

ChristReformationChurch

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The Gospel According to Matthew

Christ is Our Treasure

June 17, 2018

Sermon Text: Matthew 6:19-24

Scripture Reading: Daniel 2:31-45

What was the central message Jesus preached? Most people would say, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." And certainly Jesus did call on people to repent and believe in Him for forgiveness of sins. But why? Why should we want our sins forgiven? The answer is, *because unless we are made righteous through faith in Jesus Christ, we will never see or enter the kingdom of God.* And it is this kingdom that is really the ultimate message Jesus preached:

Mat 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the

kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Mat 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Mat 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Mat 9:35 And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

Mat 10:7 And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

You could in fact say that the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God is the good news of the gospel and that apart from this truth the gospel really isn't the gospel. And yet, incredibly, it has been and continues to be neglected. Most Christians do not think at all about the kingdom of God. Which is to say, they do not think about the new creation. The new heavens and earth. The new Eden which is our eternal home. As a result, they are earth-bound. This present life and world absorbs their attention and energy. And they get into all kinds of troubles as a result.

Jesus has been describing for us, here in the sermon on the mount, what the citizens of the kingdom of heaven look like (the beatitudes) and just as importantly, what they do NOT look like (the hypocrites, scribes and Pharisees). So we have been hearing quite a lot in these past few weeks about the counterfeit "church" that makes up so much of what we call the visible church. [By the way, don't waste your time and energy trying to reform the counterfeit church. It will never reform. Jesus never tried. He exposed it, but he never worked to reform it].

Recall that last time Jesus identified the central motive of the counterfeit church – to be seen by and praise by men. You wonder why anyone would bother to be a Christian who is a phony? This is your answer. False religion provides a marvelous platform for being seen and praised by human beings. And to gain and exercise power and control for personal gain. Rome is the classic example but there are many, many, many little popes today as there always has been. We must not be duped by them.

Listen again now to Jesus as He continues to teach us about how to go about doing this:

Mat 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Here it is:

Mat 6:19-24 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, (20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

(22) "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, (23) but if

your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

(24) "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Alright then, let's zoom in on the first two verses:

6:19-21 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, (20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Treasure is a symbol of what we most value. What we make as an ultimate priority in our lives. Everyone has a treasure. The question is, is it really valuable or is it worthless? It turns out that most people are on a treasure hunt for something that is ultimately worthless.

When salvagers found a 300-year-old ship at the bottom of the Caribbean near the coast of Colombia three years ago, they claimed it was the "holy grail"

of shipwrecks—the legendary San Jose galleon, a Spanish ship rumored to contain up to \$17 billion in treasure. Now, the Associated Press reports, experts have identified the ship...and confirmed that it's the real deal.

Remains of the Spanish galleon were discovered in Colombia in 2015. But details of the find are only now being revealed with the permission of the Colombian government and agencies that have worked on the search operation.

The San Jose was launched in 1698 and served as part of the Spanish treasure fleet, a convoy of ships tasked with transporting valuable items from the Spanish Empire back to Spain. That was risky business: At the time, Spain and France were involved in the War of the Spanish Succession, a conflict that pitted the two countries against England and that involved attacks on Spanish trade vessels like the San Jose.

The massive, 64-gun galleon came under fire in 1708 and sank, its entire stash of emeralds, silver and gems intact.

Now, the wreck has finally been identified thanks to its cannons. The identifying details were discovered using the Woods Hole Oceanographic

Institution's REMUS 6000, an autonomous underwater vehicle. The REMUS surveyed the site from 30 feet above the wreck, said WHOI in a press release.

"The wreck was partially sediment-covered, but with the camera images from the lower altitude missions, we were able to see new details in the wreckage," Mike Purcell, the WHOI expedition leader, told the AP. "The resolution was good enough to make out the decorative carving on the cannons."

Those carvings, which feature elaborate dolphins, were then used to confirm the ship's identity.

The ID is expected to play into ongoing legal battles about the ship. Heralded as one of the most significant finds in archaeological history, the shipwreck immediately sparked a bitter battle over which entity discovered it first. Though the ship's coordinates have not been revealed for security reasons, the dispute includes a tussle over where the San Jose was found and when.

For the time being, the ship's loot remains at the bottom of the sea. UNESCO, the United Nations cultural agency, wants it to stay that way. Last month, reports the Associated Press,

the agency implored Colombia to preserve the treasure instead of selling it.

But with a worth rumored to be up to \$17 billion, the rightful owner of the wreck will no doubt be tempted to profit from it—no matter who that owner is.¹

Treasure seekers, you see. And what a treasure! \$17 billion! *But Jesus is telling us that such treasure is worthless!* That we should not seek it. And just a moment's sober reflection will tell you He is right. Think about it.

Of what use is that treasure to the King of Spain who was having it brought to him? Of what use it is to anyone who was on that ship? Not just today, but the moment it sank? Moths, rust, thieves, and sinking ships. Ultimately everything in this present world is destroyed by these things.

YOU are an eternal being. You have and are an eternal soul. This world is not eternal, and therefore if an eternal being makes a temporary world his treasure – a fool and his money is soon parted, as they say.

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

¹ Erin Blakemore, <https://www.history.com/news/shipwreck-treasure-discovery-san-jose>

Certainly, work with your hands. Work hard in order to make a living, to provide for yourself and others, to be able to be generous and ready to share. But Jesus is not talking here about the necessities of life. He speaking of *treasure*. That which we consider to be of ultimate worth. When it comes to this, we must be certain that the treasure we are pursuing is genuine. And here is the distinction:

- Treasures on earth
- Treasures in heaven

Earthly *treasures* are a foolish ultimate investment because, as Jesus told the rich fool –

Luk 12:19-21 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." (20) But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' (21) So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

How do we become “rich toward God” and thus have true treasure in heaven? The key is wrapped up in this matter of “God’s righteousness.” True righteousness. Being right in God’s sight and of course that righteousness only comes through faith in Christ.

But notice again that punch line principle Jesus stated:

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

Treasure is that which we love and give ultimate value to. That which we pour our energies into, seeking it. God requires our hearts. Our love and our worship. To treasure anything or anyone besides Him is to worship an idol. And that is precisely what we have in verse 24-

(24) "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

The Christian’s ultimate treasure, is Christ. If this is not true then such a person is not a Christian.

1Co 1:30-31 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, (31) so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

We boast in that which we treasure. Christ is our boast because He is our treasure. And this is what it means then to lay up treasure in heaven. It is to treasure Christ. To give Him

ultimate worth. To serve and obey Him.

Now, the world is always trying to draw our hearts away with its trinkets of treasure, right? And it can be rather easy to get off track and go after treasure that is not real treasure. *But we cannot serve God and money.* It is an impossibility.

1Ti 6:6-10 But godliness with contentment is great gain, (7) for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. (8) But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. (9) But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. (10) For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

The love of money, you see, is idolatry. It is love for this present world and it precludes love for God and pursuit of treasure that is true treasure. So this matter of what is our treasure *has eternal consequences for good or evil.*

Now, what in the world did Jesus mean by this:

(22) "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, (23) but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

Just as our eye is a kind of "lamp" which lets light in to hit our retinal and send all that image data to our brain so that we see, Jesus is speaking to us here about our "eye of understanding."

Eph 4:17-18 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. (18) They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.

It may well be that Jesus had this Old Testament passage in mind and expects us to remember it:

Isa 44:13-20 The carpenter stretches a line; he marks it out with a pencil. He shapes it with planes and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. (14) He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. (15) Then it becomes fuel for a man. He

takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it.

(16) Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!" (17) And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!"

(18) **They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand.** (19) No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" (20) He feeds on ashes; **a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"**

I want each one of us to seriously and honestly ask ourselves – *do I really have an eye to see what is true treasure, or am I feeding on ashes, worshiping and loving a treasure that is no treasure?*

This is what Jesus means. This woodcutter idol worshipper. This man with the bad eye. He is speaking of spiritual blindness. So that the person cannot see the glory of Christ:

2Co 4:4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Is Christ your treasure? Do you see Him? Do you long for Him above all else and yearn to enter His kingdom? Or are you blind to it all, chasing after what the world calls "treasure"? *Has Christ truly given YOU sight?*

Eph 1:16-18 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, (17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, (18) having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

These are the things Jesus wants us to think carefully about because if we miss this, as He says, *how great is the darkness* – not only now, but for all eternity! Moses had eyes to see:

Heb 11:23-26 By faith Moses, when he

was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. (24) By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (25) choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. (26) He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

Following Christ, treasuring Christ and His kingdom, in this world – is costly. How much money are treasure hunters spending right now in order to get their hands on that \$17 billion treasure at the bottom of the ocean? They probably are willing to take great risks because they want that treasure.

Well, following Christ as our treasure requires great risks – only in the end, it isn't risky at all because it is a certain reward! Following Christ is costly, yet in the end it is no cost at all. No one will ever enter His kingdom, see the glories of Christ and the New Creation, experience the resurrection and the reversal of every aspect of the curse, and say, hmmm..., well, I guess it was worth it. No! Rather, this is how it will go down:

Php 3:7-11 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

(8) Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (9) and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith-- (10) that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (11) that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.