

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

A Sermon for the Family of God

Matthew 6:19-34

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October 20, 2017

Jeff: Our heavenly Father, we are thankful, thankful to be here and thankful for Your grace, and Father, to be reminded of Martin Luther and the Reformation and that time of real light in the history of the church when there was so much darkness. It's refreshing to the soul. Father, we pray that You will remind us of the great truths of the Reformation, that they might penetrate deeply into our hearts, just like Your Holy Spirit worked in us to bring about new life. Remind us, Father, of those truths that brought that life about in us, that are embodied in the Spirit's work. Father, we pray that You will continue to bless us as we study Your word. We know that studying Your word is a means of grace and that it changes us, that it brings about Christ's image in us. And so we pray that You would continue to do things in us through teaching and through the ministry of Your word that we encounter throughout the week and on the Lord's Day, things that will last for all eternity.

Father, in the meantime we know that we walk the path of humiliation, and that life is sometimes and often difficult. Father, we pray that You will be with Alfred. We pray for that man as he struggles through the death, the loss of his three-year-old daughter. We not only pray for Alfred, but for his dear wife and the mother of this little girl. How much pain she must be in without her husband near to her side! We know not, and yet we pray, Lord, that Your Holy Spirit would comfort her in the midst of this grief. We give this family to You, asking that You will bless and keep them.

Father, we pray for Bill and Sue. We ask that Your hand would be upon them for good. Father, we pray for Sarah. And Father, we pray that the doctors would be able to find out what it is that's happening in her, causing her to have these fainting episodes. We do pray for continued healing for past falls. Father, we pray for wisdom and discernment on the part of the doctors. And we pray, Father, that You will grant wisdom in the face of future possible episodes, that they might be averted. And Father, we pray for Your hand to be upon this family as they work through this difficult time.

Father, we pray for our brother Bruce. We ask that You would use this surgery in his life to bring about healing and real pain removal. Father, we just pray that You will see him through this. We pray that he'll be able to stand for prolonged periods of time without difficulty. We pray, Father, for his health and well-being and for his life as well. Father, we ask now that You would help us to turn our attention to Your word and bless us in the study of it. For we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. Well let me turn your attention once again to The Sermon on the Mount. And today we're going to be looking at another section in the sermon. But I want to remind you that this is our plan. And we are in class 4. So we are looking at lessons in loving God, and that's revisited. Last time we looked at lessons in loving God, and previous to that lessons in loving others, and then, previous to that, an overview of The

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

Sermon on the Mount with a little bit of exploration of Matthew’s Gospel and the Beatitudes.

And so The Sermon on the Mount looks like this. Again it’s the same as the outline. The introduction is in 5:1 and 2, with the Beatitudes in 5:3-16 with a little bit of extra there. Loving neighbor is 5:17-48, loving God in 6:1-18. Today we’re going to be looking at loving God again in 6:19-34. We’ll return to loving neighbor in 7:1-12. Then there are warnings in 7:13-27, and then our conclusion is 7:28-8:1. So this is a nice way of looking at this sermon. I think it’s a helpful way of remembering The Sermon on the Mount. And today we’re going to look at 6:19-34.

So why don’t we turn our attention there? And does somebody have a strong, clear voice who would like to read it? Sure, Don, go ahead. 6:19-34. Thank you.

Don: You’re welcome. *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, 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 in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

“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.

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet Your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

“And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Let me begin by asking you men a question, simply this. Is there a connection between our spiritual well-being and our money?

Participant: Yep.

Jeff: Okay. Next point? *(Laughter)* Yes, I think there is. But I just want to take a very brief period of time and walk through the different ways in which people think about that. I want to compare one end of the spectrum, perhaps the most extreme end of the

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

spectrum, the end of the spectrum where we might say that well, this may in some ways be outside of the pale of where we are. And then I want to take the other end of the spectrum, which would be the Scriptures at this point.

So let me just give you these. And I’m not going to tell you the source of these quotes. These are people that you know well if you watch any sort of Christian TV. But I’ll give you some quotes. And as you can see, these are bad eggs, at least in my understanding of things.

This one. *“Give ten dollars and receive a thousand. Give a thousand and receive a hundred thousand. In short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal.”*

Transcriber’s Note: Mark 10:29-30, NKJV. *“So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.’”*

Men: Oh!

Jeff: All right. So, you know, if you gave ten bucks today, then you can expect a thousand bucks in your pocket at some point in the very near future, okay? How about this one. *“God wants us to prosper financially and to have plenty of money, and to fulfill the destiny He has laid out for us.”* All right, I’m still on this track. I haven’t seen it come to fruition yet. *(Laughter)* But whatever, you know?

How about this one? *“Since God’s covenant has been established, and prosperity is a provision of this covenant, you need to realize that prosperity belongs to you now.”*

All right. I’m not really interested in talking to you about those quotes. If those quotes are quotes that you really buy into,-- let’s go to the next one. *(Laughter)*

Some good eggs. How about some good eggs? John the Baptist is a good egg, isn’t he?

Participant: Yes.

Jeff: How should we show the fruit of repentance is the question that’s put to him. And what does he say? In Luke 3:11 he says to share clothes and food with the poor. In 3:13 he says to the tax man, “Don’t put extra money in your pocket. Be content with what you have,” and the same for the soldier. “Be content with your wages.”

The repentance of Zacchaeus. Luke 19:18. *“Look, Lord! I will give half of my goods to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.”* Jesus’ response? *“Today salvation has come to this house.”*

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Look at this quote from Paul. *“Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*

In my estimation, the quotes we saw earlier and the quotes we see in the Gospel are like oil and water. They don’t mesh together; they don’t work together. But the Bible and those quotes do have one thing in common, one very serious thing in common. And that

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

is this. The Bible affirms that there is a very serious connection between our spiritual well-being and our money.

So I rushed through that because basically there are better things to study than that. But that really does help us to understand that no matter where we are on the spectrum, the Bible connects spiritual health to the way we handle our resources, okay?

I want to look really briefly at the structure of this particular section of The Sermon on the Mount. I want you to notice a couple of different things from a couple of different angles.

If you remember, in 5:20 we had a section on righteousness. And you can just glance back there if you'd like. 5:20 was when Jesus was talking to the Scribes and the Pharisees. And he talked about the righteousness that ought to exceed the Scribes and the Pharisees. In 6:1 He also talks about putting this righteousness into practice. Those are the two sections that we've looked at already.

We have two sections remaining. Interestingly, one is about treasure and the other one is about judging. Now I think that when you put it in this sort of way, you get the idea that righteousness and judging and righteousness and treasure intersect. In other words, we're dealing with a sermon that's about righteousness. And so I think that we need to keep that always in mind.

Remember what Matthew's Gospel told us. Matthew's Gospel told us that Jesus came *“to fulfill all righteousness.”* And we who are lacking in righteousness receive what is offered in righteousness in the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith. That was what we learned in Matthew 9.

So what about this structure? I want you to look at this. We're going to break this apart. In 6:19-21 we're going to find what I call *the treasure principle*. In 6:22-24 we're going to look at *a parable of the eye*. And in 6:25-34 we're going to look at some *encouragements*.

Now that's the section we're going to look at today. But there's one more section. Remember, it's *loving neighbor* that we're going to look at next time. And here it is: 7:1-12.

Now get a load of this. 7:1 and 2 is about judging. 7:3-6 has a parable of the eye in it. And 7:7-12 is about encouragement. So in the same way that the previous sections matched one another, these sections match each other as well.

So I just want you to notice the highly structured way in which The Sermon on the Mount is laid out for us. You would think that the Holy Spirit is inspiring this thing! *(Laughter)* I digress. *(Laughter)* So this is the very thing that we're looking at. It's the very thing that was in the left-hand column.

Transcriber's Note: Refer to the Lesson Plan for this week on our website under the current Bible Study:

<http://www.bravemen.org/BravemenBlog/2017/09/the-sermon-to-the-family-of-god/>

Jeff: 6:19-21, the treasure principle. 6:22-24, the parable of the eye. 6:25-34 is for our encouragement. And it's related to this.

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

And so what is *the treasure principle*? The treasure principle is *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, ... but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”* You can see why I call it *the treasure principle*.

Now when we look at the treasure principle, we need to understand something. We need to understand that the treasure principle and its meaning has to be uncovered by the analogy of Scripture. In other words, Scripture interprets Scripture.

Now the way in which that’s often used is that less clear portions of Scripture are interpreted by more clear Scriptures in order to shed light on those less clear passages. So we’re going to employ the analogy of Scripture in the way that we look at the treasure principle this morning. Scripture is Scripture’s best interpreter. More clear passages interpret less clear passages.

Let’s take the first half of the treasure principle. *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth.”* What does that mean? What does it mean? *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth?”* Well, Luke 12:13-34 gives us an idea of what that passage means. Let’s go there for a second. Luke chapter 12, verses 13-34.

Now I’m not going to read all of this. But I am going to read a portion of it. And I want you to notice that in this passage you find the “do not be anxious” passage that we have in our Sermon on the Mount. And so it’s connected. There’s a sense in which this passage helps us to interpret the previous passage.

Look at verse 13. *“Someone in the crowd said to Him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’ But He said to him, ‘Man, who made Me a judge or an arbiter over you?’ And He said to them, ‘Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.’*

“And He told them a parable, saying, ‘The land of a rich man produced plentifully. And he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Relax, eat, drink and be merry.’”

“‘But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you. And the things you have prepared, who’s will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.’”

So *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth.”* The idea then is that we are not to store up for ourselves. Let me put it this way. We are not to build our kingdom here on earth, okay? Verses 20 and 21. *“God said to him, ‘You fool! This night your life will be demanded of you.’”*

Now I need you to know something. Let’s just pause for a second. And let’s remember that money is not inherently evil. It’s not inherently evil. In fact, let me tell you something about the Puritans. The Puritans used to have this philosophy that said, “Let’s make all the money we can so that we can bless others with it.” And that’s where the Puritan work ethic comes from.

So money is not inherently evil. What happened to my house?

Transcriber’s Note: A cartoon.

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

Jeff: I don't know what happened to my house. But earthly wealth without gospel riches is disastrous.

Participant: Right.

Transcriber's Note: A picture of Ebenezer Scrooge.

Jeff: Scrooge! (*Laughter*) Hebrews 13:5 is clear warning. *“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.”* 1 Timothy 6:9. *“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare.”* James 5:2-3. *“Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and your silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.”*

Again, the idea here is that if you invest yourself in building your own empire for your own sake, and you don't have gospel riches, then you're heaping up treasure for yourself against the day of wrath. So *“store up for yourselves treasures in heaven”* is the second half of this principle. *“Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”*

The natural question, I think, is *how?* It's easy enough to understand how we store up for ourselves treasures on earth. But how do we store up for ourselves treasures in heaven? I think that's the more difficult question to answer.

Well, Luke 12 again. What does He say in verses 33 and 34? *“Sell your possessions and give to charity. Make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: So the idea then is this. Now I think I need to pause at this point and say as well that there's a sense in which you need to understand that the Puritans were right. The Puritans said, “I'm going to try to be prosperous so that I can try to be generous.” But you have to have something in order to be generous. Remember Barnabas, who gave land to the church that they might use it, that they might sell it and use it? He had to have land in order to give it to the church, right? So there's a sense in which you need to think wisely about what the Scriptures say about this sort of thing.

How about this? Matthew 19—the rich young ruler. You know the story, right? You know the story. A man comes to Jesus and says, *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

I don't know if you're familiar with this story. But the interesting thing about what Jesus is doing in this story is what? He's trying to say to the young man—not trying; Jesus doesn't try to do anything! (*Laughter*) Look at Matthew 19 for a minute.

“Why do you ask Me about what is good? There is only One who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” And what does the young man say?

Men: I have.

Participant: Which one?

Jeff: Yes! He says, *“Which ones?”* And Jesus gives him some commandments. And the young man said, *“All these I have kept. What do I still lack?”*

And Jesus says, “Well, let's take a shot at it”, right? (*Laughter*) What does He say? He says, *“Sell all you have and give to the poor.”* What is He telling him to do? He's telling him “love your neighbor. Come and follow Me.” Love the LORD your God with all your

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

heart. Do the summation of the commandments. Love your neighbor and love the LORD your God.

“That’s what you lack.” He’s telling the young man, “You don’t even realize that you haven’t kept these commandments. Now here’s an extreme way of Me telling you to keep these commandments. Go and do it. If you’ve already done that, this will be no problem for you.” And the young man goes away sad? Why? Because he has all these possessions.

And this is the result of that. Jesus says that it’s really difficult for a rich man to get through the gates of heaven. This is the picture of a camel and a needle. And the needle looks as big as the camel, but it’s not the scale. All right. *“If you want to be perfect, go and sell what you have and give to the poor.”* And this is the phrase that I want you to catch. *“And you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow Me.”*

So all of a sudden we’re starting to realize what it is to accumulate treasure in heaven. Treasure in heaven is accumulated when we what? When we are generous toward others. Okay? So when I’m generous toward others, I’m accruing treasure in heaven.

So here’s a summary of those two principles. Rather than building heaven on earth through earthly treasures, use your earthly treasures in order to store up treasure in heaven by being what? By being generous.

All right now. Wise needed that background in order to get what we’re going to get now. This is actually the best part of the whole day, right? When we look at this passage, this is neat stuff!

Let me just stop talking. Let me ask you this. *“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”*

Now here’s the question I have for you, okay? The question I have for you is in this challenge. What does this mean? What does it mean that the lamp of the body is the eye? What’s the interpretation of that particular text?

Take a look at it again. *“The lamp of the body is the eye.”* Then He goes on to talk about what that means. What’s the interpretation? I’m going to give you some that I’ve accumulated from different commentaries. See if they resonate with you. And I want you to tell me if I’ve missed any that ought to belong on the list, okay?

How about that one—*outlook on the world?* *“The eye is the lamp of the body.”* So this is our outlook on the world. Our eyes, the way we look at the world, casts light onto the world and gives us a better view of the world. Okay, that’s one way to look at it.

The other way to look at it is to look at it the reverse way and ask the question. What do you let into your body through your eyes? So that reverses it, doesn’t it? The light isn’t cast out. Now the darkness comes in. The light can come in too, but—

Participant: It doesn’t.

Jeff: Yes. What comes in? The other one just asks what you see. What do you see out there? What are you seeing?

The other one says that the eye either beholds God or idols. Another way of looking at it is that it’s a way of expressing our moral condition. This is Jesus, and what is Jesus

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

doing? Jesus is just helping us to understand our moral situation. The other one is just to say that the eye is a lamp. I think that’s uncreative. (*Laughter*) It’s not very helpful.

All right. Here is the question. The question is what does this mean? Well I’m going to give you an interpretation of what this means. But I want you to remember. I want you to go back to Matthew chapter 6 for a minute and look at verse 19. And I want you to remember that we just laid out the treasure principle. And now in verse 22 we’re looking at this next section.

Now the question that we have to ask ourselves is how does what we’re looking at here relate to what we were looking at earlier with the treasure principle? As we remember the treasure principle, the treasure principle said, “Do not store up treasures on earth, but store up treasures in heaven.” And we understood what it meant to store up treasures on earth. The question is how do we store up treasure in heaven? Through our generosity.

Now how does what we’re looking at here through the eye relate back to that? The eye is the lamp of the body. Okay, I’m going to show you some passages using the analogy of Scripture that I hope will open up for you a sense of what this means.

Look at this one. Deuteronomy 15:9. *“Beware, lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand’, and your eye be evil against your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you.”* To have an evil eye in this particular text seems to be lacking in generosity toward your brother. Okay? Got that?

How about this one? How about this proverb? Proverbs 28:22. *“A man with an evil eye hastens after riches.”* A man with an evil eye is not generous. He hastens after riches.

How about this one? Proverbs 23:6. *“Do not eat the bread of a selfish man.”* It’s literally *“one who has an evil eye.”* Why? Because you’ve been in those situations where people say, “I’ll give you this. But you’ll owe me if you take it.” Right? Do not eat the bread of a selfish man, or one who has an evil eye. He’s lacking in generosity. And if he’s lacking in generosity, then you will be captive to him. Again, the evil eye indicates a lack of generosity.

All right, think about this. What about this one? This is worth going to. Look at this. Woo-hoo! I’m telling you! Matthew 20, the text we’re looking at. Matthew’s Gospel. You’ll remember this. This is the vineyard owner. The vineyard owner goes and what does he do? He goes to the gates. “Hey, I have some people to come and work in the vineyard.” It’s the beginning of the day, right? He eyes them and what does he tell them he’ll give them? Do you remember? He tells them that he’ll give them a day’s wages. And then they go and work in the field.

He realizes that he needs some other workers. So he goes and he hires some more workers. He realizes that he needs some more workers. So he goes and hires more workers. What is he paying all these workers?

Participant: The same wages.

Jeff: Even an hour before closing time he goes out and hires more workers. He pays them the same wage. They all come back to him. It’s time for them to get paid.

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

He says, “All right, line up!” And all of a sudden the people who were working all day long realize that they’re getting paid the same amount as the person who got paid for working an hour. And they say, “Whoa, wait a minute! What’s going on here?”

And do you remember what the landowner says? The landowner says this in verse 15. *“Is it lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious”*—evil—*“because I am generous?”*—literally, good?

Oh, man! All of a sudden the treasure principle comes into focus, doesn’t it? All of a sudden we begin to understand in a fresh new way what Jesus is talking about when he talks about the eye being the lamp of the body, right? All of a sudden, *“the lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is good,”*—or generous,—*“your whole body is full of light.”* In other words, there’s a spiritual health.

Now this isn’t the only indicator of spiritual health. But this is certainly an indicator of spiritual health. And so if your eye is generous, if your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. In other words, you have an indicator that you have spiritual health. *“But if your eye is bad,”*—or evil, lacking in generosity,—*“your whole body is full of darkness.”* Again, it’s another indicator.

Now I want you to think about this. When you think about this, you need to understand the context here. When Jesus is saying that your body is full of darkness, what He is saying is this. You know, there may be other areas of your life where you’re seeing fine. But isn’t it true that all of us have certain areas in our lives that we need to put to death? Sin remains. And Jesus is coming at us in this particular area.

Isn’t it interesting that it goes back in the tithing, really? Go ahead, please.

Participant: You know, science today says that the eye is a door to our brain.

Jeff: Okay.

Participant: So it has a lot to do with the way that we think and how our minds usually are. The eye really expresses what we think, what is going on in our hearts.

Jeff: Yes, you know, like the expressive nature of the eye. Somebody says, “I’d rather meet with you in person.” They want to get the idea from you of what’s going on behind the eyes. They want to see you through the eyes.

So here’s the thing, though. You might say something like this to me. You might say, “You know, this seems to be oriented toward my neighbor. And I thought that what you were doing was to help me see loving God,” right? I know that’s what you’re asking. *(Laughter)*

Look back again at Matthew chapter 6. So we have Matthew 6:19-21. *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.”* And then we have verses 22-23, which tell us that there’s a generosity that we need if we’re going to lay up treasure in heaven. But now look at this. Look further.

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 the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Money.”* And all of a sudden, you’re going, “Oh, wow!”

Jesus is talking about our neighbor. But He’s driving it back. He’s not just telling us that it ends with our neighbor. He’s driving this whole thing back to God Himself. And is wealth our idol, or is God our God? It’s God versus cash, right?

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

Now does that make sense?

Participant: Yes.

Jeff: All right. So what’s the encouragement? The encouragement is fairly simple. But the encouragement is actually—Oh yes, Sig?

Sig: Before you get into encouragement, you know, my evil, sinful, selfish mind is thinking, Okay. I buy into this concept. How do I lay up treasure in heaven? You say it’s by being generous. So I can get into heaven someday, hopefully by the grace of Christ, and find out that my account is pretty low, or that there isn’t much there. You can go over and sit in the cheap seats. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: You know, that’s a great question. I think that’s a terrific question. We have a couple minutes. Let me just work through this.

So I think that if wealth has become your idol, your profession is false, right? I mean, that’s clear. You’ve already violated the first commandment. You have another god besides the one true God.

But let’s think now about the Christian. And let’s say that the profession is not false. But let’s say that we’re lacking in generosity at times. I know that’s none of you. *(Laughter)* Isn’t that the way a preacher does it? No, no, no, I’m not talking about you! *(Laughter)* I’m talking about them. *(Laughter)* They’re lacking in generosity. So let’s think about those who are outside and how those Christians out there sometimes lack generosity.

Participant: They’re the ones who didn’t show up today. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: It’s the ones who didn’t show up. *(Laughter)* So what about that? Let me ask you a question. Isn’t it true that we sin in word, thought and deed daily, and yet are still saved by grace? But the problem is the presence of sin, not the power of sin. If the power of sin remains in us, then we’re still citizens of the kingdom of darkness and slaves to sin. But if Christ’s power has conquered the power of sin and death, and we’ve been translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love and into the kingdom of light, then there’s a new power at work in our lives which brought about the spiritual resurrection that we enjoy by the Spirit. But the presence of sin remains. And we need to continually put the presence of sin, of the old man, to death in our lives. And so my lack of generosity says that I’m idolatrous if I’m not a believer. But if I’m a Christian who is struggling with generosity, that’s a sin I’m struggling to put to death in my life.

So first of all, does that make sense?

Participant: Yes. But I want to get to heaven and have a big seat in the front row.

Jeff: All right. Yeah. *(Laughter)*

Participant: I think that one of the problems we have, Sig, is that we operate on calculated generosity. Am I up to ten percent yet? No, I’m over ten percent. I’m in! No. I like what R. G. Laterno said. He was a great industrialist. He said, *“The 90/10% rule is great!”* So we think that—

Participant: How much is that for you, Tom? *(Laughter)*

Tom: How about the widow in Mark 12? There’s a good example.

Jeff: Hey, hey, hey! Here’s the deal.

Participant: That’s unrealistic. The guy had millions.

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

Jeff: No, no, no! Listen! Let me read to you from the apostle Paul. Will you be quiet for him? *(Laughter)* “*I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.*”

Now remember what he’s been doing. He has been comparing the Macedonians, the Philippians, and their giving. Remember that they gave out of their poverty. He’s been comparing them to the Corinthians. That’s who he’s comparing.

“*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Now this is what—you get it? This is so unbelievable! *(Laughter)* “*You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich. And in this manner I give you my judgment. This benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work, but also to desire to do it.*” In other words, to desire to take up a collection for those in Jerusalem. “*So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written: ‘They who gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.’*” Now here’s what he’s saying.

Participant: Where was that from?

Jeff: That’s 2 Corinthians 8.

Participant: Thank you.

Jeff: Now you see what he’s saying. He’s not saying, “Everybody give ten per cent. You started this, you finish it. Cough up ten.” What he does is that he says, “Hey, just at the outset, let me just remind everybody how much Christ gave to you,” right? So give what is in your heart to give. “*Not under compulsion.*” He says this here in this particular text. But give out of the freeness of your heart.

Now let me walk you through what this means. And so, like Tom was saying, he doesn’t put percentages on there. Somebody will ask me. Inevitably somebody will say, “Yeah, but.” And I’ll say, “Well look. You know, ten per cent is a good place to start.” But usually when you say that to people, what happens is that they have ten per cent fixed in their minds. And, you know, I say that the principle of the New Testament is to give out of grace. Give out of what you receive from the Lord. That’s how I do it.

Participant: A question for Sig. I mean, if we look at it as I want to get this in heaven, and I’m doing these things to store up treasure in heaven and I want to get a better seat, my question is this. Is that really the right question or the right motivation? What I think what might be missing in that is that God’s grace is sufficient in the work of Christ that is giving this to us. The Lord truly is manifesting that which Christ gave us. Now Christ gives us all different giftedness. And so some might give gloriously. But that’s that giftedness. And I think that you might be aligning a couple things that might not be aligned correctly. It’s all about the motivation, right?

Jeff: Yes. You’re thinking about rewards in heaven. Is that what you’re thinking about?

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

Sig: Well no. I was just concerned that I might have missed something, and that if I’m going to build up treasures in heaven, I thought of this. I don’t have any problem being generous.

Jeff: Yes.

Sig: I mean my wife doesn’t think I make enough anyhow. *(Laughter)* All I’m saying is that I don’t want to miss out on something. I know; I agree with you, Brian. It’s the grace of God. If it isn’t the grace of God, I’m in trouble.

Jeff: Yes.

Sig: But on the other hand, what does it mean to build up treasure in heaven? I thought the reward was being in the presence of God.

Jeff: So let me frame it this way: building up treasure in heaven is being who we are in Jesus Christ.

Participant: There you go.

Jeff: Right? If I am being who I am in Christ, then this is one way in which I am storing up treasure for myself. And what I’m doing is this. Here’s another way to think about it.

The other way to think about it is this. Do you know how James talks about our works, and he seems to be contrasting against Paul? And everybody gets their shorts in a bunch because they think James is teaching a works righteousness when he’s really not. He’s just saying that the outflow of who we are in Christ vindicates us, or stands there and says yes. His profession is true. That’s the idea. My generosity is just evidence that Christ has saved me wholly by grace. That’s the idea. Okay?

All right. So let’s just talk for just a minute about the encouragements. I want you to think about this. How are verses 25-34 often understood? How is it applied? It’s often applied as if it stands alone. But this is the encouragement that connects back with what we’ve already looked at. So we need to understand these verses in light of three things—context, context, and you guessed it—context. Okay, that was going to be more funny if we had more time. *(Laughter)*

Think about it—the general revelation of God, right? He takes care of the birds. He takes care of the fields, because you know what this person is asking. This person is asking, “Wait a minute! If I store up treasure for myself in heaven by being generous, what is going to happen to me?”, right? And So Jesus says, “Doesn’t your heavenly Father take care of the birds who are much less important than you are? Doesn’t He clothe the field with beautiful flowers?” So He says what? He says, “Don’t chase after those things that the pagans do.” Remember, three times he says in this passage that God is your Father.

Remember how we transitioned from Jesus the Son to the fact that we become sons through His righteousness. God is now our Father. So He says to us, look! Do not fear! If you’re serving God rather than wealth, if God is your God, and you’re storing up for yourselves treasure in heaven by being generous toward others, your heavenly Father is going to care for you. That’s how these verses fit with the previous ones that come before.

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

So that’s why He says to seek the Kingdom today, rather than worrying about tomorrow. Store up for yourselves treasure in heaven. So, just quickly, that’s how they fit together. Yes please, Tom?

Tom: I think that sometimes we can get stuck on being generous equated to money. It could be giving of your time and your talent.

Jeff: Yes.

Tom: And then you don’t want to go and help your neighbor because you want to cut your own grass, or because you have to do something else. And so when you’re giving out of the lack of what you have, it doesn’t have to be money.

Jeff: Yes, that’s very true. And there are other passages that kind of link into that idea. I think the talents open it up a little more than just the money.

Participant: You know, Matthew 25 is a big part of this in connection with when did we see you, and so forth? When you gave to the poor.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: Just do a study on the word *poor* all through the Bible. And we have really missed the point. We think we want to give our money to the LORD. And yet it says all through the Bible, in the Law, that you are to leave part of your fields for the poor.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: The poor were always in the mind of God. The words of Christ. “What you’ve done to the poor you’ve done to Me.”

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And we’ve missed it.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: The church has given that responsibility to the state.

Jeff: Yes. They really did that at the end of the Second Great Awakening. That was when the church was involved in all kinds of social campaigns. And then after that they relinquished them all to the state.

Participant: This whole message deals with focus. Achan in the book of Joshua in Jericho was the perfect example of this. He took his focus off of God. God said, “All those possessions are Mine.” And what did he gain? What good did it do him? It cost him 36 men at the next city, Ai, and it cost him his entire family. And what did he do with the treasure? He put it under the tent. It did him no good. So all of this says to focus on Christ, and you’ll have everything you need. And when I tell you to give time, talent, money, a shoulder, whatever, then you do it and you will receive My treasure. It was what, two or three thousand years before he wrote this? Achan fouls up and we have a perfect example. That Old Testament works.

Jeff: I know, It does seem to work, doesn’t it? (*Laughter*) anybody else?

Participant: It was just one Author.

Jeff: It was. It does seem like that. (*Laughter*) I mean a crazy kind of thing.

Participant: What did Bill say?

Jeff: He said that it seems like there was one Author to this whole thing. (*Laughter*) It’s kind of crazy. It does feel like that.

“Where Your Treasure Is . . .”

Well let's pray. Father, thank You for this day. Lord, we pray that You'll impress the teaching of this passage onto our hearts and our minds. Father, make us to be mindful of the need for a good eye. And so, Father, let us then follow You in this, for we ask it in Christ's name. amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)