

Where to Store Your Treasures

Matthew 6:19-24

One of my hobbies is sim racing. I race NASCAR races online against other people from all over the world. We follow the real world NASCAR Schedule. We keep track of points. And I race the same guys, and couple of gals week in and week out.

Over the years, I've made friends from Poland, Germany, and a police detective from California. In recent years, I've raced a lot with a guy from Ft. Myers, Florida. He just recently moved to Georgia. If you follow current events at all, you have a good idea why he moved.

He disappeared from our races for about 3 weeks, and then he shows up last week with an incredible story. His house was just off the coast, down the street from his parents, and they both lost their homes in the hurricane. During our practice session, he was saying it was good to be back. He had to get a new computer, a new simrig, new everything. He told us that he barely escaped with only the clothes on his back. His roof caved in, and he barely got out because he had no warning.

One of our racing buddies says, "I'm calling BS on that (Baloney sandwich). You had three days' warning. Don't tell us you didn't have a chance to get out." Nothing like friends with the gift of encouragement, right?

He wasn't offended. He went on to explain how his family always stayed put though hurricanes ever since he was a kid. They evacuated for a storm and looters cleaned them out. So, even though evacuation orders came, even though all the tracks showed that his house was in the direct path of the storm, he stayed put to save all his stuff. When the danger was two days out to sea, the most important thing in his life was all of his stuff.

But, when the storm was on top of his house and his roof was caving in, what do you think became his most important priority? It wasn't his computer. It wasn't his simracing rig. It wasn't his jumbo widescreen monitor. It wasn't his furniture. It wasn't his clothes. It was his life and his family. In a matter of seconds, all the other stuff became meaningless. He abandoned it all, because suddenly life had a very effective way of rearranging his priorities.

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 6:19-24. We come to a passage this morning where Jesus challenges us to look at life with a proper perspective on our priorities. What will matter most to you at the end of your life? When the short span of this life is over, and you are standing at the threshold of forever, where will you have wish you had invested your life? Your time? Your effort? Your money? These verses in the Sermon on the Mount are an essential Scripture for keeping a proper perspective on money and possessions. Here's what Jesus says in Mt. 6:19-21

19 "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.*

Let me summarize it this way: We all store up treasure. Where we store it is the issue.

Jesus talks more about money and possessions than he does any other subject. More than salvation, more than prayer, more than love, Jesus talks about how we handle our stuff. Why would he do this? Because so much of our life is spent in exchange for it. We spend about 80% of our waking hours earning, spending, or thinking about money – dreaming about it, worrying about it, balancing our checkbook and figuring out how to pay the bills.

How you spend 80% of your life says a lot about you. How you handle your money and possessions is the greatest indicator of your ambitions, desires, and goals. How you handle stuff shows where your heart is. It's a thermometer for your spiritual health.

I. Don't Store Up Earthly Treasures

There are three things you can do with your life. You can waste it, spend it, or invest it. What we do with our money and possessions, more than anything else, shows where we waste, spend, or invest our lives. In verse 19, Jesus tells us, don't store up earthly treasures. Here's what he says, "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.*" Now what does Jesus mean by "*laying up treasure?*" In the original Greek, the same word is used twice in row. And it's not a typo like when I do that.

The word Jesus uses is *thēsauros*. We get our word thesaurus from this word. It means storehouse. A thesaurus is a storehouse of words, but Jesus is talking about the storehouse of our treasures. Where are the things that are most important to you? Jesus is saying don't store all your treasures here. But remember, Jesus uses this word twice – *thēsauros, thēsauros*. It literally says, "*Do not treasure treasures on earth.*"

It means do not keep hoarding earthly things. Don't just pile up stuff you can't take with you. The object of life isn't to have a bigger, nicer pile of stuff than everyone else. The one who dies with the most stuff, still dies.

Last week we were in Kansas City and we went to an exhibit on King Tut. Even if you build a massive tomb that lasts thousands of years, you still die and still can't take it with you. All that gold and treasure that was buried with king Tut to take with him into the afterlife, it's all in museums now. It's useless to him.

Jesus isn't against money and possessions. He's against the treasuring of money and possessions. God has gifted and blessed some people earn, manage, and build wealth, so that they can do great things with that wealth. Paul does not say in Timothy that money is the root of all evil, he says that, "*The **love of** money is the root of all kinds of evil.*"

It's the love of money Jesus is talking about here. Earning wealth, saving wealth, investing wealth, building wealth, sharing wealth, giving wealth, and using wealth constructively, are all good things. It's when we treasure wealth in our hearts that's the problem. Where do you treasure your treasures?

II. The Failure of Earthly Treasures.

Let's talk about why treasuring wealth and possessions will always fail. There are two main reasons why Jesus tells us not to store up our treasures on earth; two reasons why earthly treasures will always fail us.

1. They are Temporary

The first reason is that earthly treasures are temporary. Stuff will not last. Jesus tells us not to store our treasures where moth and rust destroy. Have you ever opened a box of old family keepsakes— grandma's wedding dress, old baby clothes and it's all filled with holes? You dig into the closet to get your favorite winter cardigan, and it's ruined? Something as small and insignificant as moth larvae can reduce our treasures to tatters.

The word that Jesus uses for rust is the Greek word for eating. That's what rust does. It eats your stuff. And it isn't just rust that eats our stuff. Rust, wear and tear, deterioration, mileage, weather, sun, heat, and cold all eat away at our stuff. No matter how much we spend on quality, no matter how well we build it, no matter how much we protect it, it will not last.

Earlier this year I was going through the guns in my gun safe, and I have a rifle that I built about 10 years ago. It's a really nice piece. I'm proud of it, but I no longer have a place to shoot, so I haven't gotten these guns out in awhile, and even though I cleaned it, and stored it properly, there was rust all along barrel. I was horrified.

Earthly treasure is temporary. It doesn't last.

2. Insecure.

Jesus says there's a second problem with storing up earthly treasures. It's insecure. Thieves break in and steal. We have gated communities, security systems, flood lights, deadbolt locks, antivirus and encryption, motion sensors, monitored alarms, doorbell cameras and the list goes on and on. But guess what? You're stuff still isn't secure.

Six months ago, Allison's car got stolen. The scary part is they took her keys first. First, her keys went missing, and then a couple days later, her car was taken. You talk about feeling insecure. Was it somebody she knew? Did they take the keys from her backpack when she wasn't looking? Did she drop her keys and they followed her to discover where her car was? They also had the keys to her apartment. Did they know where she lived? Would they break into her apartment?

Last week her car shows up abandoned. And it's been trashed. It looks like someone has lived in it for six months while driving off road in the Dakar rally.

There is nothing that you have, that you couldn't lose tomorrow. Any of it, all of it could be gone in a moment. That's the failure of earthly treasures. Do we really want to spend our whole lives acquiring things that could be gone in seconds? Prov. 23:4-5 warns us,

*4 Do not wear yourself out to get rich;
have the wisdom to show restraint.
5 Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone,
for they will surely sprout wings
and fly off to the sky like an eagle.*

Notice though, that Jesus doesn't tell us not to have treasure. Jesus isn't against treasure. He wants us to invest in the right treasure; treasure that lasts; treasure that is secure. In verse 20 Jesus goes on to tell us where we should treasure our treasures, "*lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*"

Jesus says we can store up as much treasure in heaven as we want. Hoard it. Pile it up. Heavenly treasure is an eternal investment. Nothing can eat away at it. It doesn't break down, wear out, or fall apart. Nothing on earth can take it away. It can't be stolen or destroyed.

III. Making Deposits in Your Heavenly Account

But how do we store up this treasure? How do we put our treasure in heaven? I would like to give you several ways you can make deposits in your heavenly account. This list comes from the bible study *Sermon on the Mount: Connect with God* by Bill Hybels and Kevin Harney.

1. Worship

The first deposit we can make in the eternal storehouse is worship. From an earthly point of view, worship may seem to be completely unproductive, even a waste of time. However, from a heavenly perspective there is no higher pursuit. To worship is to do what the angels do. To worship is to fulfill one of the primary purposes of our creation. All people worship what they love. They may not call it that, but that's what it is.

One of my favorite worshippers in all of Scripture is Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Every time we see her in the Scriptures she is at the feet of Jesus. On one occasion in John 12:3-7 she pours a very expensive bottle of perfume on Jesus' feet and then washes them with her hair. Washing feet was considered an important act of service and hospitality in that day when transportation meant walking in sandals on dusty roads. Some of the disciples were critical of the wasteful extravagance, but instead Jesus welcomed it and praised Mary for it.

In Luke 10:38-42 Mary sits at Jesus' feet and learns from him while her sister Martha was busy making dinner. Martha got quite upset with her sister and asked Jesus to tell her to help, but listen to what Jesus says, "*Martha, Martha,*" *the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset*

about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Think about this. What you do here at 10am on a Sunday morning may be the most worthwhile thing you do all week. I'll guarantee you this, there is nothing else you can do on a Sunday morning that is a more valuable investment.

2. Christ-like Character

A second deposit we can make into our heavenly accounts is to grow a more Christ-like character. The Bible clearly teaches that if we want to lay up treasure in heaven, one of the best investment strategies is spiritual maturity. We should grow in Christ-like character. Your spiritual growth is a deposit in our heavenly bank account. This is expressed with crystal clarity in 1 Peter 3:8-9 with the words,

*Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may **inherit a blessing**.*

Do you hear what the apostle is saying? Every time you place yourself in someone else's shoes, every time you put yourself second, Every time you share the spotlight, every time you consider someone else's point of view, you are inheriting eternal blessing.

Every time we choose love over hate, kindness over harshness, empathy over insensitivity, truth-telling over lying, forgiveness over revenge, a polite spirit over rudeness, silence over slander, wisdom over foolishness, purity over immorality, faith over fear, or generosity over stinginess, we delight the heart of God and add to our heavenly portfolio.

3. Expressions of Generosity

A third eternal investment is to be generous with the earthly treasures we do have. Prov. 22:9 says, *"A generous man will himself be blessed"* Expressions of generosity may be a debit in our stores of earthly treasure, but our heavenly credits are multiplied.

Bill Hybels writes, "Every time we show an act of compassion, we build up our treasure in heaven. It might seem like a small act of kindness, but it counts! Others might look on and chuckle at our efforts. They might even say that we can't make a difference. But Jesus calls us to express His love, kindness, and compassion to those in need. When we do, we are storing up treasures in heaven where rust can't corrupt, moths can't eat, and thieves can't steal."

4. Lead Others to Jesus

There is one other very important deposit we all need to be making into our heavenly accounts, and that is leading others to Jesus. What greater treasure can there be than souls that are saved for eternity. When you get to heaven, what a joy it will be to see all of those with whom

you shared the gospel. To see all those seeds you planted and hearts you watered, in eternity in full blossom.

It might be your children, your friends, your neighbors, other relatives, the lady who waited on your table at your favorite restaurant, the guy behind the counter at the convenience store, your student, your teacher, your coach. It doesn't really cost anything to invest in a soul, and it's a treasure that's priceless. Just imagine hearing them say "I'm here because you told me about Jesus. I'm here because you loved me like Jesus."

Invest in the souls of people who will one day welcome you with joy and thanksgiving in heaven when you arrive. A forever friendship because you invested a bit of time, a bit of effort, and bit of money into their heart and soul here. That's eternal treasure!

My senior in college, I made a friend who had the most Biblical name ever – John Mark Romans. He was in Bible College, but he wasn't a Christian. His dad was an Air Force Chaplain stationed in Germany, and the only way he could convince his parents to let him get back to the states was to enroll in Bible College.

John Mark was a complete loner. He always had a pair of headphones over his ears. After a couple of weeks of seeing him avoid contact with everyone, I saw him sitting by himself, eating lunch, listening to his Walkman.

I plopped my tray down across from him, and I asked him, "Watcha listening too?" When he told me, I think he was trying to scare me away, but I love weird music, and I was able to have an intelligent conversation with him about his music. So, instantly we had this connection.

He soon met my best friend Jamie, and from then on we were fast friends. Over the next three months, we shared our faith in a natural, relational setting of simply doing life together. This culminated in a late, tear-filled, cold, November night where we snuck out of the dorm after curfew and baptized him in the creek behind campus.

However, our journey to Jesus is not always a straight and easy path. And there were some areas of John-Mark's life that he wasn't ready to give up. Long story short, John Mark was a kleptomaniac. It took us the rest of the school year to fully figure out what was going on. He stole from all of us.

He stole all my term papers. He went from getting Ds and Fs to getting As and Bs overnight. He stole clothes, shoes, jewelry from guys throughout the dorm. He stole books from the college library. He stole stacks of CDs from the dorm where he worked for maintenance.

This came to a head the last week of school where Jamie and I began to connect all the clues. We had long suspected John-Mark, but we could never figure out where he kept the stuff. It turns out I had this massive stereo system with these huge tower speakers. He kept it all in the speakers.

On the very last day, we confronted him. We returned the books to the library. We took shoes and belts and clothing back to other students. I have a picture of me, John Mark, and Jamie standing at the end of our dorm. It was one of the saddest days of my life. It's obvious we've all been crying. This was right before John Mark left with his grandfather. In my hand I'm holding a stack of CD cases that he stole from the other guy's dorm where he worked.

They were already packed in his grandfather's truck. He was ready to leave, when Jamie and I asked him about it. He dug the cases out of his boxes. He cried and apologized. We cried. We told him that we loved him and would always be his friend.

That was the last time I saw or heard from John Mark for thirty years. Here's what John Mark would later tell me,

I left Ozark under a dark cloud as you know. That's a time of my life that I can still struggle to think about if I'm totally transparent about it. And things didn't get better for a while. I ran hard the other direction.

Back in 2017, I get a Facebook message from John Mark. He said it would take about 6 more years and a stint in the Marines before God got a complete hold of his heart. After that he served as a missionary in Turkey, a Campus ministry pastor, and was now serving as the Missions Pastor at Savannah Christian Church in Georgia. He had preached a sermon on sharing your faith, and he talked about the night Jamie and I led him to Christ. He wanted me to hear it and know the difference I made.

I had gone decades thinking that John-Mark was a wasted effort, that I had done no good whatsoever. But his story continued. God kept working. That seed Jamie and I planted had grown, had born fruit, and many other seeds have been planted around the world.

Every seed you plant is worth it. God can use any time you share your faith, even if you never see how He does it.

Your life is an investment, what are you investing in? Are you just wasting it? Are you spending it all on the here and now, or are you investing in things that will matter ultimately? Are you investing in things that will last eternally?

Where do you treasure your treasures? When you give your life to Jesus and He changes your heart, it completely changes your view of stuff. What matters most to you, what is truly valuable to you begins to change. The things that used to capture your imagination loosen their grip. Your heart begins to beat with the passion for a new treasure.

You begin to seek treasures that you can take with you. What the apostle Peter calls, "*an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you...* (1 Peter 1:4)"