

Matthew 6:19-34 | “What Do You Seek After?”
Preached on June 18, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 6, and we will start in verse 19, but we will finish out the chapter this morning. *[pause]*

In our Sunday morning time, we have been looking at the theme of discipleship in the book of Matthew.

And this book truly helps us to see what a disciple is, how a disciple ought to live, and what a disciple’s mission is. *[pause]*

We are currently in the Sermon on the Mount, and in it, we are hearing about how a disciple ought to live. *[pause]*

We looked at the Beatitudes, which showed us some foundational qualities that a disciple should have.

We saw how we are to be salt and light in the world, making an impact for the glory of God.

We learned what true righteousness looks like, it’s not fake or merely external, but it comes from the heart.

And we zoomed in on how a disciple ought to pray, seeing that we should pray God-oriented, God-dependent prayers. *[pause]*

Now Jesus will go on to talk about two different topics, but they both have something in common...

They both have to do with our money and possessions, for He will talk about wealth and worry. *[pauseeee]*

What do you prioritize and value?

It’s what you prioritize and value that you seek after the most. *[pauseeee]*

I think of the many books about pirates seeking treasure.

You know the stories where there’s this hidden treasure buried somewhere.

Somehow they obtain a map that has an X on it, which shows them where the treasure is supposedly buried.

And what do they do?

They do anything to find that treasure. *[pause]*

They are willing to hurt or kill others to get the treasure.

They will be disloyal or lie to get it.

They will even partake in a mutiny, if it comes to it. [pauseee]

While most of us wouldn't go to those extremes to get treasure, in many ways we can be like those pirates.

We may not have patches on our eyes, wooden legs, or sail in ships, yet we seek treasure just the same. [pause]

So many will do most anything to get more and more earthly treasure.

And if we don't have much earthly treasure, we worry. [pauseeeee]

It's bad enough that we each struggle with wanting more, but we are also indoctrinated by our culture, too.

We are bombarded with the message of "you need this!" or "just a little more will do."

There are hundreds of books on how to get rich quick, or a myriad of books on the pathway to financial success. [pause]

The wealthy flaunt their wealth, and no one bats an eye.

Others pursue getting rich, making it their life purpose, and we act like it's normal.

And many think that money will solve all of life's problems, for just think of how people act like if only everyone had enough money to live on, the world would become a utopia. [pause]

But would it?

Does having money solve all your problems?

Certainly not, for the Bible actually shows us that having lots of money brings with it its own temptations. [pause]

So what exactly is wrong with this, and what's the way forward?

Jesus will teach us in this vital passage on wealth.

Let's READ verses 19-24. [READ]

In this passage, Jesus shares with us two things to not do, and so I've put it this way...

There are two common, yet wrong pitfalls when it comes to money and possessions.

They are pitfalls because they don't seem so bad at first, but they are not good, for they are dangerous, if let go in a life.

And the first one is...

I. Storing up more and more earthly treasures.

For some people, they think, “What’s so bad about storing up earthly treasures?”

“What’s so bad about creating a nestegg of money?”

“What’s so bad about storing up more and more stuff?”

Yet we cannot follow our own thoughts and wisdom, but we must follow Christ’s word, and He says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.” *[pause]*

Treasures are valuables kept and stored up for oneself.

This points mostly to money and possessions, but can also entail whatever you prize most. *[pause]*

What Jesus tells us is that we are NOT to store up these things.

This goes directly against what has been ingrained in us through our culture. *[pause]*

In our culture, it tells us to get more and more, but Jesus says, “Don’t store up more.” *[pauseeee]*

But why is it that we typically want to lay up for ourselves treasures on earth?

One reason is for *security*. *[pause]*

We feel as though the more that we gather and set aside, the more secure we will be.

We fill our barns, so to say, so that we feel more comfortable with an unknown future.

But what happens is that we never feel like enough is enough because disaster could strike and wipe it all out. *[pause]*

Many people know this firsthand, as their investments in times of recession have been hit hard and they lost thousands of dollars.

Or some people have lost everything in a fire, and so you quickly realize that money and stuff don’t truly bring security. *[pause]*

There is definitely a place for being wise with our money, making sure to provide for our family, and things like that.

Yet there can be a line crossed where we place our trust in this wealth, instead of in God. *[pause]*

You see, this desire to store up based on security shows something about our hearts.

It shows a heart that doesn’t trust God, but trusts in wealth.

Yet wealth is a horrible place to put your security in, for Jesus even says that these treasures on earth are prone to moth, rust, and theft. *[pause]*

That's like trusting a long piece of tape to hold you as you cross a ravine. *[pauseeee]*

What else drives a seeking after more? *Significance and status.*

Some people store up treasures on earth to look good to others.

They want to be seen as high up in the world, and significant, so they have multiple houses.

They think, "Just look at me and my wealth and luxurious lifestyle."

They feel the need to get more, so that their house can look a certain way, so as to impress others or feel better about themselves. *[pauseeee]*

What happens is that some become workaholics in order to obtain or keep a certain lifestyle.

Their life's purpose becomes about *more.* *[pause]*

But that's such a sad way to live because they are living for only the here and now.

They are seeking only what's temporary and earthly, rather than what's eternal. *[pauseeee]*

Some dads work so much, not merely to make ends meet, but to keep up a certain lifestyle, and their kids suffer.

They are never around, and their kids' lives are not invested in, and then the parents wonder why the kids turned out the way that they did. *[pause]*

Fathers, this is Father's Day, so this is a great time to reflect upon your life - this can't be what your life is about!

It can't be about your kingdom and status among your peers.

It can't be about selfish pleasure, comfort, or fun, just so you can have that new boat, car, or gun. *[pause]*

You are focusing on things that are open to decay or theft, and these things won't last into eternity.

But investing in your children and spouse, discipling them to follow Christ above all *matters for eternity.* *[pause]*

Serving in the church, encouraging others, being generous with your money, and things like that are things that last. *[pauseeee]*

As many of you know, I love history, and so for fun, I read a book all about the Pilgrims who first came over to America and the *Mayflower* that they sailed on to get here.

Well in it, the author described how the Native Americans admired the possessions that the English had so much so that they wanted to be buried with possessions to make sure that the mysterious power of the possessions went with them to the afterlife.¹ [pause]

That's so sad, isn't it?

Yet how many of us act like our possessions are going to last and are *so* important? [pauseee]

What's going to truly matter as you lay on your deathbed?

Are you really going to be so thankful for all of the *stuff* you accumulated over the years?

It's just going to go to someone else, decay over time, or possibly be stolen someday. [pauseeeee]

No, what will truly matter is what lasts for eternity!

So we must lay up treasures in heaven, not on earth, Jesus says!

We are to seek what's eternal.

Moth, corrosion, and thieves can't get to the treasures laid up in heaven.

They are protected and preserved there. [pauseeeeeee]

So what are treasures in heaven?

They are the things that matter for eternity.

They are the things done in the name of the Lord and for the cause of Christ.

They are the things done in obedience to Him. [pause]

In Luke 12:33, we see that selling what we have and giving to the poor is just one example of storing up treasure in heaven.

But there's many things that they involve. [pause]

It's discipling that struggling believer.

It's generously giving of your time and money to someone in need.

It's proclaiming the gospel to those who need Christ.

¹ Philbrick, Nathaniel. *Mayflower: Voyage, Community, War*. (HarperPress, 2006), 190-191.

It's showing the forgiveness, love, and kindness of Christ to others, even when they don't deserve it. *[pause]*

By living for the Lord here and now, we are laying up treasures in heaven that are stored away for us in the future.

And someday God will give us our heavenly rewards. *[pauseeee]*

These treasures don't gain our standing with God, but they are an outworking of someone who trusts in Christ.

They look with eyes of faith beyond today, and see an eternity in Heaven with the Lord that matters infinitely more than some extra money or extra possessions gained today. *[pauseeee]*

You see, Jesus explains to us that our view of money, and how we use it reveals our hearts.

He says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." *[pause]*

Our treasure and our heart are connected, so wherever the treasure is, the heart will be there. *[pauseee]*

For some people they think, "It's just stuff, it doesn't affect my relationship with God."

But Jesus is teaching us that our treasure and heart will always be in the same place.

Show me where your treasure is, and I know where your heart is. *[pauseeeee]*

Jesus' teaching here is basically opening up the curtain in front of materialism to show us what's truly behind it.

And he shows us that if all of your treasure is money and stuff on earth, you are serving money, not God.

But if your treasure is in heaven, then your heart is looking with faith to the future, and you are serving God, not money.

For as Christ explains, we cannot serve God and money, so we serve Him, and we use our treasures on earth to store up treasures in heaven. *[pauseeee]*

I'll give one more illustration from that book that I read on the Pilgrims and the *Mayflower*.

There was a group of Native Americans who converted to Christianity, and so another group of non believing Native Americans approached these new Christians and asked them what Christianity gave them in material goods...

And they replied by saying, "we serve not God for clothing, nor for any outward thing."² *[pause]*

² Ibid., 192.

We aren't here to serve God *and* money, for you can't serve both, but you must pick one.

Who will you serve? God or money?

What will you truly be about? Earthly treasures that don't last, or heavenly treasures that last for eternity? *[pause]*

Fathers, what are you about?

Mothers, what about you?

Single adults, children, what is it that drives you in life?

Serving God or money? Serving God or getting stuff? *[pause]*

May we not lay up treasures on earth, but lay up treasures in heaven, knowing that it will be worth it because the Lord is worth serving with our lives. *[pauseeee]*

Now after all of this, someone may think, "If I am serving God and not money, then how will my needs be taken care of?"

And that's why Jesus moves right into anxiety over basic necessities. *[pauseeeee]*

So one pitfall when it comes to money and possessions is the extreme of storing up more and more.

But there's another common, yet wrong pitfall when it comes to money and possessions, and it's...

II. Worrying over not enough.

Let's READ what Jesus says. *[READ VERSES 25-34]*

Anxiety is a sneaky, silent, and subtle sin.

It comes upon us quickly, often silently, and it glides under our "sin radar" so that before we even realize it, we have been worrying up a storm. *[pause]*

We start to worry over something and don't even think much about it, and we don't see it as *that* big of a deal.

We often think it's innocent or at least justified because we feel like we have good reasons to do so. *[pauseeee]*

Anxiety is also a *pervasive* sin.

Show me someone who hasn't dealt with at least some worry in their life, and I'd be shocked.

The more I talk to people, the more that I find out how truly widespread it is.

And it's probably even more prevalent than we think, for it can be a very hidden struggle.

[pause]

Worriers have learned to hide their worry, so as to not look too crazy.

No one wants to be “that guy” or “that girl” who can't seem to handle even the most mundane moments without inwardly freaking out. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus tells us straightaway what NOT to do, “do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.”

And then he opens up the curtain in front of anxiety, and why we shouldn't give into it. *[pause]*

He shows us that anxiety is *short-sighted*.

Christ says, “Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

He even gives 2 nature examples to remind us of how God provides for even small things in this world, so wouldn't He provide for us? *[pause]*

But anxiety blinds us to these realities.

It's short-sighted, and not focused on true reality, for it's consumed with the “what-if's” and “what-then's”. *[pause]*

In fact, worry turns us into practical atheists, for Jesus says that the Gentiles seek after these things. *[pause]*

The Gentiles here would mean unbelievers.

Unbelievers worry and seek after these things because they don't trust in God, and therefore, are only concerned with material things. *[pause]*

It makes sense for them to seek only material things, for it's according to their beliefs.

They have no cure for anxiety in the Father, and therefore, their priorities are material needs.

Their minds become dominated by these things, so why would our thinking and living be the same? *[pause]*

We aren't the same, for we know that we have a Heavenly Father.

But anxiety makes us short-sighted, for when we are anxious, we are neglecting to see the power and care of our Heavenly Father. *[pauseeee]*

In fact, worry demonstrates a lack of trust in God.

It reveals our hearts.

It's not just that our focus is off, but our hearts are askew. *[pause]*

Don't we trust that God is all-powerful, and can provide?

Don't we believe that He *cares* to provide?

Don't we know that He knows all things, and knows our needs? *[pause]*

So often we act like God is on our level, caught off guard by unexpected circumstances, and unable to provide amidst difficulties.

But let's get back to the basics: remembering who we serve.

It's not rocket science, and it's not some secret life hack, but it does take some dwelling upon your Lord, and who He is. *[pause]*

He's our Heavenly Father, who feeds the birds who don't have barns, and who clothes the lilies, who don't work.

Aren't we more valuable than them?

Don't we know that He *knows* all things, and therefore He knows that we need food, drink, and clothing? *[pause]*

So remember and trust your Father!

Think about who He is and what He has done - He knows, He cares, He provides. *[pauseeee]*

Worry and anxiety are also *irrational*.

Jesus says, "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" *[pause]*

Do you see what He's saying?

He's saying, "It's useless!"

Why would we do something that's useless?

None of us would try to empty the ocean with a cup, yet we try to add time to our lives with worry. *[pause]*

We are doing something that we *think* will help us, but in the end, it doesn't do anything.

And actually, Jesus goes on to show us that anxiety is not only useless, but it also *makes things worse*. *[pause]*

Look at verse 34, "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." *[pause]*

Worrying adds needless trouble to today's trouble.

Today has its own trouble, so why add needless, imaginary trouble to today's troubles by worrying? *[pause]*

If I called for a raise of hands of people who want their day to have more trouble, how many would raise their hands?

I doubt any of us, so then why would we do it by being anxious? *[pauseeee]*

The truth is that many of us are struggling *more* than we should because we are adding troubles onto our day by worrying about tomorrow.

Each day has its own troubles, but each day has its own God-given grace to meet them. *[pauseeee]*

How has anxiety helped you? Has it truly made your life better or worse?

Remember that anxiety is irrational, for it thinks that it can provide you with something beneficial, but it's useless and adds needless trouble onto your day. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus tells us that instead of anxiously seeking what we need, we should seek God's kingdom and His righteousness and God will provide what we need. *[pause]*

What's interesting is that many of us think that our basic provisions are what's most important in life, but Jesus shows us that actually God's kingdom and righteousness are what's most important. *[pause]*

To see basic provisions as most important is to think like an unbeliever, who considers survival and getting more as the basic, most foundational things in life.

But that's because if you believe that this life is all that there is, you will live that way.

But as Christ followers, we know that this life is not all that there is.

This life is more than food, drink, and clothing.

It's more than money, possessions, and stuff.

It's about God, His kingdom, His righteousness, and His glory!

He is to be put first above all things. *[pauseeeee]*

Seeking and serving the King and pursuing His agenda is what our lives are to be about. *[pause]*

We often think the priorities in our lives are our needs and our wants, but what are we demonstrating?

That's it all about *our* little kingdoms!

But Jesus tells us that the priority is God's kingdom, and He will take care of your needs along the way. *[pauseeee]*

In order to seek first God's purposes and agenda, we can't get caught up in worry.

But we are His servants, doing His bidding, knowing that He will provide for our needs as we pursue His interests.

He knows exactly what we actually need and when, so put Him first! *[pauseeee]*

Here's a diagnostic question: how often do you seek the things that you are worried about?

What if you spent that time not in anxiety, but in pursuit of God's kingdom, seeking to obey Him, make Him known, and make an impact for Him by service? *[pauseee]*

What is your life about?

God's kingdom and agenda or is it all about yourself and the material things that you can get? *[pause]*

Are you pursuing material things, and only the here and now?

Or are you pursuing what's most important and what's eternal: God, His kingdom, His purposes, and the way that He commands you to live?

Seek God's glory, purposes, and obey Him, instead of seeking material things in worry, and see God provide! *[pauseeee]*

In these two passages on wealth and worry, Jesus is pushing us to...

Look above and beyond this world to the Lord - seeking, serving, and trusting Him everyday!

As disciples of Jesus, our lives are not to be about our own little kingdoms, and the here and now.

We don't store up treasures on earth for ourselves, and we don't worry over what we need.

Rather, we look with faith beyond this world and the here and now, and serve for eternity, and trust our Father along the way for our needs. *[pause]*

How could we not when we remember what He has done for us in Christ Jesus?

Through Christ's life, death, and resurrection - He saved our soul, and has given us so many blessings, and now we have a living hope.³

If He has done that for us eternally in Christ, don't you think He cares for you today in your everyday moments? *[pause]*

It's when we truly look to Him - seeking, serving, and trusting Him - then we won't be about more and more money or possessions...

...Instead, we will generously give, knowing that we are storing up treasures in Heaven. *[pause]*

And when we look to Him - seeking, serving, and trusting Him - then worry flees, for we know He will provide, and we can serve Him with total commitment, and not divided attention.
[pause]

So how does this text help us in our study of discipleship in Matthew?

It shows us that a disciple of Jesus is to put God first, and seek what's eternal.

When you do that, money-grubbing and worry-compulsion can't coexist with trust in the Father, and the lens of eternity over our eyes.

³ See 1 Peter 1:3.