

"The Proper View of Wealth"

Part 1

Matthew 6:19-34

Introduction: Before we get started on the section which is before us we need to do a short review to get our minds prepared for what we are about to look at.

In our study of the Sermon on the Mount we have been looking at Jesus teaching to His disciples about what is expected of those who belong to the King. Jesus teaching of His disciples has been in complete contrast to the teaching of the religious leaders of His day.

The theme of the Sermon on the Mount is found in one verse.

Matthew 5:20

²⁰ For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

So, the teaching and the lifestyles of the scribes and the Pharisees had poisoned the minds of the people around them and in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus was correcting the false teaching the religious leaders. Jesus completely destroyed their teaching and He then raised the standards to a higher level and explained to His disciples as kingdom people these were the standards expected of them.

In chapter **5:1-16** He explained to His disciples they needed to have the proper view of themselves. They were to be meek, broken and sorrowful over sin, merciful, pure, peace makers and long suffering.

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They were to be salt and light in contrast to the religious leaders who spreading corruption and leading people into darkness.

In chapter **5:17-19** His disciples were to hold to the Word of God as the absolute Truth in contrast to the religious leaders who were guilty of formulating their own standards out of their sinful minds.

Jesus went on in chapter **5:21-48** and He contrasted the theology of the religious leaders with True theology from the Word of God. The religious leaders were all about the externals. They had never murdered nor had they ever committed adultery so therefore they believed they were righteous before God. Jesus explained it was not about the externals but it was about an internal problem with the heart. He explained that the problem was not about what they did or did not do but it was about what they thought or did not think.

Jesus then talked about 3 practices of the believer's life in chapter **6:1-18**. He spoke on the subjects of giving, praying and fasting. The religious leaders had corrupted these practices also as they were motivated by pride. They were not sincere in their giving, praying or fasting for it was all done so that others would see them and view them as "religious" people.

This brings us up to where we are tonight in our study of the Sermon on the Mount. Just as the religious leaders had corrupted everything we looked in our review they also had poisoned the minds of the people of their day with their view of money. Therefore, Jesus is about to explain to His disciples as well as all other believers how we are to view money.

I. The Teaching of the Religious Leaders

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Before we can really understand the teaching we find in the verses which are before us we need to understand how the religious leaders viewed money.

The religious leaders were people who were motivated by greed.

Let us notice the words of Jesus in Luke:

Luke 16:13-14

¹³ No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

¹⁴ And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

Now there are several points I want us to get from these 2 verses:

- 1. The Pharisees or the religious leaders were a covetous group. They were never satisfied therefore they were always trying to scheme a way to extract more money from the people.**

Just to support that very thought let me remind you of the corruption which was happening within the temple.

Mark 11:15-18

¹⁵ And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

¹⁶ And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

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¹⁷ And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

¹⁸ And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

The religious leaders had set up a system where they sold animals for sacrifices at the temple to those whose animals did not meet the standards for sacrifice. It just happened the inspectors were the religious leaders and so for every animal they rejected they were able to sell one of their animals which was money in their pocket. I can just imagine that not many animals passed inspection and I can also imagine to buy one of their animals was to pay top dollar. This was all fueled by their covetousness.

2. They believed that riches were a sign that God was well pleased with them.

That is why when Jesus told them they could not serve God and mammon (money) they derided Him. The word "derided" means 'to turn up the nose at'. When Jesus made this statement the religious leaders refused to believe it because they believed that riches were a sign that God was pleased with them. We can see this in their reaction to another statement Jesus had made.

Matthew 19:23-25

²³ Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

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²⁴ And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

²⁵ When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

They were amazed because this was in complete contrast to what the religious leaders had taught.

All of this makes me ask a question, "Where did the religious leaders get their beliefs from?" Let us look at Deuteronomy 28 where God promised blessing on Israel for their obedience in the Land of Canaan.

Deuteronomy 28:1-4

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

² And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

³ Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.

⁴ Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

These promises were only promised for those who were walking in obedience to God's commandments. These verses did not apply to the religious leaders of Jesus day because they were far from being obedient to God's commands. They had formulated their own set of

rules and regulations. This passage however may have been their way of justifying their beliefs. It would be no surprise because they were always twisting God's Word to fit their sinful lifestyles. They again had twisted the Word in order to extract as much money as they could from the people around them.

They may also have misapplied a verse from Proverbs:

Proverbs 10:22

²² The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

So, the passage we are about to look at is set against the dark background of the false teaching of the religious leaders.

I. Where is your heart?

Part 1

Notice Matthew 6:19-24

The first thing we need to do as we come to this passage is to understand exactly what Jesus is addressing here. Before we get into the passage I want to take some time and consider what Jesus is NOT talking about here.

He is not saying that it is a sin to own things. I have heard people over the years that are always so critical of people who work hard and use their money for certain comforts of life. They look at what the worker buys and are quick to say it is wasteful. There is within certain people a bitterness and a jealousy toward those who have more than they do. I have often found it amazing how those who are bitter and jealous never see a problem with the fact that their wealth is greater than many

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others. I have even heard this passage quoted and used to attack the wealthy.

This passage before us does not mean that we are to feel guilty if we have more than someone else. It does not mean we are to give away everything we have and live in the streets taking handouts from those who come by.

But someone would say Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell all he had and give the money to the poor. He did tell him that but it was to address the greed within his heart which kept him from coming to God for the forgiveness of sin. It is also worthy to note that Jesus never said that to anyone else.

Notice Matthew 6:19

The meaning of the word "**treasures**" here will help us to understand what Jesus is saying. It is the very word we get the word "thesaurus" from and a "thesaurus" is "a treasury of words". I often use a thesaurus in my studies and it is an entire collection of words that are stored up.

So, when Jesus says we are not to lay up **treasures** upon earth He is referring to stock piling stuff that we do not use. He is telling us that we are not to invest in things which we stash away and never use. He is NOT saying that we cannot have a savings account or that we cannot have a retirement account or that we cannot have a life insurance policy. Those are things which will be used at a later time. He is referring to things which people buy and they stockpile just to know that they have them.

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To be more simplistic here, Jesus is talking about "luxuries". Now when I say luxuries many people would say that does not pertain to them because they have no luxuries. I say we all have luxuries when we compare what we have with the rest of the world. So this applies to every one of us.

Now there is nothing wrong with you and me owning a nice car or a home that is warm and comfortable. You say well are they not luxuries? They are but they are a part of our everyday lives. They are things which we use. He is talking here about laying up more than you will ever use. The idea behind Jesus' statement is that you will continue to stock pile and stash but with no intention of ever using it in our life or anyone else's life.

Let me show you the verse again;

Matthew 6:19

¹⁹Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Notice very closely the words I have underlined. Jesus is talking about stashing stuff that will not be used to help someone else but it is laid up for only us and there are no plans to use it but it just feels good to know it is there.

Let me show you a few verses that will help you to see that there is nothing wrong with owning possessions.

Deuteronomy 8:18

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¹⁸ But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

God gives to us the ability to work so we can buy things for this life.

1 Timothy 6:17

¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

God has given to us things of this world to enjoy.

But the problems come when we allow the sinful heart to follow after greed. It is then that we begin to grab all we can get. Years ago my wife and I went to an estate sale in Bedford. The lady had died and they were selling her possessions. She had rooms full of linens. She had curtains, towels, sheets and many other things. She filled rooms with the linens and they were still in the original packaging. She had so much stuff she would have never been able to use it all in 2 lifetimes. I did not know her but I can almost say for sure that her treasure was her collection of linens and it controlled her heart. That is what Jesus is warning against here in this section.

We would look at that woman who collected the linens and say how foolish but if we are not careful it can happen to us. We gather more and more and then we have to build bigger buildings or buy safes to store our stuff.

Conclusion:

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Next week we will get into the passage much deeper but we needed this study to set the stage for what we are about to study. In closing I want to share with you something that will help us to keep things in their proper places.

This came from a website called everydaysteward.com...

Mr. And Mrs. Thing
May 2004 - eNewsletter

by Anonymous

Mr. and Mrs. Thing are a very pleasant and successful couple. At least, that is the verdict of most people who tend to measure success with a "thingometer." When the "thingometer" is put to work in the life of Mr. and Mrs. Thing, the result is startling. There he is sitting down on a luxurious and very expensive thing, almost hidden by a large number of other things. Things to sit on, things to sit at, things to cook on, things to eat from, all shining and new.

Things, things, things. Things to clean with and things to wash with and things to clean and things to wash. And things to amuse, and things to give pleasure and things to watch and things to play. Things for the long, hot summer, and things for the short cold winter. Things for the big thing in which they live and things for the garden and things for the lounge and things for the kitchen and things for the bedroom. And things on four wheels and things on two wheels and things to put on top of the four wheels and things to pull behind the four wheels and things to add to the interior of the things on four wheels. Things, things, things. And there in the middle are Mr. and Mrs. Thing smiling and pleased pink with things, thinking of more things to add to their things. Secure in their castle of things.

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Well Mr. Thing, I have some bad news for you. Oh, you say you cannot hear me because the things are in the way? Well, I just want you to know that your things cannot last. They are going to pass. There's going to be an end to them. Oh, maybe an error in judgment, maybe a temporary loss of concentration, or maybe you'll just pass them off to the secondhand thing dealer. Or maybe they'll wind up a mass of mangled metal being towed off to the thing yard. And what about all the things in your house?

Well, it's time for bed. Put out the cat, make sure you lock the door, to make sure some thing taker doesn't come and take your things. And that is the way life goes, doesn't it? And some day, when you die, they only put one thing in the box. You.