

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *Treasures*
SERIES: *Whoever Hears These Words*
SCRIPTURES: *Matthew 6:19-24*
SPEAKER: *Shaun Kipe*
DATE: *7 - 28 - 2019*

**Credit to Scot McKnight John Ortberg, Ron Sider for valuable insights regarding this message!*

Well good morning, it is so great to worship with you.

This morning we're coming to the end of our second section of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (**whoever hears these words title slide.**)

Anybody in here a savor, a packrat, a hoarder. That's me. Most things in my life carry sentimental value, and I'm always afraid that if I throw them away, or get rid of them it's like throwing the memory away with it. And so I keep everything.

I'll just show you some of the things I've kept. We might say these are some of my earthly treasures.

Jesus says...

Matthew 6:19-24 - ¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin (rust) destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, 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. If your eyes are healthy,^[d] your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are unhealthy,^[d] your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness.

24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Today we want to talk about having a proper perspective of our stuff, the things that we treasure. The things that we value. What we place our time, energy, money into acquiring.

It is good to keep in mind that in the sermon on the mount, Jesus is speaking to a diverse crowd. Many of them the poor, the taken-advantage of, the outcasts. But also to those who are wealthy, successful. No doubt as he spoke these words, the crowds could picture the homes and villas of the wealthier Jews and Romans. No doubt they were aware of the “heated” Roman baths (**PIC**) the Herod had built. Quite an amazing feat in that day.

Jesus on the other hand seems to have had very little. As a traveling teacher, often without permanent home. The food he ate mostly coming through fishing, farming or donations.

Scot McKnight, we’ve been using his book on the Sermon on the Mount as one of our primary resources. In his section talking about treasure, he asks this question...kind of hit me between the eyes. Made me feel a little bit uncomfortable. And I’d rather not be uncomfortable alone, so I’ll share it with you, so we can all sit uncomfortably together:

How do we, the affluent, follow Jesus, a poor man?

Ron Sider says something very similar...

“Christians in the United States live in one of the richest societies in the history of the world. Surrounded by a billion desperately needy neighbors and another two billion who are poor. We are far more interested in whether the economy grows than in whether the lot of the poor improves.” (Sider 93)

Because in truth, we North American’s, relatively speaking are the wealthiest nation that has ever existed. We are those who in today’s society have “heated baths.”

So this section of Jesus sermon is written for you and me, it’s all about the necessity of disciples of Jesus to disentangle themselves from possessions.

So let’s talk about our...

I. Earthly treasures and how they entangle us.

“Don’t store up treasures on earth. Where moth and vermin destroy”...first thing you need to know about your earthly treasures.

A. Treasures on earth are temporary.

Most of the stuff you own is on its way to becoming trash. Have you thought about this, the only thing separating the treasures you have now from the transfer station is...time? Everything you buy, inherit, acquire is on its way to the garbage dump.

This is why when you go to the grocery store almost every item you buy has an “Expiration date.” Think about that. Its kind like a little reminder to you. This won’t last.

The jeans you got for Christmas, starting to wear out. The shoes you bought, on Amazon wearing out? The moment you drove your new car off the lot, it was wearing out? The moment you walked out of AT&T/Verizon with your new phone, it's outdated and it's was wearing out. The groceries in your fridge, wearing out. Your refrigerator itself, wearing out. The person sitting next you...they are wearing out!

I'm not much of a stock market person myself, but every once I have daydreamed to myself...maybe you do too: What if I'd have known that company was going to soar? Like Amazon or Facebook. What if I would have purchased stock in that company? John Ortberg describes it this way, he says take...*for example **IBM (PIC OF IBM SYMBOL)**. IBM first got listed on the New York Stock Exchange in 1915. He says, think about it: If you had acquired one share of IBM stock on that day in 1915, how much would you be worth today? Go ahead take a guess...turn the person beside you give them a rough estimate.*

Ready, correct answer: if you bought one share of IBM stock in 1915, you would be dead today, so would be worth nothing at all! (Ortberg)

See how that happens to you and me. See how we get trapped, blindsided, fooled entangled in earthly treasure. We forget wealth, money, possessions, do not last. Paul wrote to Timothy...

1 Timothy 6:7-10 - ...we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ 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.

This is why at Five Forks church, we aren't preaching sermons on knowing, loving and following the stock market. It doesn't last. We're not preaching about knowing,

loving and following Iphone or Amazon or Ford trucks or vera bradley and we are definitely not preaching sermons on knowing, loving and following the Pittsburg Steelers.

Don't store up earthly treasures.

Second, one of the real dangers is that **B. Treasures on earth control us.**

We talked a little bit about this last week in regards to the power of food. But possessions, earthly treasure have the same kind of controlling effect on us.

“Jesus teaching in this passage isn't simply about the ideal society, and neither is it an economic theory. This is about worship and idolatry.” (McKnight)

Idolatry is when I give my allegiance to something other than God. Last week it was a warning about food, this week it's about earthly treasures that are seeking your allegiance.

That's why Paul says, people eager for money...have wandered from the faith. It's idolatry.

Some of you are familiar with a movie series called **“The Lord of the Rings.”** The idea is that there is a magical ring that gives the owner supreme power. Which you would think, is an incredible gift that would lead to freedom and riches. But you see the problem is that the ring of power corrupts, and begins to control and eventually enslaves its owner. There is a character in the movie, Gollum, **(PIC OF GOLLUM & RING)** falls captive to the allure and power of the magic ring. He sells his soul for the ring. The ring owns him. Throughout the movie, he says time and time again of this ring...**“It is mine. My own. My precious.”**

Jesus says of earthly treasure...

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Ultimately earthly treasures are dangerous because they start to control us. Jesus says, they start to master us. We begin to place our sense of security, trust, peace of mind in them.

“For where your treasure is there your heart will be also...”

There is a story in Matthew 19, about a young man...described as a rich young ruler comes to Jesus and he says, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus says, “Obey the law.” And the man says, “I have obeyed all of them. What else?” And

²¹ Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

I wonder how many of have been entangled by the allure of earthly treasure.

What is the possession that Jesus would say, “go sell what you own” and come follow me?

²³ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

How do we, the affluent(wealthiest nation that has ever existed), **follow Jesus, a poor man?**

Important to note here. Jesus doesn't say "don't have any earthly treasures." He says don't **store up** earthly treasures. Jesus is not saying that possessions are evil or have no value or that you shouldn't own anything.

Shoes, cars, homes, stuff...neither good or evil...but it's what's happening in your heart that matters. That's why Jesus doesn't say things like "well one car is ok, two cars is too many." Because it's not about the number of cars, its about why you have the cars and how the cars are used that matters.

It's not about how much money you make. Jesus says nothing about money being evil or wrong. You've heard this before, money is not evil. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

Some of the people supporting and helping to finance Jesus ministry were described as wealthy (Joseph of Arimathea). It's about how that money is viewed, used. If that money becomes your master. You got a problem. That's earthly treasure. That was the rich young ruler.

The problem with earthly treasures, is that they are so subtle. This is why all throughout the Bible, when Jesus talks about wealth and possessions. He almost always says, "*Watch out. Be on your guard. Beware.*"

In general he does not say the same thing as consistently about other sins. Like stealing, or lying or adultery.

But wealth, greed, materialism just gets inside of us so easily, without being noticed. And then it masters us. I'll just read you what God says to the Hebrews as they enter the Promised Land...see if you think this fits us...

Deuteronomy 8:11-14 & 17 - Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God...¹² Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery...¹⁷ You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.”

The great challenge for us, most of us in this room, is that we live in the wealthiest country in the world, and it is so easy for that wealth to master us, with poor people all around us...more concerned with whether the economy grows than with the lot of the poor. **“It is mine. My own. My precious.”**

So, don't store up earthly treasures, Jesus says, instead

II. Store up treasure in heaven.

Store up treasure that lasts. What kind of treasure lasts? If it's not my running shoes, or my car, then what is it?

Treasures in heaven are things of moral/eternal value. What kind of treasure lasts, YOU. Your character, the person you are becoming. People last. The stuff you own. The possessions you acquire...are having an impact on the kind of person you are. Those possessions won't last but you, you will last.

“Remember, we Christians think that man lives forever. Therefore, what really matters is those little marks or twists on the central, inside part of the soul which are going to turn it, in the long run, into a heavenly or a hellish creature.” (Lewis 119-120)

People last. Every human being on the face of this earth is one of God's treasured possessions. Created in His image. Engraved on his hands. For God so loved the world, he gave his Son.

Scot McKnight says Jesus gives us a hint about heavenly treasure, **“the two greatest commands...Love God and Love others.”** All of the law and the prophets revolve around these commands. At the heart of kingdom living is love God and love others.

We begin to store up treasure in heaven when we live our lives around these two commands. We begin to store up treasure in heaven, when we view our possessions, time, resources...in light of loving God and others. When we do, we are becoming a Kingdom of Heaven kind of person.

It's interesting Jesus throws in this section...

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy,^[a] your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are unhealthy,^[a] your whole body will be full of darkness.

When you become a Kingdom person you start to see the world and treasures the same way God does. You start to treasure the same kinds of things.

What's interesting...The Greek words used for **healthy** (haplous) and **unhealthy** (poneros) are often words used for **“generous”** and **“stingy”**.

You are healthy person when you are generous. You are an unhealthy person when you are stingy.

All over the New Testament...you find this little phrase “**Jesus saw...**” and it’s always in relation to other people.

Luke 7:13 – Jesus saw a widow whose son had died.

John 5:6 – Jesus saw a lame man, who had been this way for 38 years.

Mark 3:5 – Jesus saw a man with a shriveled hand and healed him on the Sabbath.

Mark 10:21 – Jesus saw the rich young ruler and had compassion on him.

Matthew 5:1 – When Jesus saw the crowd....he went up on a mountains and side and began to teach.

“Greed, consumerism, chronic discontent, and a lack of generosity make me look at the world wrongly. Instead of looking at what I have and being grateful, instead of looking at people in need and being generous, instead of looking at God and being confident and secure, I look at what others who have more than I do have, and I get envious.”
(Ortberg)

A couple years ago, I remember this plain as day. Someone had asked to borrow something of mine. I remember talking to Jenny about my concern that this person would not be careful with my item, might get broken, and might get lost. And should I really let them borrow it? Landon was about 7 years old at the time. He was listening in on our conversation. I don’t know where he got the line from. But it was profound and it has been with me ever since. He said, *“Dad, people are more important than things.”*

He was basically saying *“Dad don’t store up earthly treasure. That item you own is on its way to the transfer station. But your generous or stingy heart in this moment is going to last.”*

You are going to last. And other people are going to last.

Storing up treasure in heaven, is learning to see and to value the same treasures that God sees and values.

Jesus is not saying... “Don’t have material possessions because they are fleeting.” He’s actually saying “be generous with all of your material possessions. Share generously, extravagantly with those who don’t have as much. Because generosity is an eternal treasure.”

Jesus is not saying... “Don’t get the oil changed in your car, because it’s going to be trash one day.” He’s saying, “get the oil changed in your car, so that you can use your car to love God and love others.” When somebody needs to borrow a car you have one to share.

He’s not saying never get new shoes. He’s saying, think long and hard about why you feel you need those shoes and how you will use those shoes, where those shoes will take you, what kinds of activities those shoes will mobilize you to do. Because everything you decide to do wearing those shoes is having an impact on the person you are becoming.

This is actually the idea behind tithing. Sometimes churches get this wrong and use the concept of tithing as a guilt trip.

But in Scripture the idea behind the tithe is pretty simple, it’s a mode God gave us to help us remember that money should not be our master. Tithing is God’s way of helping to disentangle us from our love of money. Money is our opportunity to give back to God and to those around us who have less.

It’s not that money is evil, its about the person I become, in how I use my money...that will last. I am becoming either healthy or unhealthy. Generous or stingy. Heavenly or hellish.

I'll just tell you God has given you and me a great opportunity to practice this passage of Scripture. We live in the wealthiest country in the world. Which means we have so much to be generous with. The real question is, what is our responsibility to our neighbors, to our church, to our community, to the rest of the world with that wealth? Have we become entangled in it?

There infinite ways to practice storing up heavenly treasure. I was thinking I'd encourage you to some of those opportunities right here at Five Forks.

Opportunities at Five Forks to practice heavenly treasure:

I was sent an article recently, Public Opinion about Franklin County homes. 10% of people in Franklin County, live below the poverty line according to PA standards and an additional 20% are just above the poverty line, but unable to make ends meet. Meaning 1 in 3 families in Franklin County, are still falling short paying for housing, food, transportation, child care.

It's why I'll just highlight our Food Pantry and clothes closet ministry at Five Forks **(PIC of FOOD PANTRY BUILDING)**. Up on the hill, across the stone parking lot. Building sits over there. Every week we have volunteers picking up, unloading, unpacking, organizing repacking food/clothes.

And folks from the local area come and get some of these basic needs. In fact, this ministry has been growing and we're running out of room in the building up there. Isn't that awesome? And we could use more volunteers to keep growing this thing. You can sign up using the red serve card.

Now don't sign up for this because you're expecting to get financial rewards. You won't. You don't get a Five Forks Food pantry company car, ok? You do it because, you're being generous with your time and generosity, your personal sacrifice for the sake of others is an eternal investment and you are a kingdom of heaven person.

This is why volunteering and finding a place to serve here at Five Forks is so important to us and we keep talking about it. When you choose to voluntarily give your time, you usually don't get many earth treasures.

In fact it will usually cost you some earth treasures. Like your personal time, it may cost you some of your personal comfort and maybe even your finances. But we believe that when we give/serve/volunteer in this way...that's eternal treasure, because we're training to be Kingdom people. You sign up to sit in the nursery or be a door greeter, or help out each Wednesday at Awana or volunteer with the youth group or help out with our work projects ministry...we believe those things are having an effect on the kind of person you are becoming. And that's the eternal treasure. You're practicing generosity. You're practicing prioritizing your life as a Kingdom of Heaven kind of person. Jesus says this is the stuff that lasts.

You all, this church, gave generously to support our teen mission trip to Puerto Rico. We sent 35 students and leaders in voluntary service to Puerto Rico to learn first hand that sacrifice and serving others are eternal treasure. You should come out tonight at 7pm. Right here in this room. Hear their stories as they talk about the treasure they earned on this trip.

How do we, the affluent, follow Jesus, a poor man?