

The Sermon on the Mount (Part 2)

The New People of God

Study 12 – Treasures of the Heart

Introduction

There is no doubt that we live in a materialistic culture, a culture in which what we earn, what we own, where we live, what we wear, what we drive play a large part in defining who we are, not least in the eyes of others. In this culture we are often ruled by “I see– I like –I want – I buy”, even if the price tag is beyond our reach. Little wonder then that we also live in a culture crippled by debt, a culture in which generosity is all but extinct.

And yet for all the powerful appeal of a culture shaped around things there is also a deep sense of emptiness and dissatisfaction with a materialistic view of life. We can't always put it into words, but deep down we know that we are more than what we own, that we are made for something deeper and greater than the perpetual pursuit of things.

It is precisely this ‘something more’ that Jesus is referring to in Matthew 6:19-24. He does not despise the material world for He is its Creator and Lord, but He makes it very clear indeed that material things are meant to be our servants not our masters. True life begins in our hearts and our hearts, says Jesus, are designed for God. Because of this, our fundamental choice in life cannot be *both/and* – it must be *either/or*. According to Jesus - and He should know! - we cannot serve both God and money.

The passage consists of three sections, centred on three images. Verses 19-21 speak about treasure and the heart, verses 22-23 about the eye as the lamp of the body, the window to the heart and verse 24, about servants and masters. In each of these, Jesus has one primary concern in mind and that is to warn His disciples against the spiritually destructive, but all too common, sin of materialism. We will do very well indeed to pay careful attention to His words.



Read Matthew 6:19-24

1. What does Jesus forbid and what does He command in verses 19-21?
2. What do you think Jesus means when He speaks about treasures on earth and treasures in heaven?
3. Why does Jesus want His disciples to store up treasure in heaven rather than treasure upon earth?
4. What is surprising about verse 21?
5. What point is Jesus making in verse 21?
6. What truth does Jesus have in mind when He describes the eye as the lamp of the body?

