

# **REDISCOVERING THE HEART'S TREASURE**

## **Matthew 6:16-21**

<sup>1</sup>“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ in front of others, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

<sup>5</sup>“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>6</sup>But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

<sup>16</sup>“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

<sup>19</sup>“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup>But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [TNIV]

Where’s your heart?

What do you treasure most?

Jesus tells us that where your treasure is, there your heart is?

It is pretty easy to figure out what is your treasure. And it may not be worth much in dollar terms, by the way!

How can you figure out what is your treasure? Here’s a very simple exercise:

What do you think most about?  
Or what gets your passions moving the most;  
and those passions may be love or hate!

I suspect most of us would feel fairly guilty, because we would all have to admit, according to that little exercise, that our treasure isn't Jesus. All too often there are things, or work, or someone who fills our hearts and minds with thoughts and feelings. And again that something or someone can be either good or bad for us! But it isn't Jesus!

Tonight, however, we have asked God to help us treasure Jesus in our hearts.

One of the things that stands out so clearly to me is that people's lives go astray as soon as something is treasured other than Jesus.

I see young people, whose only goal is to have enough money to afford alcohol, a car, an iPhone, and a girlfriend or boyfriend.

I see farmers and other business owners, who seem almost obsessed about working every day, whether the need is there or not.

I see people, young and old, who believe being right with God is a matter of how good they are, or at least that they haven't been too bad, or that they are really trying hard.

I see people who have no idea why saying sorry is necessary, and people who will not accept anyone saying sorry.

I see people who are stressed out of their brains because of work or health or family concerns; but believe all this talk about stress is just an invention of weak-willed or weak-minded people.

I see people who, in their pride, will not accept 'charity', as though it's a sign of weakness, rather than as a sign of love.

I see married couples whose love has turned to hate.

All of these people, and there are many other situations I could list, have one thing in common: They've lost sight of Christ, and the love he puts into human community. Instead of Christ as their treasure, they are treasuring something else.

Does this sound all too true, maybe even true in your own life? I know it does for me! All too true, all too often!

But what would things be like if Jesus were the treasure of one's heart?

I know some may think, But my wife/husband, or children/grandchildren is my heart's treasure. That's OK. But if you think that way, where is Jesus?

Your heart is signed with Jesus' cross!

In New Testament times, slaves were often branded, like cattle, with the mark of the owner. We 'slaves of Jesus' have been branded with our

Owner's mark, namely the cross! Sealed with the sign of the cross at our baptism.

Behind all this is the enormous loving work of God in bringing about our reconciliation with him. The slave mark we have received is actually the birthmark of God's dearly loved children – loved, all for the sake of Jesus.

What does it mean, then, to have Jesus as one's heart's treasure? What difference does he make to all those things I listed before (the "I see . . ." paragraphs)?

I'm going to pause here, and let you do an exercise: Go through the "I see" phrases with the following prompter. You can also change the "I see" phrase to "I am" phrase to make the point even more pointed (eg, *I am a farmer/business owners, who is obsessed about working every day, whether the need is there or not.*)

**Jesus is my heart's treasure!**

**My heart is signed with his cross!**

**Therefore, when I see (or I am) ... I will ...**

I will finish with a true story. I think I've shared it with you before, but that doesn't matter. Good stories are always worth hearing again.

A sobbing little girl stood near a small church from which she had been turned away because it 'was too crowded.' "I can't go to Sunday School," she sobbed to the pastor as he walked by. Seeing her shabby, unkempt appearance, the pastor guessed the reason and, taking her by the hand, took her inside and found a place for her in the Sunday School class. The child was so touched that she went to bed that night thinking of the children who have no place to worship Jesus.

Some two years later, this child lay dead in one of the poor tenement buildings and the parents called for the kind-hearted pastor, who had befriended their daughter, to handle the final arrangements. As her poor little body was being moved, a worn and crumpled purse was found which seemed to have been rummaged from some trash dump. Inside was found 57 cents and a note scribbled in childish handwriting which read, "This is to help build the little church bigger so more children can go to Sunday school."

For two years she had saved for this offering of love. When the pastor tearfully read that note, he knew instantly what he would do. Carrying this note and the cracked, red pocketbook to the pulpit, he told the story of her unselfish love and devotion. He challenged his deacons to get busy and raise enough money for the larger building.

But the story does not end there! A newspaper learned of the story and published it. It was read by a realtor who offered them a parcel of land

worth many thousands. When told that the church could not pay so much, he offered it for a 57-cent payment. Church members made large subscriptions.

Checks came from far and wide. Within five years the little girl's gift had increased to \$250,000.00 - a huge sum for that time (near the turn of the century). Her unselfish love had paid large dividends.

The result: Temple Baptist Church in the city of Philadelphia has a seating capacity of 3,300, Temple University, where hundreds of students are trained, Good Samaritan Hospital, and the Sunday School building which houses hundreds of Sunday scholars, so that no child in the area will ever need to be left outside at Sunday school time.

In one of the rooms of this building may be seen the picture of the sweet face of the little girl whose 57 cents, so sacrificially saved, made such remarkable history. Alongside of it is a portrait of her kind pastor, Dr. Russell H. Conwell.

God, help us treasure Jesus in our hearts, for great riches always flow!  
Amen.