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Where Your Heart Is

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Matthew 6:19-34

[Concerning Treasures]

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[The Sound Eye]

²² “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; ²³ but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

[Serving Two Masters]

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

[Do Not Worry]

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ ³² For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴ “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

One of my part-time jobs in seminary was taking care of two little boys named Michael and Brian. They had a giant dog named Winston and about 5,000 Star Wars toys. One day when I was there, Winston ate one of Brian's Happy Meal X-wing fighters, and Brian cried and cried. Trying to comfort him, Michael said, "It's okay, it was just a little one." To which Brian said, "Yes, but it was one of my *favorite* little ones."

Almost every English rendering of Matthew 6 has left me feeling just like Brian – like I'm not allowed to have more than one favorite thing. That I have to pick, or Jesus is going to pick for me. Just like Winston – spoiling all the fun. Or, maybe not.

Treasures. When Jesus talks about them in the Sermon on the Mount, he's not talking about trinkets and toys. He's talking about the things we bet our lives on; the things we live with, like we can't live without. Money, or wealth, is Jesus' word for it – "mammon." Security.

On what form of security do you bet your life: money? work? reputation? power and influence? Honestly, I'm not sure what the Sermon on the Mount sounds like, adjusted for our own time and place. We aren't much like those Galilean peasants who first heard him preach it. We aren't poor, oppressed, occupied by a foreign government. At face value though – it seems to me – he wants anyone with ears to hear to consider what we treasure and ask ourselves, simply, would you bet your life on it? I've no commentary to guide me in these thoughts.

I've not studied half enough to preach this week, but the idea of treasure has surely been on my heart and mind. We've had a slightly scary week, my best friend and I. *[Note: Pastor Annette's husband was in the hospital for several days. He is doing fine now.]* Our life together is a precious treasure, and I'll not believe God would make me choose. I don't even know myself apart from him. But I know that our life together rests in our life in God, the greater stream of the life of the Almighty, and that in that stream our little life together is but a bitty rivulet.

Our marriage; our family; this church; this country; this planet; this century – all just tiny teacups of time in the ocean of eternity. And money something way less than that. Possessions, careers, and politics – something smaller still. And one slightly scary week – or year! – is but a hiccup to eternity, where life and love persist endlessly.

Consider where your treasure lies, Jesus says, because your heart lies there too. Not a particularly Christian thing to say, in that all religions have some version of the same. Yet, who doesn't struggle to remember? – most especially on days that take a sudden turn.

I know the larger Sermon on the Mount text is about realizing that the kingdom of God is here and now; that it is possible to live joyfully in the midst of scary circumstances; that

it is possible to develop hearts and minds that love what God loves, the will to do what God wants done in this world, and not feel as if we are being denied some good life we might have had if Jesus weren't so demanding. The sermon on the mount is about asking us to realize God asks us to choose – not as a vindictive commandment, but because God loves us, knows what's best for us, and wants us to be happy, to have joy and to love this life, however tiny a life it is in the greater stream of things. And putting our whole hearts into what will never make us happy, Jesus says – kindly, it seems me – is a dumb plan.

If my dog Scout finds some good treat on the floor, a strawberry or cheese cube, she'll pick it right up and eat it. But if it's something *really* yummy – a good chew bone or an almost empty peanut butter jar – she'll wait until no one is around before she takes it from the floor and then goes and hides to eat it, where she seems to believe the other dog can't see her, plain as day. It's just too good a treat to be true, so she treats it like it isn't.

That God loves us the way the Bible says God loves us is a hard thing to believe, so we love lesser things rather than be disappointed. We disappoint ourselves rather than be tricked or cheated and then made a fool of, forgetting once again who it is we follow. "Despised and rejected" is how Matthew and the others describe it. We want Jesus, but only the clear and well-cut parts.

Too bad life isn't like that. We can look a whole lot better outside than we really are on the inside. But that isn't living, that's pretending. We want in the stream, remember. The panic and plunder are flotsam on the way, but they will not drown us nor save us. They cannot.

I've not studied half enough, friends. But one thing was clear as a bell to me this week. The treasures of our lives aren't things, and no money in all the world could ever buy or replace them. They are love and life, and they come from God alone.

Would you pray with me?