

# Money and The Gospel

Preached at 8.15, C@10 and C@6 on 30th October 2016

## Intro

As we continue on in our Money Matters series today, we're building on what we've seen in the first two talks.

We've seen that money is a created good from God that's not to be rejected but, like everything, received with thanksgiving.

Like everything else in creation, all the wealth of the world belongs to him, and like everything else it's to be used for his purposes and his glory.

And his purposes for his wealth include the provision and care for the needs of all people.

Last week we looked at the way God taught his people Israel to be thankful and generous with all that he provided them.

But we also saw how God's good law can be misused by sinful people like us to mask greed, while trying to make ourselves appear righteous.

Instead, the Law is to show us our sinful hearts, our need for forgiveness in Jesus Christ, and to a new attitude to life shaped by the cross.

So today we're looking at just what is the difference that the coming of Jesus makes as we think more about our attitude to money, how we relate to it and use it.

## Hearts and Treasures

The passage from Matthew 6 that was read is part of the famous sermon on the mount — where Jesus is teaching his disciples about everything from taking oaths, to adultery and divorce, fasting, and prayer.

And the context of his teaching is how he has come to fulfil the Law...

*“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (Matthew 5:17 NIV11)*

So what Jesus is teaching isn't just lists of instructions.

They're descriptions of the life of people who belong to the eternal kingdom of God through faith in Christ.

He's teaching us about the life he's set us free to live forever through his death and resurrection.

For most of the sermon he contrasts the way we tend to naturally think and act, with the new way that he's come to bring.

In v19-21 he's teaching us a new attitude to what we treasure.

People of his kingdom shouldn't be aiming to store up treasures on earth.

When I hear the word 'treasure' it usually brings back memories of story books with pictures of treasure chests full of gold and jewellery.

But treasures are just the things that we long to have and strive to have.

In v19-20 the defining mark of these earthly treasures is their uncertainty.

They belong to a world that is decaying and passing away because of sin.

**This is one** of my treasures — or part of it — my record collection.

Vinyl records need to be looked after — stored in a certain way, cleaned properly, played with the right equipment, etc otherwise they're ruined... they'll warp and become unplayable or the sound quality will deteriorate.

But what will eventually stop me enjoying this treasure altogether, is death.

No matter how well I look after it, my record collection will not follow me into eternity.

All my records — if they last — will become someone else's to enjoy.

Our children joke they're waiting for me to kick the bucket so they can have them all valued and sell them so they'll be rich!

**Whatever we** store up as our treasure in this world will become nothing to us when we die or when Jesus comes back.

So storing up treasure here is short-sighted in the light of the eternal life Jesus has come to bring.

Instead, Jesus says his followers should be aiming to store up treasures in heaven — treasures that won't be destroyed or taken away ever.

The kind of treasures Jesus is talking about are the benefits of the life that he's saved us to enjoy.

It begins with the unrestricted, personal presence of God with us... it's life where we don't sin and hurt others and they don't sin and hurt us... where all people will love everyone else... and so many even greater things that God just whet's our appetite with in the Bible because the treasure of life in heaven is beyond our comprehension.

So Jesus is teaching us to value eternal life more than anything we might treasure in this world... whether that's material things, or status or success or even relationships... anything that our attitudes or actions show that we treasure more than living for Jesus.

That's what those couple of verses 22-23 are about — about what our eyes are on.

What our eyes are set on tells us about the state of our heart — whether it's full of the light of eternal life, or whether it's full of the darkness of sin and set on the things to be enjoyed in this world.

So when Jesus says in v21 *“where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* let's use that to take a bit of a check up on ourselves.

What your eye is on will show you where your treasure is.

And what you treasure will show you what you love most.

And for a follower of Jesus there can be no question over what (or who) we love most.

It has to be Jesus.

If we love him more than anything, it will show in what we treasure.

We'll treasure the new life with him he's promised us in heaven — and that he's commanding us and teaching us to live now...

...more than our dream car or house... our overseas holiday... that man/boy or woman/girl that we can't live without... that rare record that I have to have in my collection.

...

This side of heaven we'll always be tempted to treasure things in this world.

I still get on eBay and look for records that would be interesting to have... or a piece of hifi equipment that I've always wanted.

Our sinfulness will always pull our love away from Jesus and the life he's given us through the gospel, and set our hearts on other things.

That's why he's said what he says here about storing up treasures on earth — because he knows we'll have to fight against the temptation to do it.

We need to listen to Jesus here and learn to practice the new way of thinking and acting that reflects the life we're going to live forever in his kingdom.

Let's encourage each other in our conversations at church and at Growth Group and in our friendships to treasure our new life with Christ forever in heaven more than anything in this world.

## **Money and Worry**

**Lots of words** go together really well, don't they?

Beach and sand

Ice and cream

Car and drive

**Money and worries!**

People worry about money... about how much we have or don't have.

We worry about whether we'll have enough for the necessities of life.

I was talking to someone last week who was telling me that they heard that 'necessities' for retirees now includes an annual overseas holiday among other things!

From v25 Jesus teaches that his people shouldn't worry even about basic things like what we'll eat and drink, or what we'll have to wear.

Using birds, flowers and grass, he challenges our thinking about what we need for life.

It's God.

Not money.

Money is the means God mostly uses to provide for our needs.

But he is the provider, not money.

If he gives the plants and birds everything they need, we can be certain that he'll provide everything we need.

Of course, our idea of what we need and God's might not be the same.

(We have a tendency of turning our wants into our needs very easily.)

Jesus isn't teaching a sort of a "she'll be right" attitude here.

In the previous verse, v24, he says that no one can serve two masters — you can't serve both God and money.

If money is what you depend on to provide what you need to live, then money is your master.

It's the thing we look to to provide for our security.

And you will serve it...

...just in a subtle way like being inclined to hold back on being generous because something might come along that you'll need that money for.

Or at the other end of the scale, keeping back as much as you think you'll need to do all the things you want to do before you think about the needs of others.

You might work at a job that demands so much time and energy that you don't have anything left for your family — let alone to be at church.

If you look after your money, it will look after you.

If that's the way we think and act, then we're serving money.

It's become our master, our god and our saviour.

And Jesus says this world ain't big enough for both of us.

If we love God, it will show as we trust him to provide for our needs, and serve him.

If we trust money, our priority will be to serve it so that it will look after us. It's impossible to say we trust and serve both.

## Money under the Master

Well, what does this mean for what we do when we get up tomorrow morning?

*“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:34 NIV11)*

Firstly, Jesus isn't suggesting that his people ought to be careless about money and just think that it will pop up in the biscuit tin whenever we need something.

Quite the opposite.

He's teaching us what a right attitude to money looks like for people who belong to his eternal kingdom.

Firstly God doesn't entrust us with money so that we can accumulate treasures for ourselves in this life.

What we do with our money should be a matter of working out what v33 looks like for each of us.

*“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33 NIV11)*

The priority in how we use our money and everything else is living for Jesus, in obedience to him as our Master.

And that necessarily includes generously supporting gospel ministry and mission.

When we think about what we do with our incomes, the amount we give to supporting the ministry of our church and the missions we support should be at the top of the list — not the bottom after everything else is taken out.

We won't do that unless we've really listened and believed Jesus when he says "don't worry about the rest."

Have a think this week about how you use your money... could you say you're seeking the kingdom of God as a priority?

Remember in v20 where Jesus says "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven", at least part of that treasure is going to be the people who have heard and believed the gospel because Christians have given generously to make that happen...

...in things like covering the costs of employing ministry staff like myself and John without the need to rely on renting any of our buildings out to make up the total (which we still do at the moment).

Supporting ministry and mission is an investment in the treasure of heaven because it's investing in making and growing disciples of Jesus who we'll get to love and live with forever — even if we never get to meet them in this life!

The new way of life that we've been saved for is the life where our place in the kingdom of God and a place for others is the most valuable thing we know.

And the only thing we can take with us is people, as we do all we can to help them hear the gospel and follow Jesus.

Jesus invested all of his earthly life even to death on the cross as his highest priority to establish his kingdom and bring us into eternal life.

He calls us to follow his example with all that he's made us and given us so that others will come too.

But we'll only live like this if we give up worrying about our lives like unbelievers do.

Ross Greenwood on Today Show last Friday was using statistics about how long the average Australian lives to emphasise the importance of making sure we've got more than enough money for our future.

And he finished with a comment something like how getting older might be a challenge but it's better than the alternative!

The alternative he's talking about is death.

And without the gospel, Ross Greenwood is right.

If death means that we've lost everything, then the sensible to do is to make sure we look after our money so it will continue to look after us until we die.

But that is short-sighted thinking if we're Christians.

John Chapman used to say that in the scheme of eternal life, our 70 or 80 years in this world is like the sand-pit in the first week of kindergarten.

Jesus has secured our eternal greatest need, good and joy.

So we are free not to worry about tomorrow and the future... but instead to love and trust Jesus with all that we are and all that we have, and to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.