Treasure More...Worry Less

Time, Talent, Treasure Series

Matthew 6:19-34

Pastor Bryan Clark

A couple of weeks ago my friend Tom and I were fishing on our pond and we'd been out for a couple of hours when my youngest daughter Jayme came out, brought her little puppy out, and Patti's kind of been on this mission all summer to catch a *big* catfish. So we look over to the dock, and Patti and Jayme come down and decide they are going to try. So they heave out their lines and weren't really weren't paying much attention. I think I even commented to Tom that I didn't see much likelihood of them catching a fish down there. Jayme was paying no attention. Her bobber had basically floated all the way back to the dock and literally was right below the dock. And all of a sudden we heard these screams, and Jayme's bobber just took off. So she's grabbing the pole before it goes in the water and suddenly there is mass chaos. Patti is screaming; Jayme is screaming; the dogs are tangled up in the lines, and the water is splashing with this fish. Patti frantically runs up on the bank, tries to find a net, finds a net, comes running back to the dock, dips the net into the chaos, and pulls up a 6 ½ pound catfish. There was nothing Tom and I could do to help. We were fifty feet away on the water; we had a perfect view of this moment. I will tell you this. For the rest of my life I will remember that. It is a moment that is burned into my memory, and I remind myself that that moment will never happen again. And I'm really thankful I didn't miss it.

At the end of the day, the quality, the joy, the life that makes living what God intended it to be is found in the *moments*. It's not found in the big moments; nobody misses those. It's found in the most ordinary, everyday moments of life. If, for fifty-one weeks of the year you have a bad marriage, you can't go to Hawaii for one week and have a great marriage. It doesn't work that way. The only thing that makes the one week wonderful is you have fifty-one weeks that are wonderful. Life is made up of moments. Some of you a couple of weeks ago sent off a child for his or her first day of kindergarten. I hope you didn't miss that—because for the rest of eternity that moment will never happen again. For some of you it was a child who took his or her first steps. I hope you didn't miss that—because for the rest of eternity there will never be another moment of first steps. For some of you it was a sixteenth birthday for one of your children. I hope you didn't miss that—because you don't ever get another one like that again.

This is a holiday weekend. For some of you this may be the last holiday you ever spend with a loved one or friend. I hope you don't miss that moment. How do we live in such a way that we don't miss the moments...the moments that make life worth living...the moments you never get back? That's what we want to talk about this morning. If you have a Bible, turn with us to Matthew, Chapter 7. The last couple of weeks we've been looking at the *Sermon on the Mount* and reminding ourselves that Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount by saying, *"If you listen to what I say and live this way, you build your house on the rock. If you ignore what I have to say, then you spend a lifetime building nothing but sand castles.*" So we've been asking ourselves: then what exactly did Jesus say? The last two weeks we looked at *The Beatitudes*. We want to take one more look this morning as we've been talking about our time, our talent, and our treasures. I want to do this in a rather odd fashion this morning—and this is going to mess with some of you. But I'm

actually going to work the text backwards. I just want to get a fresh look at a familiar text by working it backwards. So we pick it up in Verse 34 of Chapter 6.

> **"So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."** (*NASB, Matthew 6:34)

I would suggest what Jesus is saying is that one of the greatest thieves that steal our moments is **worry**. It's anxiety; it's fear. As long as I'm anxious, as long as I'm worried, as long as I'm fearful about tomorrow and what might happen tomorrow, there's no way I can really live in the moment. Fear, worry, anxiety, steal the moments away. Studies show that the overwhelming majority of things we worry about never happen. So I dwell on something that never comes to pass, and I miss the moment I'll never get back again. So how do we not live this way? Let's back it up a little bit. Verse 32:

> **"For the Gentiles eagerly seek all of these things. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."** (Vs. 32-33)

When Jesus uses the word **Gentiles**, He's speaking to a Jewish audience and **the Gentiles** is a reference to unbelievers. So that is what He is saying there specifically. He's talking about those who have determined themselves to be their own gods. We've talked about this the last two weeks. In our contemporary culture, the operating system is, "I am my own god. I am in charge of my own significance; I'm in charge of my own meaning; I'm in charge of my own purpose; I'm in charge of my own life. I'll decide what's good and bad; I'll decide what's right and wrong. So I'm my own god." And what Jesus is saying is that as long as you have decided that, you *should* worry. You *should* be fearful; you *should* be anxious because, as god, you're completely inadequate for the task. You legitimately have a reason every day to be fearful, to be anxious, to worry. And that's what Jesus is saying: that makes sense with that operating system. That is how unbelievers live their lives. But that shouldn't be what characterizes the life of a Christ follower. When you change to a different operating system—when you're *poor in spirit*, you've become *broken and humble* and before God you say, "I'm not God. God is God and I choose to surrender and let God be God and I'll be his slave." Then you should trust God with the most ordinary, everyday stuff of life. If God is the God of the universe, what are you worried about? Let God be God. And if God is God, then that sets me free to enter in and capture the moments of life. You say, "Well that sounds very compelling. Could you tell me a little bit more about that?" Why certainly, I'd be happy to. Back it up to Verse 25:

> **"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink, nor for your body for what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the air that they do not sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin. Yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will he not much more clothe you, you of little faith? Do not worry then, saying 'What will we eat? Or what will we drink? Or what will we wear for clothing'?"** (Vs. 25-31)

So Jesus is saying, "*If you've made a decision to surrender to God as God, then you have to trust Him."* He even asks the question, "*How is it possible that worry can add a single day to your life?*" One of the logical questions is: How does worrying change anything? How does it make it different? How does it make it better? How does it make the problem go away? It's simply wasted energy. And so He's saying, "There's no need to worry." Look at creation. If God takes such good care of the birds and God takes such good care of the flowers, can't you trust that God will take care of you? So the logical flow is that God will take care of you, so the unbelievers worry about those things. They *should* worry because they've chosen to be their own gods, but you've trusted God. So why should you worry? "*Seek first His kingdom and trust God to take care of the stuff of life."*

Notice at the beginning of Verse 25 it says, **"For this reason...** We would ask the logical question, "For what reason?" Let's go backwards, Verse 24.

> **"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."**

You cannot serve God and money. Jesus is saying, "*At the end of the day you either choose to be a slave to God or you're going to be a slave to money—but you can't be a slave to both."* Now he doesn't say you can't be an employee to two bosses—because you can be. Some of you work two jobs. It's hard for us sometimes to get our minds around a slave/master relationship. The master owned the slave, and the slave was available to the master twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Any time I want anything from you, that's your job. It is virtually impossible to be the slave to two masters. You can't be available twenty-four/seven to two different masters. It will never work. And that's the imagery that Jesus is using. If we choose to become our own god, we are in charge of our own significance; we are in charge of our own self-esteem; we are in charge of our own value; we are in charge of meeting our own needs. Therefore there has to be some way to measure our performance in order to gain our significance. And in our culture, as in almost every culture of the world, ultimately that is measured by money. It's measured by money; it's measured by stuff: What kind of house do you live in? What kind of car do you drive? How much money is in the bank? That becomes our safety; that becomes our security. And so we think about these things; we worry about these things. And I eventually become a slave to that money; I become a slave to that way of life. I can't afford to be generous; I can't afford to give that away. That's my self-esteem; that's my significance. I'm giving away a piece of myself. I can't afford to share that. And every day I worry about what I have and whether I'll keep it, and what if I lose it? It would be fair to say, "The more you have, the more you worry about it because the more you have to lose." And you get used to having that safety and that security and that significance and that self-esteem.

If I drive an old crummy pickup and I pull into the parking lot at Wal-Mart, I don't care if someone pulls up next to me. I don't care if there's a rogue grocery cart. Have at it! Bang it into my pick-up as much as you want. No problem. But if I have just bought my dream car, I'm very concerned when I pull into the parking lot. Who is going to pull up next to me and what if a grocery cart gets away and bangs into the side of my car? What if it hails today? Every day there is some reason to worry about my new treasure. And six months later it's not a new treasure. My neighbor Ralph bought a new one; now I've got to buy a new one. It's relentless; it never ends. Let me ask you a question this morning. If you have lots of money in the bank, what are you going to do with that so that you sleep peacefully at night? In this economy that is so shaky, the more you have, the more you have to worry about. And people get a sense of what it feels like to be a slave to money, because as long as it's tied to my significance and my self-esteem, I'm always going to worry about it. And I get anxious and I'm going to think about those things and it's going to cause me to miss

the moments in life that I will never get back again.

The alternative is you become a slave to God and say, "God, I don't want to be my own god. I want You to be my God and I want to be Your slave. I want to live for You and I want to trust You. And so I want to seek first Your kingdom. I want to invest my time; I want to invest my talents; I want to invest my treasures; I want to invest myself in You and I'm going to trust You with the stuff of life." Every single day there are hundreds and hundreds of things that affect our lives I simply cannot control. But I'm going to trust God, because He's in control, which sets me free from the worry and anxiety and fear and allows me to live in the moments and capture the moments that give life—the moments I'll never get back again. Jesus actually has a little bit more to say about this when we back it up to Verse 19.

> **Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;**
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> (Vs. 19-20)

This is a familiar passage. We've talked about this many times and I feel like, even in my own thinking, I've evolved around a bit on what exactly the text is saying. It's written in what we would call parallel fashion. This is very common in the Psalms—but it shows up in other places—meaning the two statements are parallel and so they are offering a contrast. So first of all he says, "Do not lay up—literally do not treasure—treasures on earth," so in other words buy into the value system of this world and live for the things of this world. You're treasuring treasures. So you become a slave to your treasures—to your wealth. Do not treasure treasures on earth. Why? Because, at the end of the day, you lose them. Some of you, a couple of minutes ago, when I asked you, "Where would you put that money," are thinking, "Oh it's really safe." No, it's not! I don't care where it is; at the end of the day—gone. That's the whole point! You don't keep it—it's lost. You can't keep it. "Don't live that way," is what Jesus is saying, "because, at the end of the day, all you've invested in is sand castles—and you end up with nothing. What's the alternative? Treasure treasures in heaven. Why? Because they can never be lost. It's the one investment that is eternally secure no matter what.

What does He mean **to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**? This is the part that we've gone round and round, trying to figure out, "What exactly does that mean?" Several of us on staff have talked about this at length. I'll give you a brilliant answer this morning—"I still don't know." But I will tell you I think there are two things I think it is definitely *not* referring to. Number one, it's not referring to some heavenly currency where, when you get to heaven, because you laid up treasures for yourself, you're going to be rich and somebody else is going to be poor. We're not taking this earthly, consumer-driven culture and transferring it to heaven. I don't think there will be rich people and poor people in heaven. It doesn't make any sense. So I don't think it's saying that. But other people would say, "Oh it's just talking about your salvation." That doesn't make sense either. First of all He's talking to believers. He's already pulled out the disciples; these people are all believers, so clearly He is saying there are those who are laying up treasures versus those that don't.

It's very similar to the discussion in the New Testament about rewards. I'm not exactly sure how to sort that one out either. But I do know that the teaching on rewards is clear—that this is something more than just our salvation, because clearly the teaching on rewards is: some will have their works burned up, but they will still have their salvation, where others receive a reward that endures in

eternity. What exactly is that? I don't know—which again is the brilliant answer I have for this one. But here is what I *do* know. Clearly, both related to treasures in heaven and rewards, the New Testament teaches that this is true, that it matters, that it has value, and it should affect the way we live our lives. To just dismiss this—that some day when I die there will be a quick transaction, rewards are thrown out, end of story, everybody goes on—is a mistake. Somehow, some way, this matters forever. So it is worth thinking about. What Jesus is saying is, "Treasure treasures in heaven because they can't be lost." Now sometimes I think we confuse the situation with our language. I'm not sure what the better language is, but when we talk about giving, what it sounds like we're saying is, "When I give, I give away and what I hold onto, I keep," which biblically is exactly backwards. To be a generous giver, you have to understand: actually what I generously give is the only thing I keep for eternity. And what I choose to keep for myself is what I ultimately lose. I'm not giving it away. I'm investing it in that which will matter forever. And that's what Jesus is saying.

Then He says something very radical. As a matter of fact I would suggest to you that if any preacher uttered the words that Jesus is about to utter, I would have a line up and down the aisle here saying, "Preacher, I think that's wrong and I take offense that you said that." But I didn't say it. Jesus said it! "**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."** I can imagine people saying, "Oh I don't think that's true. Jesus has my heart," and twenty reasons why he doesn't have my treasure, "but He has my heart." Hey, I didn't say it; Jesus did. And at the end of the day there is only one opinion that matters, and He said that, "**Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is."**

I think some Christians are bound and determined to convince others that, "I really am Super Christian; check me out!" But what Jesus is saying is that if I don't have your treasure, you're not. You're not! Stop thinking that way. I don't even have your heart. *Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is*. Why do we lay up treasures in heaven? Treasures can be your time; it can be your talents; it can be your money. We lay up treasures in heaven because, where our treasures are, that's where your heart is. And if that's where my heart is, then I'm going to serve God as my master; I'm going seek first His kingdom. I'm going to live for the things that matter; I'm going to capture the moments. If God doesn't have my heart, then I'm going to be enslaved to money and stuff and I'm going to worry and I'm going to be fearful and I'm going to be anxious and that's what I'm going to think about. And I'm going to be so busy worrying about that stuff that I'm going to miss the moments that ultimately give meaning to life.

It's so important to understand that this isn't just a money talk. This is a life talk! A lot of preachers say, "I hate to talk about money." I don't hate to talk about money because it goes to the root of something I am very passionate about and that is living for the things that matter! If you don't get this one right, you don't get any of it right—because your heart's not in it. And you say, "Well I don't know about that. That's a bit of an overstatement." Fine, let's read on in the text.

> **"The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"** (Vs. 22-23)

Think of the eye as what both the Old and New Testament often use to describe *covetousness—s*o, basically, the idea of what I see and what I want and what I live for. And the ancients understood the eye to be like a conduit of light into the body—as a metaphor. So what Jesus is saying is that if the light is good or the eye is good, then the light comes through the conduit and shines to every

area of my life. So what He is saying is, *"If I get this money thing correct, if I treasure treasures in heaven, then that light shines in every area of my life and chances are I'm going to get every area of my life on track."* But he's also saying, *"If that eye is bad, and there's no light getting in through conduit, then everything else in my life is in darkness—and chances are every area in my life is going to be off."* Jesus is clearly saying, "When you get this one right, it affects everything else," because it's where your heart is. It's what's going to determine who your master is. It is going to determine whether or not you are going to seek first His kingdom. And it's going to affect whether or not you capture the moments. And then, at the end of that, He says something I find very sobering.

> **If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!** (Vs. 23)

In other words, if you think your eye is good; you think you've got it wired; you think your Christian life is all together; you think that you're living for things that matter, then you think everything is as it should be. But in actuality your eye is dark and that light isn't penetrating into every area of your life. Jesus says, "*For you the darkness is the greatest of all, because you are totally deceived*. **How dark is that darkness**!" is what Jesus asks.

Basically the logic of the text is this: If I treasure treasures on earth, if I live for the things of this earth, then that's where my heart is. And if that's where my heart is, that's going to affect every decision I make. And I'm going to find myself enslaved to the things of this world, which is going to cause me to worry. It's going to cause fear and it's going to cause anxiety and I'm going to spend so much time fearful and anxious and worrying about these things, I'm going to miss the moments that ultimately make life worth living—moments I'll never get back again. But if I choose to treasure treasures in heaven, that's where my heart is. That light then shines into all areas of my life. God is my master and I can trust Him with the stuff in my life. I don't have to be anxious; I don't have to be fearful. I don't have to worry about these things every day, which frees me up possibly for the first time in my life to just live in the moment and drink in the moments of life that bring joy—moments that I'll never get back again.

This isn't just about what you do with your money. This is ultimately about your heart. This is about your master. This is about capturing the moments that make life worth living.

> *Our Father, we are thankful this morning that You love us. You love us and You tell us the truth. Lord, I'm sure there are people here this morning, they just don't really want to hear this. There's others that are hearing Your voice and genuinely want to make a change. Lord, my prayer is that You give them the courage to follow through to make whatever changes are necessary to live for the things that matter. And, Lord, there are a whole bunch of people here this morning that do treasure treasures in heaven every day. That's how they live. They find the joy of giving. Lord, my prayer is: You just encourage them today. Remind them again that this is the way to live. Lord, my prayer would be that we will all find the joy in giving. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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