I could get \$1 million." "What would make you the happiest?" "Oh, if I could get more money." And we express it this way, "Oh, money can't buy happiness but it can buy a boat and that's about the same thing." Now, we laugh about that but do you know what that is? It's materialism. Materialism. Some things, some stuff, physical is what will make me happy, is what will meet my needs, bring fulfillment to my life, make me satisfied and content with life, some thing, and that at its very root is what materialism is, finding my joy, finding my fulfillment, finding contentment in things. Things. Again, the more prosperous society we live in, the more of a real danger that becomes.

So the Lord is addressing that here. I think there are two aspects of materialism that he focuses on in this last part of the chapter, in this part of his sermon. I have noted in verses 19 through 23, he addresses this matter of investing my resources into temporal holdings, and we'll look at this, it will have to be another message, but he says, "lay not up," your resources. Your stuff. "Don't lay it out for yourselves upon earth," don't invest your resources in something on earth. Then he tells us why. Then in verse 20 he says, "lay up for yourselves treasures," your resources, I'm ahead of myself here but that word "treasures" has the things you value, the things that are important to you, the things that are precious to you, "lay them up not on earth," he tells us why, "moth and rust corrupt and thieves break in and steal, but invest it in heaven," in eternity, "where moth and rust cannot corrupt and thieves cannot break in and steal." So he addresses this matter of investing our resources whether in materialistic type things or spiritual things.

Then the second aspect of materialism he addresses is the anxiety over physical conditions and that's verse 24 all the way down through verse 34. Of course, verse 33 is the classic verse, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, then all these things," all this stuff you're so worried about, what you're going to you eat and what you're going to wear and what kind of house you're going to live in, all of that stuff, "it will be added unto you." So he's confronting this matter of getting so worried, "Oh no, what am I going to do? How am I going to, where am I going to live? What am I going to eat? What am I going to do this?" He says that's materialistic thinking. Your faith needs to be in God; your investment, your focus needs to be on the Lord. You get the spiritual right, God will take care of that other part.

So to be honest with you, when I began studying this, I didn't associate verse 19 and 20 and 21 with the rest of the chapter, but the more I studied it, he's addressing this whole idea that temporal things are so necessary to my fulfillment, are so necessary to my

temporal pleasures, and the word "treasures" there isn't just talking about money. We think about money. It's talking about anything that's important to me. Anything of great value to me. I need to invest that in something that is secure and eternal and lasts beyond just a few years here on this planet. So I see this overall is God is addressing this whole subject of materialism, I believe.

As far as God is concerned, I don't see God has any distinction between the physical and the spiritual. My attitude towards the physical is very much a reflection of my attitude toward the spiritual. In other words, if I am so in love and I am so wrapped up with the here and now and what people think of me and what I have and the possessions and the pleasures of life, if that dominates my thinking, if that is the most important thing in my life, that tells me a whole lot about my spiritual condition. And if the focus and concern and drive in my life is spiritual well-being and the glory of God and things that are eternal, then that says a whole lot about my attitude toward the physical. The two are very much connected. My attitude toward one reflects my attitude toward the other. How much I value one, the material, reflects a whole lot on how much I value the spiritual.

I think a good example of this is in the Old Testament. Is everybody still with me, everybody doing okay? I think in the Old Testament we have a classic example of this in the person Abraham. If you study Abraham very carefully, you'll find out that Abraham was extremely wealthy, incredibly wealthy. I mean, far beyond anything you and I perhaps would experience in our lives with a few exceptions of a few moneybags out there, but he had it. But Abraham was very mature spiritually. Now, he had his ups and downs but overall he was an incredibly mature man spiritually. He was the father of the faithful. Do you know what Abraham invested his tremendous riches in? Not in houses. Everywhere he went, what did Abraham build? You follow his travels around, everywhere he went, he built one thing and one thing only: an altar to God. He built an altar to God. You traveled back in that day, you traveled across, you'd find an altar to God, to Jehovah, you'd say, "Abraham was here." You'd travel a little further, "There's another one. Abraham was here." Not one time did Abraham build a house. He never built a palace. He never built a barn. He didn't have any self-storage units set up anywhere. He didn't invest any of his incredible riches in here and now. He invested all of it in eternity. He invested all of it in things that would last beyond the here and now. What a tremendous man. Even his own son when he was called to give up Isaac, your average American Christian, if they were called, "Give me your son," would say, "Listen, I've got a big bank account, Lord, I'll put \$100,000 in and cover that." He said, "I don't need your money. It's not about money, it's about your heart." God had Abraham's heart. Because he had his heart, his possessions were not an issue and he had tremendous possessions.

Lot on the other hand, Lot had tremendous riches. As far as we know, he was sitting fine, but his heart wasn't in the things of God. His heart wasn't in the things of heaven, it was in the here and now, the materialistic things and he cast his eye toward Sodom when they had their going parting separate ways and he cast his eyes toward Gomorrah and he saw the well watered plains of Gomorrah. Do you know what was going through his mind? It doesn't say this, it's implied, what's going through his mind, "I see bucks. I see a place I

can make some moolah." So he chose Sodom and he laid up his treasures on earth and what did it get him? Moth and sin crept in and when he left he had nothing. He was up in a mountain. His wife is a pillar of salt. So you see a contrast here between one who, he's very materialistic in their thinking, and another who is very spiritual in their thinking and how they laid their treasures up so differently and Lot left behind a horrific legacy, and Abraham to this day still has a people in the Middle East who honor him tremendously.

So materialism, we put a distinction, we try and put a distinction between the physical and the spiritual. Well, this is the way we do it. I've said this before. When it comes to, let me use finances right now for a moment. There are three approaches to finances people look at it. Some people look at their money as, "That is all mine. 100% mine, mine, mine. Money, money, money, money, it's mine." Alright, some people have that idea. Then you have some folks, maybe they get saved or whatever and they hear the preacher preach and they read their Bible tithe 10% and they have this approach, "Well, alright, 10% of it is God's, the 90% left is mine, mine, mine. 90% moolah, mine." Alright, that's better than that. Do you know what God says our approach ought to be? "God, everything I have is yours. It's all yours, not mine. You trust me with a certain amount. Praise the Lord, I'll would use it. I'll invest it as you see fit. I'll use it." Is there anything wrong with being wealthy? No. Is there anything wrong with having nice houses and nice cars and nice clothes? No. But God says don't place the one over top of the other. Layup, store up, hold on, treasure, hold onto it. Don't put it in temporal here and now, don't put your heart toward that.

I heard somebody, I read a guy said, "You know, man, did you ever see a fellow with a wallet and he'll have a wallet and there will be a metal thing on there with a chain and he chains it to his belt?" Has anybody ever seen that? So he doesn't lose it, I guess, or nobody steals it. But his wallet is chained to himself and they said this, "This is the way God wants it to be, God wants a chain on your wallet but not to your belt but to your heart." That's where the chain is, to your heart, and what you value the most is where your heart will be, where your treasure is. He makes that statement and we'll look at that.

So you have this contrast here, Abraham and Lot. You have how we handle our finances. I want to show you and I'm going to end with this and I wanted to cover this and lay some groundwork and understand what this materialism is and what the Lord is addressing here before we get into the nitty-gritty, but I'd like for you if you would, turn to Revelation 3. We have a church here that the Lord addresses and they have fallen into the trap of materialism and they are doing exactly what the Lord warns his disciples not to do. Revelation 3, the last book of the Bible, and I'm going to begin reading in verse 14, verse 17 and 18 is what I want to look at but let me read verse 14 to lay the groundwork here. Jesus is addressing this church in Laodicea, verse 14, "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." So the Lord Jesus is addressing the church, I believe the pastor of the church. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art," what? "Lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will," do what? "Spue thee out of my mouth." How many people have ever heard preaching on that? Oh, the sin that makes God sick. O

h, lukewarmness, and that's true and I preach it, I agree with that, but look at the next verse. He explains what it means to be lukewarm. He says in verse 17, well he says in verse 16, let me read it again and tie it in. "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am," what? "Rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." These folks are loaded. They are looking at their bank account. "Man alive, our budget is awesome." And they are looking at their facilities, their goods and, "Man, we've got beautiful facilities here and our shelves are stocked full, and the storage area of the barn is just packed. We've got everything and we don't need nothing. Bills are paid. The shelves are full. The bank account is nice." But look at what he says, "and knowest not that thou art," what? "Wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They had placed, they had laid up for themselves as a church treasures upon earth. That's where their heart was. That's where their mind was. Did they love the Lord? Sure, they were going through the motions, he touches on that. They were doing what they were supposed to do but their values, their priorities were in their stuff and he says, "I'm looking at your spiritual well-being. Your physical well-being is great, no doubt, but your spiritual well-being is terrible. Spiritually you're poor and you're blind and you don't even see it. You're miserable and you're naked. Spiritually you are dried up and in poverty." Do you know what they did? They laid up for themselves treasures on earth and moth and rust and thieves had broken in and their spiritual well-being was gone.

Now, look how he advises them. It's almost identical to what he says in the Sermon on the Mount. He says, "I counsel thee," here's my advice, church at Laodicea, "buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye salve that thou mayest see." What's he telling? He's saying, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." He's saying, "Listen," and when he says, "I counsel thee buy of me gold tried in the fire," you understand he's not talking about them investing in gold. "The economy is going south, we need to invest in gold." That's not what he's talking about. Do you know what he's talking about there? Gold that's tried in the fire? Peter says that's their faith. Invest in a strong faith. Invest in the things of God. Lay up for yourselves the things that produce strong faith and white raiment, linen pure godly life. Something that brings glory to God. Something that lasts beyond this life. Classic example of materialism versus spiritual thinking.

And so we're going to, Lord willing, it won't be next week because of the meeting but the following week, Lord willing, I am going to dive into this. What does it mean to lay up for ourselves treasure? What is he talking about? What is the treasure? Then getting on down there, worrying about this stuff, how do we do that? And the title of the message which I really didn't even get to tonight is this, "What do I do with my treasures? Should I buy stocks and bonds?" There's nothing wrong with that but that's not where our treasure is. Amen? So I hope this made sense. I hope it's a help and let's pray.

Father in heaven, I ask now that you would bless us and help us and challenge us in our thinking in this old world, especially in America here with so much televisions and radios

and vehicles and cars and four wheelers and boats and clothes and credit cards and furniture and stuff, stuff. I pray, Lord, you don't let us get blinded by that and help us to invest our hearts and lives and souls in that which is eternal, that which is real, and that which will last.

Our heads bowed and our eyes closed, how many of us would say, "Preacher, God has challenged me a little bit tonight to evaluate my thinking on this matter of stuff and finances and things"? And you'd say, "Preacher, pray with me that God would help me get a spiritual focus and have an eternal focus on the things he has blessed me with"? Are there any like that? Say, "Preacher, God has helped me and challenged me tonight a little bit"? God bless you. I know I was challenged as I was studying this. I want to rethink what I value and what I am investing my life in.

So Father in heaven, I ask you to bless us now in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's stand together for of few moments. Catherine is going to play.