

³² “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

³⁵ “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. ³⁷ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. ³⁸ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. ³⁹ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

The Treasure Test

1. Where is Your Heart? (32-34)

2. Are You Prepared? (35-40)

In the name of Jesus, our Savior, dear friends,

If you were fortunate enough to have been here in worship last Sunday, you heard an excellent sermon from Pastor Clemons on the danger of greed and how it gives you a false view of life and leads to a fool's death. And if you were here last week and now you're here today staring down a sermon titled “The Treasure Test,” you might be thinking, *“Seriously, two sermons in a row that deal with money?!”* While that would be okay, since God talks A LOT about money in the Bible, that's not the case this morning. Today isn't really about money—unless you need it to be. Then it is. Sort of. Let me explain.

Prior to speaking the words before us this morning, Jesus had preached his warning against greed and then encouraged his disciples not to worry. You might remember the pictures he used: you are more valuable to God than the birds of the air, God takes care of the lilies and the grass growing in the field, so he'll certainly take care of you. Don't worry, he said, about what you will eat or drink. Your heavenly Father will take care of all that as you make his kingdom your first priority. And then comes our text from Luke 12: 32-40.

The first words are these: **“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

We begin with a promise from Jesus: **your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.** Just as Jesus was speaking to those who trusted in him as their Savior, I speak to you who also believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and our Savior from sin. We believe that from the perspective of looking back and seeing the accomplishment of our salvation through Jesus' spotless life and his innocent death.

We look back and his tomb is empty because he defeated death when he rose to life. We recall his ascending back into heaven and the promise of the angels that he will one day return. People like you and me—sinners who put their confidence in Christ for forgiveness—receive Jesus' promise that our Father in heaven **has been pleased to give you the kingdom!**

Just what does it mean that we possess the kingdom? Well, it means several things. It means that Christ rules in our hearts and minds—that the Holy Spirit has gifted us with faith in him and changed the way we think about things. It also means that Christ rules over our lives, blessing us every day in just the right ways. It means that we have a place in heaven reserved for us. This comes with the assurance that if we were to die right now, we would instantly be taken to our place in God's heavenly kingdom.

Focusing on our place in the kingdom of heaven is really what Jesus is after as he speaks these words to us this morning. Jesus only mentions possessions and money bags here to get us to draw our attention away from the things of this world and get us to focus on what is vital—the treasure that IS eternal life in heaven.

So Jesus teaches us not be overly attached to the things that we have, but instead, be willing to part with some in order to help others with acts of charity. We're careful to find holding places for our money—wallets, purses, piggy banks, banks and credit unions, online accounts, investments—all of which can be lost, stolen, robbed, or decline in value. Jesus says that preserving your place in heaven is the sure investment! It cannot be stolen! It cannot decrease in value!

If you were to compare earthly possessions and worldly wealth to the treasure that is your eternal salvation...well, there really is no comparison, is there?! I mean, if I were to ask just anyone off the street, who has no faith in Jesus, I could expect lots of opinions about acts of charity or focusing on money and life in this world. But Jesus wasn't just talking to just anyone, these were his disciples. And *you* are not just anyone; you are God's people. God **has been pleased to give you the kingdom!**

So you listen differently when Jesus talks to you and says, **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.** When the one who lived and died for you tells you this spiritual truth, it raises this question: "WHERE IS YOUR HEART?" Jesus says that wherever your heart is—whatever you love the most, whatever is central to your life, whatever gets your attention above everything else, whatever guides the way you think and the things that you do and the way you spend your time—that is your treasure. So what do you treasure? And I suppose the test question that follows your response—to see if your answer is really the truth or just the thing you think you're supposed to say, is this: If the thing you say is truly your treasure, does the way you live your life make that obvious?

This is why I said at the start, today isn't really about money—unless you need it to be. If the almighty dollar has risen to prominence in your mind and heart and the evidence from your life is pretty compelling, then you do need to consider money and its role in your life. You *do* need to think about the treasure of God's kingdom and whether you've allowed earthly treasure to jeopardize your faith and your eternal life. You *do* need to think about whether the spreading of the kingdom's gospel has the prioritized position in your management of God's financial gifts to you that he says it ought to. Maybe the truth is that earthly treasure *is* your treasure. If so, Jesus calls you to repentance along with the rest of us.

I say “with the rest of us” because there's not one of us who always prizes Christ and his kingdom above all things. If you haven't given your affection over to money, your love has fallen upon your family members in a disproportionate way. They are the focus of your life—even before God. You may say that's not so, but there is compelling evidence. You ignore or minimize their sin. You get angry at another Christian or a pastor who points that sin out. You care for your child in every earthly way, but godly things take second place, things like home devotions, Sunday School, Confirmation, teaching your children to help out at church, prioritizing worship ahead of kids' sports and clubs and many other things.

Perhaps that's not it either. For you though, it's the good times and the partying. It's late Saturday nights—going out, watching TV, playing video games—that make getting up for church pretty difficult—or make it pretty hard to pay attention to God if you do make it here. It's the fun-and-entertainment-heavy schedule that prevents you from serving at church when your church family could really use those particular gifts the Lord has blessed you with. There's not much room for supporting the spread of the gospel because supporting all your fun is all you can manage. Maybe *you've* become the idol—you treasure *you* and it shows.

Maybe I just swung and missed three times and struck out with you. You don't put money or people or fun ahead of the treasure that is faith and eternal life. Or maybe it's not one of those things *all the time*. But the sad truth is that there are times when we do not make the treasure that is God's kingdom and our salvation the most important thing that we have. For one thing we've done or another, for some sinful times, for a sinful penchant that we have, we all need to ask forgiveness from Jesus, the One who earned our salvation and who sent the Holy Spirit to give us faith.

Jesus is the one who can extend that forgiveness because when he offered up his sinless life, part of that sinlessness was his perfect love and dedication to the kingdom of God. He made weekly worship and festival worship priority in his life. He shared the good news of God's kingdom with people. He helped to spread the kingdom throughout the world by training his disciples. He was sinless when it came to the God's kingdom. That perfection offered on the cross matters because it pays for these very kinds of sins of ours. So yes, I am guilty and so are you, but we are assured of our forgiveness in Jesus and he calls us to forget those past sins and go forward treasuring God and his kingdom above all else.

If we will do that, we will be prepared like Jesus urges us to be: **“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”**

If Jesus and the salvation he has given to you is your treasure, you will be prepared. You'll be prepared for Jesus, the Son of Man, to return on the Last Day just like servants who have the lights on and are ready to answer the door for their master as he gets home from a wedding reception. And as those servants in Jesus' picture were rewarded by the master as he served them, so you will receive the reward of eternal life with the Master of our souls, the Son of God who took the form of a servant as the Son of Man to accomplish your salvation!

ARE YOU PREPARED? Are you prepared like the owner of the house who knew that a thief was arriving at his door? That homeowner would stop the thief exactly because he was prepared. It's that kind of preparation that is required of the Christian at all times because Jesus says that he **will come at an hour when you do not expect him**. Jesus speaks of the Last Day, the day he will come with salvation for those who treasure him and the salvation he earned and the day he will bring judgment upon those who rejected him. That is the last day of this world's existence and the pronouncements of eternal life or eternal death are final.

I assure you, these words of Jesus are not simply pre-event hype like we hear with sporting events or election-time media coverage. This is Jesus encouraging those who have been given the kingdom to hold onto it and treasure it above everything else so that they are prepared to hear him say, **“Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world (Matthew 25:34).”**

Jesus says, **“Don't be afraid.”** Don't be afraid that you won't be cared for if you put the kingdom of God as your highest treasure. Don't be afraid that your sins of treasuring other things have prevented you from seeing the kingdom of heaven—Jesus paid for those and you are totally forgiven. In that state of grace in which you live, your Savior urges you: **Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning.** In other words, know that he is returning to take you to be with him in heaven and prepare for it! Expect it! Treasure it! Amen.

Now the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.