

Treasuring Christ w/ Treasures

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[0:00] We're going to do something that is a little bit unusual for us or for me.

We're going to be spending most of our time split between two different passages of Scripture this morning. Most of the time we have one main focal passage, but this morning we're going to have two.

So I'd like you to find Matthew chapter 6 in your Bibles and put your finger there or put your ribbon in your Bible there if you've got one. If you're using one of the Pew Bibles and it's on page 811.

And then I'd also like you to locate Luke chapter 16 and mark that. We're going to read Matthew 6 and then we're going to get to Luke chapter 16. We're in the midst of and actually drawing closer to the end of the series that we have been in on the spiritual disciplines in the Christian life.

And we have defined the spiritual disciplines throughout this series as the means of grace that God uses to cause us to trust and treasure Christ more fully.

[1:09] They are the means of grace that God himself uses to cause us to trust and treasure Christ more fully. And every part of that definition is important.

Otherwise, we might come to these very same activities and use them toward an end that doesn't honor and glorify God. So we need to understand why we're operating off of this definition, especially as we approach this morning, the spiritual discipline of stewardship.

The aim of all the spiritual disciplines is, of course, exactly what that definition says. That we might trust and treasure Christ more fully. I think we would all confess this morning if we were able to and we had a time we could all go around the room and confess ways in which we don't treasure Christ to the degree that he deserves.

Times in which we have not fully trusted him with the things and the people in our lives. So we need help from God to help us and to cause us to trust him more and to treasure Christ more fully, more than we do now.

But, of course, these spiritual disciplines are things that God is actually going to use. They're things that he's going to do in our life. He's going to be active in these.

[2:23] That's why we call them the means of grace that God uses. It's gracious. We don't deserve any of this work that God is going to do through these things in our hearts. It's gracious, but God's doing it.

God himself is causing us to trust and treasure Christ more fully. But that does not, by any means, imply that we have no role to play, that we have no part in this.

When I use a phrase like means of grace, You need to hear every part of that phrase because it's important and it's significant. It's gracious.

It's nothing that we deserve, but God is using means to accomplish something. God's not just immediately zapping us and making us supremely holy the moment that we are saved.

That's not how sanctification works. That's not what he does. Instead, he uses these means. He uses things that you and I have to participate in in order to increase our holiness or, in the language of our definition, in order to cause us to trust and treasure Christ more fully.

[3:27] And so we've spent some time looking at how God's Word is used by God to transform us so that our commitment, both corporately and privately, our commitment to spend time meditating on the Word, reading the Word, studying the Word, thinking about the Word, to do all of those things, our time doing that is the means that God actually uses to change and transform us.

Or we've talked about prayer. We've talked about why we pray and how we pray. Prayer being the other half of the conversation with God. God speaks to us in His Word. We speak back to Him in prayer.

And God uses that time of communion with Him to stir up within us greater affections or greater feelings of emotion for Christ and a greater desire for Christ.

And then we spent time last week looking at fasting. And I said that fasting is most clearly a means that God uses because fasting aids prayer and Bible study.

Fasting comes alongside and the hunger that is generated in us when we abstain from eating foods is a hunger that reminds us that we don't yet hunger enough for God, but it's also a hunger that drives us to our knees in prayer and that separates time when we would normally be eating.

[4:47] It separates time in the day for us to actually spend time in reading the Word and in praying. And so all of these different spiritual disciplines are means of grace that God uses.

We have to participate. We actually have to read our Bibles and pray and fast. But in those things, God is at work to cause us, to change us, so that we trust and treasure Christ more tomorrow or more next year or more in a decade from now than we do right now in this moment.

And now this morning, I want us to shift our gaze from seeing how our hunger and our lack can help us in our pursuit of God to see how God might sanctify us through the plentiful things that we have. I think as Americans, we could all say that no matter where we fall in this sort of socioeconomic ladder compared to the rest of the world, this is why it's so important, as Bill said, for us to be in other places and see how people in other parts of the world live, so that we can see that on a sort of a global scale, I think probably everybody in this room lives a more comfortable lifestyle than most of the world lives.

We have greater plenty. We have more things and more money and more treasure at our disposal. So we need to ask the question, how can we use the treasures that God has given us to help us to treasure Christ more fully?

[6:18] And the two passages that we're looking at this morning, I believe will help us to answer that question. So I want you guys to stand as we begin here in Matthew chapter 6. I'm going to read starting in verse 19 down to verse 24, and then we'll start in the first verse of Luke 16.

Jesus says in the midst of the Sermon on the Mount, 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 he will either 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.

[7:28] Luke chapter 16 verse 1. He also said to his disciples, There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions.

And he called him and said to him, What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager. And the manager said to himself, What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me?

I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg. I've decided what to do, so that when I'm removed from management, people may receive me into their houses. So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, How much do you owe my master?

He said, A hundred measures of oil. He said to him, Take your bill and sit down quickly and write fifty. Then he said to another, How much do you owe? He said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said to him, Take your bill and write eighty.

The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

[8:45] One who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No one can serve two masters. For he will either hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. Father, thank you for these words from Jesus being recorded for us in the Gospels.

Thank you that we are not left to our own devices to try to figure out what to do with all of our devices and the things that we have. And I thank you now in advance that the same Spirit who inspired Matthew and Luke to record these words of Jesus would also open our eyes so that we might rightly understand the Word and put it into practice.

I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I don't know how many of you have ever been to Chuck E. Cheese. All right? There's one not far, just down the road in Humble.

[10:00] I don't know how many of you have ever been to Chuck E. Cheese, but if you've taken kids to Chuck E. Cheese, you know that Chuck E. Cheese can be somewhat excruciating for parents when they go in.

I have taken my kids there a few times. I will probably take them a few more if they want to go there. But it's not my favorite place to go, and it starts as soon as you walk in the door because they have what ostensibly appears to be, and is presented as, security and safety for your kid, right?

The first thing they do when you walk in the door is they put a stamp on your arm and a stamp on your kid's arm. You can only see it under the black light, but they put a stamp on your arm and under their arm, and the numbers are supposed to match.

So that should give you a sense of safety that, okay, nobody's going to come in here and grab my kid and run out with them because they're going to check the numbers before any of us leaves. They're going to match the number of parents with kids. So it should give you some sense of security, and yet it really does the exact opposite once you've been there a couple of times because, first of all, they draw your attention to the fact that this may be a place where somebody might come looking for your kid to take them away.

So we've got to go through the trouble of stamping your arm. We've got to mark you and your kid just like they do at the hospital when you have a baby. We've got to mark you so that nobody runs away with your kid. And then any sense of safety that you had when you first entered is gone as soon as you leave because the 16-year-old who's standing at the door just kind of barely flashes the light and goes, okay, take off.

[11:22] They don't check your number. Half the time when they stamp it on there and I glance at it under the black light, it's so smudged. It just looks like a rectangle, just a smudged block on my arm under the black light.

So there's no sense of security that comes with being there. In fact, the opposite is the case because they may think it needs to be secure when it's not secure. But that to me is not the worst thing about Chuck E. Cheese.

Worst thing about Chuck E. Cheese is not that my kids get to play all the games. That's why we go. We go so they can play the games. And so I'll put a \$10 bill or whatever in the machine or buy pizza and get some coins.

And they get all these coins, basically a representative of my money that I've given to them. And they get to go spend their coins at all of these games, which would be perfectly fine, except very quickly it comes into their mind that their goal becomes not simply to have fun at the games, but to gain as many tickets as they can from the games that will supply them with tickets so that at the end of their time at Chuck E. Cheese, they can use these tickets to buy the treasures behind the glass counter.

The problem is they will spend \$20 worth of my money to get all of these tickets so that they can go get a three-cent plastic spider and a piece of bubble gum at the end of the day.

[12:37] And I think we could have just gone to the dollar store and bought a box of those spiders for a buck and I could have gotten you all the bubble gum that you want. Have fun. Play the games. Don't try to get the tickets.

They're worthless. They're not going to get you much. And the toy that you get is going to be gone, likely, before we get home. I will find it like stuffed under the seat or between the seats in a couple of weeks when I go to finally vacuum out the car or if it makes it in the house pretty soon, I promise you, it's going to be in the trash as soon as somebody turns their head just so there's not one more thing to clean up around the house.

They are worthless treasures. But I feel like oftentimes that's what we do. We spend our money to get things that in the end will only get us something that doesn't satisfy.

It's not as good as it's advertised to be. I mean, when those prizes are in the glass case and when they're up on the wall and they've got those tags, you know, so many thousand tickets to get this or 20 tickets to get this, I mean, they look like they're, they look nice.

I mean, they're in a glass case. You put jewelry in a glass case, right? So you would think that it would be something worth having and it's next to worthless and yet you've spent all the tickets that you worked so hard to get at all these different games on something that's worthless.

[13 : 56] And that's, I feel like that's how we use the stuff that God gives to us. He blesses us with money. He blesses us with houses and cars and treasures that we have at our disposal and yet so often we use them to gain things that have no lasting effect.

Because if it is true and it is that our lives in this world are just a blip, they're so short. In fact, James says they're like a vapor.

They're just like a mist. They're here and they're gone. If you ever just sprayed a water bottle into the air and seen the mist and suddenly it's gone, that's what our lives are like. They're just a mist. They're here one minute, they're gone the next and the things that we gain in our earthly lives are no better than the mist.

They're here one minute, they're gone the next. And we spend so much of our treasure and our time trying to hold on to those things, trying to gain those things when instead, as we're going to see here in the scriptures, God would have us use the treasures that He has given to us graciously to obtain rewards that are everlasting.

Let's take a look here at Matthew chapter 6. I want us to see what exactly Jesus has to say about the treasures that we can gain here in this life versus the eternal treasures that we can gain in the life that is to come.

[15 : 23] He begins with a simple command in verse 19. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. Don't do that. Why? Because they're temporary. That's what He says.

Where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. That's the problem with all the treasures that we have here. They're not going to last. If you've got nice garments, eventually they're going to wear out or the moth is going to get to them and eat them up and destroy them. If you've got some goods that you have, they're going to rust, they're going to decay, they're going to get old or perhaps before they even get old, the thief will break in and take them away from you and then you don't have them anymore.

They're just, they're temporary. They are not going to last. So since they're temporary, He says, Don't treasure up treasures on earth for yourself. Don't store them up. Don't gather them to yourself. Don't hoard them to yourself. Don't make them your aim. And then He says, But, now here's another command, But instead, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

[16 : 29] So there are two kinds of treasures that we can gain. We can either, we can either store up treasures on the earth that are temporary and will not last or we can store up heavenly treasures that are eternal, that last, that last forever.

Now what are the, what are the heavenly treasures that He's talking about here? There's been a lot of sort of debate and discussion about what those are. I want to circumvent all that debate and I want to get to the core of what they are.

I think at their core, what these earthly treasures are, or they are exactly what we have seen is our goal and our aim throughout this series. And that is that the heavenly treasures are the fullness of joy in the presence of Jesus that we will receive on that day.

Our goal in everything that we do in life ought to be to gain a greater taste for the fullness of the joy of the presence of Jesus that we will receive on that day.

So that everything that we do in this life, we ought to be living our lives in such a way that we are prepared and ready to taste of the, what Revelation calls the wedding supper, when we are finally reunited with the bridegroom and we can enjoy the fullness of His presence.

[17 : 43] The problem is, is that there are a lot of things that would draw our hearts away, that would turn our hearts into things that do not have a feeling for the things of God.

That's the danger of earthly treasures. I had one of my cars when I was a teenager and I'll confess, I really don't know much about cars now. All right?

I can build you some cabinets. I cannot fix your engine. I can't do it. That's just not something that I know anything about. But the only thing I can do on a car is change a tire and change the oil and I

don't bother changing the oil on my cars.

I pay people to do it. All right? I'm not a car guy. But when I was a teenager, I knew even less about cars. And for the longest time, my car, if I took my hands off the steering wheel, would immediately go left in the other lane.

I mean, the alignment was just terribly off. And I really had no idea what to do about that. I didn't know how to fix the alignment. I didn't, I mean, I was clueless as to what to do about it.

[18:47] And so finally, when I think I had my oil changed or something happened and they fixed the alignment and I got in and I realized, oh my goodness, I'm going straight. I'm going straight. I'm not fighting with the car all the time.

And I feel like our hearts are like that. I feel like our hearts would have us veer to the left. That's not the way, if you're going to veer anywhere in your car, it ought to be to the right, out of oncoming traffic. But I feel like at times, our hearts, sinful as we are, they naturally are inclined to take us into oncoming traffic, to take us into danger.

And we see that nowhere more clearly than in the issue of what we do with our money and our earthly treasures. Our hearts have a tendency to latch onto those things and to use them to steer us toward danger.

But that doesn't mean that they can't be used to steer us somewhere else. It doesn't mean that your treasures cannot be used by God and therefore used by Him through you as a means of grace to steer you toward Christ.

Jesus goes on to make a statement that He also, that He repeats, as we saw in the Gospel of Luke. He says, if you look down in verse 24, no one can serve two masters.

[20:00] You can't serve two masters. And then He goes on to apply that by saying, you cannot serve God and money. You cannot. You can't do that. You can't have two masters because they're going to give you contradictory orders and then which way will you go?

You can only have one ultimate master, Jesus says. But so often, we feel the pull of our old master. We feel the pull of the flesh. We feel the pull of our own greediness. And it pulls us into what looks like bright, shiny lights, but they're just the oncoming headlights of death and danger.

That's all it is. And so Jesus says, you cannot live a divided life like that. You cannot be devoted to me. You cannot be devoted to God and be devoted to your earthly treasures.

You cannot. But I want you to notice that Jesus does not say you cannot possess any earthly treasures. You could, if you were to read this passage and divorce it from the rest of the Gospel of Matthew, just all by itself, and ignore things said elsewhere, especially in Luke chapter 16, as we're going to see.

[21:13] If you were to divorce these verses from the rest of Matthew and the rest of the New Testament, you might be able to build a case that Jesus expects us not to have any earthly possessions.

You could build that case. And you could even pull in a few passages from other places in the New Testament to try to build a strong case that what Jesus is calling for here is the renunciation of all goods and of all wealth.

So we shouldn't possess, we shouldn't own anything. But I don't think that's the point of what Jesus is saying here. I don't think that Jesus' concern here is so much with our possession of earthly treasures as it is with our pursuit of earthly treasures.

Or you might say that He's not concerned with whether or not we possess treasures. He's concerned with whether or not we are possessive of the treasures that we have. That's His concern. That's why He says, you can't serve two masters.

You cannot. You cannot devote your life to the gaining of earthly wealth and then say, but I'm serving God.

[22:20] I'm going to live my life for Him. You have to make a choice. You live your life in the pursuit of wealth or you live your life in the pursuit of God Himself. As you pursue God, you may gain wealth.

You may. It depends on where He calls you to pursue Him, where He calls you to serve Him. Right? You may gain wealth and so you may possess wealth and compared to the rest of the world, all of us here possess wealth.

The issue is not whether or not you possess it. It's why do you possess it. Is it something you have because it just comes along with serving your master in the place where you're serving Him? Or is it

something you have because you've spent your life fighting to get it?

You've spent your energies trying to gain it and hang on to it. That's the real question that we have to answer. Why do I have what I have?

And what am I going to do with what I have? On one level, what you do with your treasures, your earthly treasures, your attitude towards them, on one level, it is a test of whether or not you actually love Christ.

[23 : 27] That's why Jesus says in the middle of this passage in verse 21, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. So that if you value and you cling to and you chase after earthly treasures, a bigger house or a newer car every time the opportunity arises, or if you're always in pursuit of the promotion and the raise, regardless of what it might cost you in your spiritual life, Jesus says, that's where your treasure is, therefore that's where your heart is.

So on one level, whatever we treasure practically, whatever we cling to and pursue reveals our hearts. But on another level, God can use our treasures that we have in this life to turn our hearts toward Him.

So they are evidence of where your heart is, but they can also be used to direct the course and the direction of your heart. Let me show you what I mean from the Gospel of Luke.

If you'll turn over there for a moment, real quickly, Luke chapter 16, where Jesus, as we read earlier, shares a parable. It's usually called the parable of the dishonest manager or the dishonest steward, a man who's entrusted with the care and maintenance of the wealth of his master.

And he's been lazy. We're told there that he was wasting his possessions. He wasn't serving his master well. He was just wasting what his master had.

[25 : 01] He wasn't doing what he'd been commanded to do with the things with which he had been entrusted. And so a threat comes upon him. Going to lose it all. And of course, he turns things around.

He does good things, things that are good in terms of for his master. And so he's commended for that. But then Jesus has something to add to this parable. He's going to help us to understand the point of this particular parable of the dishonest steward, the dishonest manager.

He says in verse 10, one who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in very much. So I want you to think about this. I want you to read when you see the words very little here, I want you to think earthly treasures, Matthew chapter 6.

Okay? They're very little. They're minuscule. They're nothing compared to heavenly treasures.

Jesus says, if you're faithful with a little bit with your earthly treasures that are a vapor, here today, gone tomorrow, you're faithful with that, you may be entrusted with much, heavenly treasures, right?

Something greater, something more lasting, something more enduring. But on the other hand, if you're dishonest in a very little, if you don't make good use of the possessions that you have, you will not be trusted because we know that you'll be dishonest with much.

[26 : 22] It goes on and says, if then you've not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust you with true riches? If you can't be trusted, if you're not faithful, if you're not serving God with the unrighteous wealth of the world, the things that you gain simply by living and working in a fallen sinful world, if you can't be trusted with that, how in the world do you expect God to shower you with true riches, with heavenly treasures?

Why would you even expect that? so that what we do with our possessions is not only a reflection of our heart, but what we do with our possessions shows, it directs the course of where we're headed. Are you going to head somewhere to where you're going to be entrusted by God with great spiritual treasures? Are you going to head to the place where God says, you've not been faithful in this stuff, I'm not going to give you something greater than that?

You see, God is capable of using the possessions and treasures that we have to sort of, to readjust our spiritual alignment.

Yes, we pull to the left, that's the direction that we are naturally headed, into danger, into death, but God is capable of using our use of our treasures to correct the course, to change it a bit.

[27 : 41] Just as the dishonest manager, here under the threat of punishment, of losing everything, just as he begins to make a course correction and because of that, his master says, well done.

So also, God, through the power of the Word and conviction upon us, He can begin to change the ways that we think about and we interact with the stuff that He's given us so that we who once were

unfaithful in very little are slowly becoming more and more faithful in the very little that we have so that in the end, what do we receive?

The true riches, the heavenly treasures, but it's going to require that realignment. It's going to require that we move from being people who cling to what we have and spend all that we have on things that satisfy us to being a people who are willing to let go of what we have, spend what we have for the furtherance of the gospel and for the good of other people.

It's interesting that Jesus in Luke chapter 16 draws His explanation of the parable of the dishonest manager to a close in the same way that He draws His instructions about wealth in the Sermon on the Mount to a close with the exact same saying.

Verse 13, No servant can serve two masters for he will either 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.

[29 : 16] Two different places apparently Jesus gave this teaching on two separate occasions. In fact, you'll find that many times in the gospels, in the other gospels, particularly in Luke, and Mark, but also at times in John, you will find that some of the things that Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, some of those things He said in other contexts at other points in His ministry and if we can sort of collate those, if we can bring those together, we can better understand what Jesus is saying in the Sermon on the Mount so that we don't read the Sermon on the Mount merely as a condemnation of the possession of earthly treasures, but we read the Sermon on the Mount as a warning about what you do with those treasures.

That's exactly what Jesus does here in Luke chapter 16. He gives us a warning. What are you going to do with the treasures that you have? You've got them. You have stuff. What are you going to do with it?

Are you going to allow that stuff to continue to pull you in this direction? Or are you going to prayerfully say to God, God, help me to use this stuff to bring honor and glory to you so that the stuff that could have pulled you away suddenly becomes a means that God uses to draw him closer to himself?

How does that happen? I mean, practically, how does that work? I don't know if you figured it out yet, but I have one point in this sermon. It's one I keep saying. All right. One point in this sermon. Jesus is not so much concerned with your possessions, but with your pursuit of possessions. That's the one point. All right. I hope you've gotten it by now. That's the concern of Jesus in Matthew 6 and in Luke chapter 16. The question becomes, how can we stop pursuing wealth and clinging to our wealth?

[31 : 04] And how can we become the kind of people for whom our earthly treasures are a means that God uses to make us treasure Jesus more? Practically, I mean, how does that, how does that happen?

There are some clues scattered throughout the Gospels. There are some other stories where we see people interacting with their money, where we see people doing things with money after they've encountered Jesus, both negative examples and positive examples.

So, for instance, we see the negative example of the rich young ruler. I don't know how many of you recall this story. It's a well-known story from the Gospels where there's a wealthy young man who comes to Jesus. Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus talks to him for a bit and says, you need to obey the command. He says, I've done that. I've obeyed the commandments. Jesus lists a few of the Ten Commandments. I've done that. What else do I need to do? Jesus, knowing this man's heart, says, go and sell all your possessions, give to the poor, and then you'll have eternal life.

And we're told in the Gospel accounts that this man went away sad because he had much wealth. So there's the negative example of how to respond.

[32 : 13] Jesus calls for a radical obedience from this man because he knows that this man is radically attached to his earthly possessions. Go and sell it all and then you can come and have eternal life, but the man cannot do it.

What's the point there? What's the practical takeaway from that? The point is that we need to examine everything that we do with our possessions and ask, am I clinging to this?

Am I hanging on to this? Am I unwilling to give this away? What am I willing to do with the stuff that God has given me?

What's the first thing that comes to mind? I mean, this young man, he confirms that he's obeyed the commandments. It never even enters his mind that he should do something with his money.

Why? He loves his money too much to ever think that he might be asked to do something differently with it. What's the first thing that comes into your mind when you think of your obedience to Christ? [33 : 15] And what's the furthest thing from your mind? Would you find it simply untenable for you to consider that you might need to give away some of your wealth?

That you need to not upgrade your phone in the next upgrade cycle for 200 bucks? All right? You need to not do that because God, your phone is fine and he wants you to do something else with your money?

That's small. It's not big. We're not talking about giving away everything like the rich young really might call you to do that. But I need something really small. Would it never enter your mind?

Because this is what you do with your money. This is how you spend your money.

It never enters your mind to say, maybe I should give more. Maybe I should help someone out a little bit more rather than get a new phone or a new car because I'm tired of my car.

All right? Our last car, I was determined to drive it until it was just dead. And Allie and I were talking about we knew it was coming close to an end.

[34 : 13] What should we do? When should we get a new car? And she had a sense that it was near its end. I did not because I'm the one who drove it all the time and it was my car, you know? And I said, no, I think we've got another year out of this car.

I think that was like on a Wednesday or Thursday we were talking. Sunday after church I got in the car and it started making this awful, horrible noise. It's not... So Monday I drove it to the dealership and he was amazed that I had even gotten there with the car.

It was like a miracle that the car made it there. But so many times we don't use up the things that God's given us. We don't trade in our cars because we need to. We trade them in because we want something bigger.

We want something better. We want something nicer. We want whatever the case may be. They're real practical. What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of what to do with your stuff? This man's not even on his mind.

It's like way down there. He thinks of everything else first. Yeah, I've done that. I've done that. I've done that. What else you got for me, Jesus? Give away your stuff. Can't do that. What do you think of when you think of what God might call you to do and to sacrifice?

[35 : 17] These negative examples but there are positive examples as well. There is in the Gospel of Luke just a few chapters after this there's a story of Zacchaeus where Zacchaeus is converted. He trusts in Christ.

And what does he do? He's wealthy. He's a tax collector. He's got a lot of money and most of that money he got from dishonest gain. What does Zacchaeus do? He pays back the people that he's defrauding.

He pays them back more than he actually took from them. We are not told that Zacchaeus gave away everything he had. And it's very interesting as Jesus deals with Zacchaeus He does not look at Zacchaeus a man who has a lot of money just like the rich young ruler but he doesn't look at him and say give away everything that you have.

It's not what he does. He says I'm going to come eat at your house. I'm going to come spend time with you. You're going to get to be in my presence. Why? Because at that point in time Jesus already knew even though he's still wealthy he still has a lot of possessions Jesus knows he's he's already repentant.

He's already come to me. He's already so you have this positive example of Zacchaeus whom Jesus comes and communes with. Why? Not because he gave away everything that he owned.

[36 : 30] Maybe paying back people caused him to give away everything he owned but he at least had enough to have a feast for Jesus left over. Right? He's still got his house where he has Jesus. He's not giving away everything so we can't look at the rich young ruler and go just give away everything.

No the issue is what's going on in your heart? First thing that comes to Zacchaeus' mind is I want to spend time with Jesus and I want to help the people that I've hurt.

First thing that comes to the rich young ruler's mind is I've done this and I've done that but never his money. Never. And one of the tests as to whether or not we are clinging to our possessions is to ask does it ever occur to me that I should be giving more or not getting more for myself with the money that I have all the time.

Again it's not a matter of whether or not you possess great wealth. It's not a matter of whether or not you have a big house. It's a matter of what do you do with your big house. It's not a matter of whether or not you have a car.

It's what are you doing with that car? It's always a matter of what are you doing with it? Are you clinging to it and hanging on to it just for you? Are you saying God whatever you want me to do with this?

[37 : 42] If you want me to give it away I'll give it away. If you want me to just use it in any way that I can now I'll use it in any way that I can now. It's always what you do with your treasures.

And God begins to work. God begins to work in such a way that he begins to correct the alignment of our hearts. And he does it through these means of grace.

We know it's obvious how he does it with the word. Right? You may not have a lot of Bible knowledge. You may have neglected spending time in God's word for years and you think what I need is for God to just give me knowledge of the Bible.

What God calls you to do is open it up and read it. Right? But as you open it up and read it as you do the thing you've neglected to do God then begins to change your heart. Same thing happens in prayer.

Same thing happens when we fast. Maybe you've never fasted before and you fast and God begins to do something. I believe that God works the same way throughout the stewardship of the things that we have.

[38 : 44] Maybe we've hung on to things. Maybe we've been seeking after more and more and more and we don't know where to start and yet sometimes it starts very simply with saying I'm going to stop trying to hang on to this and let it go.

Do whatever you want to with it Lord. Do whatever you want to with it Lord. And God begins to enter in and he begins to realign your heart. He begins to realign your heart.

It may be something as simple as saying I'm going to maybe some of you have never this is not a sermon on tithing right? It's not a sermon on tithing okay I read a passage on money oh man a pastor is going to preach tell us to give them more money right?

Whether or not you tithe well if nobody gives I don't get paid but if you all give a lot more I don't get paid anymore right? Salary set in the budget every year. This is not about that. It's not about money it's not about gaining money or anything but it might be that the Lord would say you start by just giving to your church right?

It's a good question do you I mean do you spend more money on things that are of no consequence at all things that honestly if you didn't get them today in a month you probably wouldn't notice that you got that you didn't get them or you got them if you just ignored them all together would it make no difference you spend more money on things like that that don't matter they're just a mist and a vapor even in your life now than you give to your local church or to missions or to whatever the case may be.

[40 : 07] Simple test to say where is your heart? You think about if you think about what would happen if I gave this much more and you shudder with fear and think no I can't do that I can't give any more to the church or to missions or to anything else then you're hanging on to something it's not a matter of going home today putting your house up for sale and then donating all the money that's not the point the point is can you start with small alignments and adjustments in the things that you do with your wealth so that God through that begins to make larger adjustments on your heart because at the end of the day this is not about money it's really not it's not what Jesus' concern is it's what Jesus draws to the end of both of these sections of teachings on money and he just simply brings it to a point you can't serve God in money this is about whether or not you serve God this is about whether or not you trust and treasure Jesus with all of who you are that's what it's about which means that if you're sitting in here and you don't know Christ in a saving way if you've never repented of your sins if you've never trusted in him then probably this money stuff doesn't make any sense to you why does Jesus talk about money so much why do preachers preach it why is it even a concern why does anybody care about what we do with money shouldn't we just be talking about spiritual stuff

Jesus is very much concerned that we understand that what we do with physical stuff reflects who we are in our hearts and if you don't know Christ and this doesn't make any sense to you then you need more than a slight realignment of your heart you need a new heart and God says he can give it he says repent of your sins and trust in Christ and he'll begin such a work in you that you couldn't

imagine so that you begin to become a person no longer obsessed with stuff or what you can accomplish you become a person lives for Christ serves Christ and in all the plenty that you have you lay it down for the sake of Christ let's pray