



Transcending a Futile World

Matthew 6:19-21

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Good morning and welcome to GraceLife. This is a good Sunday for you to be here because the text that we have in front of us today and the words of our Lord Jesus Christ are going to be immensely personal and immensely practical to each one of you. It couldn't be any other way, as you will see as the message unfolds.

It is important – as we return to the Sermon on the Mount today in Matthew chapter 6, where we are going to be if you want to turn there – as we return to the Sermon on the Mount today, I want to step back and just keep in mind the big picture, which is so easy to lose sight of. As you study the Sermon on the Mount, as you read the Sermon on the Mount, it would be easy to get caught up in little details and the particulars of any given subject and lose sight of what is probably the most important part of this sermon.

It is important to remember, as you read the Sermon on the Mount and as you hear it taught, that we are studying together the words of the eternal Son of God. Jesus not only commands what we are to do, but He commands what we are to be. Who you are to be at the core of your very heart is something that the Lord Jesus Christ stands over as Lord and says, “Thus shall you be, thus shall your priorities be, thus shall your character be.”

And the skeptics might say, “Well, who is this Jesus to tell me such things?” The superficial might say, “Maybe it is not that important.” But beloved, think with me for just a minute, because this will help us prepare our hearts for what the Lord has for us today: the authority of Jesus Christ extends over all the universe by virtue of His deity, which Jesus conclusively demonstrated during His public ministry.

He proved His authority as He performed many miracles, as He raised the dead, and as He taught with such unprecedented authority that everyone who heard Him, even those who did not bow the knee, acknowledged. They said, “Never spoke a man the way this man speaks.” Ultimately, this Lord Jesus Christ, whose words we are studying in the Sermon on the Mount, was declared both Lord and Christ when God raised Him from the dead.

We are speaking at a profound level when we contemplate the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so when Jesus speaks, you, beloved, as well as I, have the responsibility to listen and respond at a profound level. These are the words of the eternal God – He is speaking directly to your heart in a commanding way. And so it is with that supremacy of Jesus Christ in our minds that we turn our attention again to the Sermon on the Mount.

Here in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus – get this and listen very carefully – Jesus is describing the character of those who truly belong to the kingdom of God. He is not describing how you earn your salvation; rather, He is describing and commanding the spiritual life that flows when you have truly been born again. When someone truly becomes a Christian, the spiritual characteristics that are described in the Sermon on the Mount start to flow out of their lives. Jesus is both describing the fruit of true repentance and He is commanding it at the same time – this is what you are; this is what you ought to be.

Now most of you know that I have five daughters to go along with one son – that’s why I look tired this morning [laughter]. Now, generally speaking, the girls that are born into the Green family – including those born to my brother and to my sister and to our cousins – the girls that are born into the Green family have light-colored hair and fair complexions. That family resemblance comes from a common ancestry – that’s just the way it is. These are the traits that mark membership in our family – the physical traits. Our girls didn’t go out and bleach their hair and put on some make-up to try to get in. This characteristic of theirs just belongs to them because of their common ancestry.

In a spiritual way, it is the same way with true Christians. True Christians share certain spiritual qualities because they have been born from the same Spirit. They have common desires because those are the desires that flow from the one Spirit who gave them birth. You cannot get into the family of God by changing your conduct. You have to be born again so that you will naturally manifest these family traits.

What I want you to see, beloved, and understand, is that the Sermon on the Mount demonstrates the family traits that mark those who have been born again through repentance from sin and faith in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And because these are the undeniable spiritual characteristics – because this is the plumb line of what spiritual life looks like for the true Christian – they become a measuring rod to see where you are really at spiritually.

This is a huge wall mirror that you look into and discern the state of your heart. The true Christian looks into that mirror and affirms those characteristics that Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount as the true aspiration of his heart. He says, “Yes, this is good and worthy and true and noble. This is righteous and what God requires, and this is what I want. This is the mark of my life even though I realize that I fall short of that standard in my daily life.”

The true Christian affirms all of that and embraces what Jesus says in the deepest part of his heart because he is born from that same Spirit that inspired the utterances in the first place – there is a divine continuity that grows.

For the non-Christian, however – and there have got to be some in this room, though I couldn’t point you out with my finger – for the non-Christian, understand that what the Sermon on the Mount does and should do in your life is convict your conscience. The words of Christ convict you.

And it is not just because you have particular sinful actions that are in your life, although that is true and those sins incur judgment on their own. Understand this – and this is why I opened the message like I did – in light of the totality of the greatness and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, His deity, His unparalleled authority that continues to speak to us through His word – when He speaks in the Sermon on the Mount and you say, “That’s not what I want; that’s not what I’m like,” the Sermon on the Mount is exposing your fundamental rejection of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For sinners like that – and that’s every sinner – the sinner’s entire life and system of priorities are one huge ongoing sin against Christ. It is more than whether you smoke a cigarette; it is more than whether you commit an act of adultery or any of the other sins that come to your mind as being particularly egregious. That external stuff is only an outward manifestation of a deeper inner sin that is rejecting Christ.

And you say, “I can’t manifest the Sermon on the Mount.” But understand that it is not just your conduct – it is your entire system, it is your entire paradigm, it is your entire heart that is the ongoing sin against Christ when you refuse to bow the knee to Him. Every breath you take is a rejection of Him.

Now for that sinner, maybe for you today, I want to preface what I say today by saying that your need is to make a fundamental turn away from sin and to submit in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the only solution to your spiritual dilemma; that is the *only* one – you *must* bow the knee. Now understand that God extends that offer to you – He extends the offer out of His love out of His grace and says, “Your sins can be forgiven; I will wipe it all away.”

But you have to understand, beloved, that you have to recognize the death and resurrection of Christ as the payment of your sin. You have to trust Him alone and His righteousness as the sole grounds of your acceptance before God. That fundamental transaction is the only way that you can be saved from your sins.

See, you can’t rearrange a few things in your life to make yourself acceptable to God – “I’ll throw away the cigarettes,” or whatever – that’s too superficial. Think about it: that couldn’t *possibly* be right – it *couldn’t* be a matter of your conduct because of the surpassing authority and the greatness of the person of Jesus Christ, and as you are in the presence of the triune Godhead, obviously it is going to take something more significant than the matter of your little bit of external conduct.

You can’t rearrange a few things in your life to make yourself acceptable to God any more than they could have rearranged the deck chairs on the *Titanic* to save that ship from its disastrous fate. See, beloved, you need to get into a completely different boat.

Now, I think that fundamental emphasis on the person of Christ is very important for you as we move into this section of the Sermon on the Mount that we are about to study, because what Jesus says here in these three verses that we are going to look at today are

going to be a profound examination of everything that you hold dear in your life, without exception.

This goes to the very heart of who you are, the very core of your personality, and you have to understand that it emanates from the authority of Christ Himself – I am not making this up. It is not about me here this morning; it is about you living out your life in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what you are going to see is that a true Christian orders his earthly priorities around his love and obedience to Christ; everything else is secondary.

Because of the greatness of who Christ is – because of the love and devotion that is rightfully His as the One who bought your soul, the One who owns you by right of creation – as He stands in unparalleled authority over you, it is obvious that everything about your life must be ordered around what He considers to be the priorities, and failure to do that results in spiritual disaster. Don't be a spiritual *Titanic* here today, okay?

Turn with me to Matthew 6:19 with those thoughts in mind, remembering who it is that speaks to us today through His word. And in verse 19, the Lord Jesus Christ says:

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; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What I want to do this morning – I want to start in kind of a counterintuitive way – I want to start with Jesus' conclusion in verse 21, because I think it will make it easier for you to assimilate what Jesus says in the rest of this short passage.

The conclusion in verse 21 tells you where He is going with everything that He says in the prior two verses. This is where you can see what Jesus is driving at. So look at verse 21 with me again, just to set it clearly in our minds. He says:

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus is talking about your heart this morning. The word “For” – “*For where your treasure is...*” – that is introducing the reason for His command when He says, “Don't store up your treasures on earth, but store them up in heaven.” Jesus sets forth that command and the “For” introduces why He says that. He says it because where you put your treasure is where your heart is going to be.

And just a little point of interesting grammar from the original text – in the Greek language, the word “your heart” comes at the end of the sentence. It would read this way if we were to follow the literal order – it says: “Where your treasure is, there also will be your heart.” You say, “Why does that matter?” When Jesus structured His words this way, the words “your heart” form the climax of the entire passage. This is the main point; it shows what Jesus is emphasizing with His teaching in this passage. That's really

important and will keep you from getting strayed off into matters that are irrelevant by comparison. With that concluding word “your heart,” it’s as though Jesus were calling out in the valley and you get the repeated echo, “your heart, your heart, your heart” – it is about your heart, beloved – that is the emphasis here in this passage that we are looking at this morning.

And when Jesus speaks about your heart, understand that He is addressing more than your emotions. The heart refers to your total inner man. It is the center of your personality. It embraces your intellect, your emotions, and your will. And so when He talks about where your treasure is, when He talks about, “Do you treasure things on earth? Do you treasure the things of heaven?” – understand that He is addressing the totality of your life priorities. Everything that you consider to be important in life is on the table today. What you treasure, what you aim your life after, what you spend your time on, what you spend your money on – those are just reflections of what is going on in your heart, your heart, your heart.

Now, can I clear up a common misconception before we proceed with this passage? Thank you for that liberty to do so. When Jesus says, “Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth...” He is not making a blanket condemnation of earthly wealth, nor is He condemning prudent planning for your earthly future – that is not His point in this passage. You can see that when you compare Scripture with Scripture. For example, in 1 Timothy 6:17, the apostle Paul, speaking under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, assumes that there will be wealthy Christians when he says:

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

Paul does not command them to divest themselves of their wealth. Rather, he inculcates spiritual attitudes toward that wealth that are supposed to mark the way they handle the stewardship that God is given to them. He goes on to say:

Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

So you see that passage from Paul; King Solomon in Proverbs chapter 6 commended the ant – that’s right, the little tiny insect that I like to step on and squish when it gets in my way – the ant which plans for the future by storing up provision during the harvest. And so you see both in the Old and the New Testaments a commendation of prudent planning and instruction for those who have means on how they are to use them.

And so Jesus, in the consistency of the Scriptures, must be and is teaching about something far more profound than whether you have money in the bank or not. Jesus is teaching this principle: Jesus is teaching you not to devote your life to that which you

cannot keep in the end. Let me say that again: *Jesus is teaching you not to devote your life to that which you cannot keep in the end.*

It is easy enough to illustrate this with some common sense observations about life – that Jesus is not talking primarily about whether you have money or not. The whole Sermon on the Mount is about the spiritual values of the human heart, of the believing heart. You could be a beggar on the street and be greedy and selfish and violate the very words that Jesus teaches here even though you don't have a penny in the bank. By contrast, a man could be a millionaire who generously supports the work of the kingdom and in that process fulfills Jesus' words perfectly because he is not storing those treasures up for himself here on earth.

See beloved, this passage is only incidental about what you have or what you do with your money. It is about your heart – your heart, your heart, your heart—that's the emphasis here. And only when you approach it from that understanding can you rightly understand what Jesus is getting at. I am not going to get up here and tell you not to have insurance or anything ridiculous like that – that's not the point. The point is: What kind of person are you? That's more significant.

And in the totality of this passage, what Jesus is saying is – He says, “Pursue heavenly treasures because earthly treasures are temporary and insecure.” First point from the passage:

1. See Through Your Earthly Pursuits

This applies to every one of you. No one should be saying, “This has nothing to do with me.” This has everything to do with you. This has everything to do with everything about you. See through your earthly pursuits. Look at verse 19 with me again, where Jesus said:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

This opening command in this verse could be translated “Stop storing up treasures” – it has the idea of halting something that is already in progress. What Jesus is saying is: Break away from your earthly preoccupations. Break away from the attitude that loves the things of this earth so much, and replace it with an attitude that treasures preeminently the values of the kingdom of God. Don't store up treasures on earth. Treasure the things that belong to the kingdom of God.

The idea of treasures here that Jesus is speaking on indicates that to which you attach your greatest value, that which you esteem, that which is most important to you. It would include money, it would include wealth – but it expands beyond those issues and we see that in the way Jesus addresses His first-century audience. For His first-century audience, clothing was a treasure – it was not readily available as it is today. Some writers say that clothing would be handed down from generation to generation because of

its intrinsic value for the people of that time. And as valuable as it was, as much as they would try to protect it, Jesus says do your best – it is still subject to being attacked by moths. Little itty bitty creatures can eat away at that treasure.

He says don't store up those treasures where moth and rust destroy. The word for rust is taken from the word for eating. It can refer not only to rust eating away at a metal, but also to the destruction caused by rats or mildew or other elements on grain or other things that were subject to that kind of consumption.

Jesus says, "Beloved, get a brain." Okay, He didn't say it like that – that's my paraphrase of it. But that is the impact of what He says to every one of you – He says, "Get a brain." He says these earthly treasures that you so enjoy and so value are subject to corruption and subject to loss despite your best efforts to protect them – He says, "What's the point of that?" Beloved, this is a word of very generous grace from our Lord to help us think through these things so that we wouldn't waste our lives and come to the end of our lives and say, "I devoted myself to the wrong things."

At the end of verse 19 He says, "...where thieves break in and steal" – even the valuable treasures that a moth couldn't eat or the rust wouldn't corrode away, even those valuable treasures were not safe really in an ultimate sense because in the first century, homes were often made of mud brick walls. And so thieves would literally dig through the walls and carry away the treasures that were sometimes buried beneath the floor. You can hide it and watch over it, you can worry about it, but there are outside forces that come and take it away. People in the first century were left with a sad reality. The fruits of their earthly labor, the things that they cherished and loved so much, in reality could be taken away from them at any time.

Now beloved, you might experience the uncertainty of earthly riches differently, but the effect is just the same. What we are doing here is we are stepping back and taking a great big picture look at life and recognizing that we are dealing with the reality of the nature of life in a fallen world here is what we are dealing with—this impacts every one of us. You might experience the uncertainty differently, but the effect is just the same. Your boyfriend breaks up with you. You lose the job. The economy changes for the worse. The housing market collapses. Your marriage is messed up. The children that you love and cherish grow up and leave the house. Accidents happen. Sickness comes. Loved ones die. And eventually, death comes looking for you too. This is reality and in those times of varying degrees of crisis, when you cherish those things and build your life around them and the uncertainty comes and makes itself known, you are left holding a bag full of broken dreams, with nowhere to turn.

Beloved, as hard as this is, the only way that this is going to penetrate your heart is that the Spirit of God works in it because we just don't think on this level; we can't grasp this reality internally. Beloved, understand that you will not be the exception. Even if you keep your earthly treasures for years and all of life goes the way that you have it planned out to go, you will eventually lose that which you have treasured in the process – it is certain; this is the nature of life.

Job got this point right when he said in Job 1:21:

Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I will return there.

I came in with nothing, I am going out with nothing – I have got to check it at the door to eternity. And beloved – I speak with grace and compassion as I say this; I really do – when your affections are set on earthly things, sooner or later reality is going to shatter your aspirations. In big things and little things, Jesus says, “Expect it: decay and loss are going to come.” The bloom on the flower is going to fall off.

Now, you can see this in little ways and big ways. Sometimes, you can assess where your heart is at when you see your reaction to the unexpected, to an unpleasant intrusion upon your life. I witnessed a car accident a few years ago. A Christian man carelessly ran his car into a concrete pole in a parking lot. Blasted pole – it just jumped right out in front of where he wanted to go! In a rather comical scene that ensued in the next few seconds, he got out of his car, yelled and complained about the cost of ensuing repairs, and kicked the damaged parts around. He was lucky he didn't break his foot in the process. I resisted the temptation – you will be proud of me – I resisted the temptation to make the helpful observation: “Dude, what do you expect when you hit a concrete pole at 20 miles an hour?” Not sure he would have been in the mood to receive that helpful insight... But he was out of control.

Now listen, none of us likes making silly mistakes. None of us would have enjoyed having that kind of an accident, so easily preventable. That kind of event wouldn't bring out the best in any of us. But beloved, here is what I want you to see: Your emotional reaction for those little reverses demonstrates to you more than you would like how your treasure ultimately controls you. They demonstrate to you what it is that you value, because that's the only thing that would explain such a violent emotional response to something like that. Your reaction to misfortune shows where your heart is at.

More significantly, beloved, let me encourage you to evaluate this whole matter from a macro sense because I don't want you to let yourself off the hook and say, “Well, I had an accident, I handled it like a pro. I was a godly man when that happened. You would have been proud of me, Don.” That too, would be missing the point. No, beloved, I want you to evaluate this from a macro sense because Jesus is talking about all of life. I am just trying to help you recognize little symptoms that will help you assess yourself.

So beloved, here is what I want to say to you today: Step back and look at your life. Think about where you are at in your relationships, in your work, in your ministry. How did you get to where you are at today? What motivated the decisions that brought you to your current place in life?

If you find yourself struggling, if you find yourself dealing with the consequences of sin that are very unpleasant, step back and realize and take responsibility for the fact that, “You know how I got here? I loved earthly treasures more than I loved Christ. I preferred the things of this world to the righteousness that God requires.” You have got

to start there and not make excuses for yourself and stand up and say, “I treasured earthly things and now I am paying the price for it.” That’s the only thing that will start you on a road to spiritual restoration.

When you were at those forks in the road, were you motivated by your love for Christ and His righteousness? It can be a positive encouragement as well – it is not purely a negative thing. You find yourself suffering; you find yourself with life not working out the way you had hoped? Say, “How did I get to this point? When I made that decision 20 years ago, I was conscious of the fact that I thought this would lead me on the path of serving Christ. But it hasn’t worked out.” For you, beloved, you can take comfort in that kind of analysis – it applies differently to every one of us. But it is a macro sense: What were your priorities? What are your priorities? Now going forward, what are you worried about? What are you concerned about? Jesus is shining the flashlight on all of that stuff going on in your heart.

To paraphrase John Calvin: If you love recognition from men, you love being the up-front one, the one who gets the praise – beloved, ambition will control you. If you love money and having big figures in your bank account – greed will control you. If you love pleasure and just having a good time – beloved, sin and self-indulgence will control you.

You may enjoy these things for a time, but beloved, understand that they are perishable and ultimately you will give them up; ultimately, those earthly treasures will betray you. Those earthly treasures that you thought had their arm around you and you were walking through life together and enjoying this earthly pleasure – personifying it as a friend – that friend is going to betray you. You are going to be left holding the bag of broken dreams and it is going to be too late to do anything about it. And as we have tasted in one form or another, it is dreadfully painful to give up that which you love.

Beloved, recognize that earthly treasures are just a mirage in the desert that vanishes the more you move toward it. What are you moving toward in your life, beloved?

See this is not just academic stuff; we use academics to understand the text, but this is about your life. And when you see through it all, remember the first point was: *see through your earthly pursuits*. When you are thinking rightly with the help of the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, and you see through it all, you recognize that your earthly pursuits are a flower that is doomed to fade away, to just rise up for a moment and then wilt and be gone with nothing left behind. It is true of your closest relationships as well as your worldly pursuits.

And beloved, I am going to tell you, I have wrestled with this – this is the kind of thing that has bothered me over the course of my life, especially as I start to get a little bit older. Because when you think about it on an earthly level, the only conclusion that you can come to is what Solomon was wrestling with in the book of Ecclesiastes: “What is the point then? Why should I even bother? Is there any hope in this world of futility? Because I see what you are saying – when I follow it through to the logical conclusion, this ends up in nothing. Everything that I devote myself to in this life ends up [speaking

apart from the kingdom of God] ends up in nothingness. These earthly treasures go away and I am left waiting for the coffin to swallow me up and carry me to the grave.”

What do you do today if you find yourself sitting in the ashes with all your dreams torn apart? Is there anything to do? How do we get around this? Are we doomed to that dilemma?

Praise God, the answer is no, we are not doomed to that. Jesus here in this passage gives the answer. You can transcend that earthly meaninglessness, you can transcend the pain of great earthly loss if – conditional statement – *if* you are willing to do some honest spiritual inventory.

If you find yourself in that position with your bag full of broken dreams, you need to do some honest spiritual inventory, beloved. I am speaking with love towards you. You have got to realize, “You know why I am so broken and so disappointed? It is because I have been loving the wrong things. I have been pursuing that which Jesus warned me about, that I didn’t pay attention.”

If that’s you, your starting point – speaking in love, but speaking the truth – your starting point is repentance. And you fundamentally recognize that “The direction of my life, my attachment to this thing or to this stuff was misplaced, and I am responsible for it.” And you repent and say, “Lord, I have set my affection on earthly things; I want to turn away from that.”

What do you turn to? The answer is as encouraging as it is simple. Second point in this message:

2. Seek a Heavenly Treasure

Turn to verse 20 with me. Jesus has just said, “Don’t store up for yourself earthly treasures,” and in verse 20 He says:

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.

The whole contrast in this passage turns upon the words “treasures on earth” versus “treasures in heaven.” There is a sharp contrast between the two. The things that you value are different, and the outcome is completely different. Jesus describes these heavenly treasures as those things which cannot be corrupted, those things which are imperishable, those things which will not fade away, those things which are not subject to thieves.

Imagine that I were a financial advisor and I said to you, “I have got two options for you. You can invest everything into this thing that ultimately will come out at zero, or you can invest everything where you will have a great reward that no one can ever take away –

absolutely guaranteed.” Which would you choose? No brainer. This in your self-interest, beloved, to pursue the kind of heavenly treasures that we are about to discuss.

Earthly treasures will rot; heavenly treasures will not. What are those heavenly treasures? What is it that we devote our life to? Where do you find these rewards that God stores up for those who love Him?

Beloved, this is glorious because it is so simple and it is so accessible, but it requires the depths of who you are to pursue it. Jesus talks about this a lot just in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. Look at what He characterizes as generating reward for you.

Look at Matthew 5:11. This is a multi-faceted thing that we are going to go through very quickly here. But I want you to see what God attaches heavenly reward to. He says in verse 11:

Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great.

More fun to pursue the money, you say. I think it is more fun to have a reward that doesn't fade away, even if it means earthly persecution. Look at 5:44 where Jesus says:

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Verse 46:

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?

The implication then is that there *is* reward for you when you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. When you manifest a godly response to those who are opposed to you, you are storing up rewards in heaven. To look at verses that we have talked about more recently, look at 6:4, where Jesus talks about secret giving. He says when your giving is in secret,

Your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Secret praying – verse 6:

When you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Verse 18 – we looked at it two weeks ago:

[Do your fasting in secret] *and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*

Just sticking with the book of Matthew but expanding the context out a little bit – turn to 10:41. This is all driving to a point. Jesus says:

He who receives a prophet, in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

One final verse – Matthew 25:40, where Jesus talks about visiting the prisoners and the sick and feeding the hungry and all of that – He says in verse 40:

The King will answer and say to them, "Truly, I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me."

This was after He had said in verse 34:

Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Consider this carefully, beloved; see the big picture on what we have talked about. Forget about whether there are 12 or 18 jewels in the crown, okay? Consider the big picture here: All of those verses speak to humble and sincere acts of righteousness that are done because God notices and rewards them. They flow from a pure and simple righteous life.

You store up treasures in heaven when you orient your life toward the simplicity of devotion to Christ. This doesn't require you to quit your job and go into fulltime ministry; it doesn't require anything big and flashy like that. It is rooted in the simple act of day-to-day life for the believer who loves Christ and wants to honor Him and give glory to God whether he eats or drinks or whatever he does – that is so precious! To think that this God of the universe, this God who commands the stars in their orbit, would say, "The thing that I want is the simplest thing that is accessible to the most humble believer in Christ."

It is not reserved for the lofty, it is not reserved for the person up front, it is not reserved for the wealthy. This reward, beloved – that is going to be exceeding abundantly beyond all you can ask or think – is accessible as you walk through life in a faithful way, whether anyone sees you or not. It is better *not* to have an accountability partner watching you as you do it.

You just have to remember something fundamental, beloved: As a Christian, you are not living for this earth; your goal, your home, lies beyond this life. Your life is hid with Christ in God and you are moving toward a heavenly home where all the values are going to be reversed and God will reward you for the things which men did not esteem. When

you took time away and were praying in private and no one noticed – and if they had, they would have said, “Why do you bother with that? There’s work to be done here” – God saw that and said, “Heavenly dividends in the bank of heaven” – big rewards as you are simply faithful to live out life in the presence of God.

The knowledge of that reward, beloved – and you have to orient your mind through the lines of scripture to be able to appreciate this because we are talking about things that cannot be seen – the knowledge of that reward is what helps you transcend earthly loss.

You look beyond your unfavorable circumstances – and for some of you, I know they are severe; I understand that, but the principle is still the same – you look beyond those unfavorable circumstances and discern the spiritual reward that comes from loving Christ. When you are conscious of loving Him, when you are conscious that He will never leave you nor forsake you, and you value that intimacy with Christ and that indestructible relationship in which no one can pluck you from His hand, and you have valued that above all else, you can shrug your shoulders at earthly loss and say, “That’s not what I’m living for anyway. I treasure something else, and that cannot be taken away, and my joy therefore is unassailable.”

When Martyn Lloyd-Jones was nearing the end of his life after several decades of faithful pulpit ministry, his ill health prevented him from preaching any longer. One of his friends commented to him, “Doctor, it must be difficult for you not to preach any more after so many years of ministry.” He shook his head and said, “No, not difficult at all. People don’t understand; it was never about the preaching for me.” For Martyn Lloyd-Jones, preaching was simply an overflow of his love for Christ and His kingdom. And when preaching was taken away, his love for Christ was undiminished. Preaching was an earthly treasure to him and so its loss did not diminish his joy.

Beloved, Jesus’ teaching here in this passage is absolutely foundational for the way that you approach life. Your response to these words frames the course of your entire life and helps determine the reward that you will know in eternity. It is rooted in simply loving Him and living out righteousness in daily life above all else.

Beloved, respond wisely, for where your treasure is, there also will be your heart. Let’s pray:

Help us, Lord Jesus – we are bound in human flesh and are surrounded by circumstances of this world. We are assaulted by the pride of life and the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh. We are surrounded by what the impact of the immediate future will be on our lives.

Help us, our Father, so that we would not treasure those earthly things, but help us, Father, to treasure those things that are heavenly, that You place value on, and to devote our energies toward that – content to let the world pass by, content to let opportunity dissolve into nothing, if that’s what it takes, O God, just so long as we could be found

faithful to You, treasuring that which You have commanded and treasuring that which will be our ultimate reward.

Yes, Father, we will know Him – we will know Christ; we will see Him face to face. May that be the consuming passion of our heart that orients the totality of everything that we do in life, so that our treasure will be with You in heaven rather than here on earth, where things are going to perish anyway.

Grant us grace that as we come to the end of this life, whether it is soon or whether it is decades away, Father, that we would have approached life and so ordered our priorities and so managed our own affections that our lives would be a testimony that it could be etched on our tombstone: “Here lies a man, here lies a woman, who stored up their treasures in heaven.” Grant us grace for that end, Father.

We pray in Jesus’ name, amen.

This transcript was prepared by Shari Main.