

What Are You Living For?

Matthew 6:19-34

Mark Vroegop

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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 bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will 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.

25 "Therefore I tell you, 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. 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 which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious 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 arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

34 "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble (Matthew 6:19-34)

So far we have seen that superficial religion surfaces in how we think about certain sins and charitable deeds. Chapter 5 showed us that it is superficial to think that real righteousness is not just committing certain sins. Then, the first section of chapter 6 took that one step further showing us that real righteousness involves doing the right things for the right reasons. So we've seen two things: 1) When it comes to sin - the heart matters, 2) When it comes to good works – motives matter.

Now next week we are going to take a break from our study in Matthew for a series on relationships called "How to Kill Relationships and Irritate People." My hope is that August will be a very practical month for your soul as we wrestle with various relationship killers, starting with pride next week.

Today, we are going to learn that there is a third category when it comes to righteousness, and it relates to this question: What are you living for? Real righteousness involves obedience in the heart, good deeds with God-glorifying motives, and a focus in life that is Godward.

What is your purpose in life? What are your goals about? What motivates you? What drives you? What do you spend time, money, and energy doing? And do those things relate more to an orientation toward God and his kingdom or do they fit more with an earthly and self-centered perspective?

Verses 19-34, when taken together, show that real righteousness is not just about what we do or don't do; it is also about what we are living for. And Jesus calls us to live with a bent, a focus, and an orientation toward God's kingdom. In other words, **getting real means living for the right goal.**

I'm going to divide this text into two sections or two questions that relate to the question – what are you living for? The first deals with stuff and the second with anxiety.

1. Are you living for God or gain? (vv 19-24)

First, let me give you an overview of this section. Jesus begins with a very clear command – “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (vv 19-21). That is followed by a difficult statement regarding the eye as the lamp of the body (vv 22-23), and then we hear that “no one can serve two masters...you cannot serve God and money” (v 24). There are three sections that all center around one question: Are you living for God or gain?

Where is your treasure?

There are few things more personal and defining than what we do with our money. And it is important to note here that Jesus not only knows this, but he targets this area as a critical point of focus for what it means to get real.

Now when Jesus is talking about treasure, he is not just talking about money. By definition treasure certainly includes money but it is far more than that. The word refers to that which is deposited, stored, or accumulated. Treasure is the stuff in life that we desire, want, and work to get. So you could think of it in other terms – like possessions, stuff, assets, bling-bling, and valuables. But you could also think of it in terms of anything that we want and work to get: promotion, esteem, praise, and glory. Treasure is the commodity of personal advancement.

Notice that the focus is less on the specifics of what the treasure is and more on its location (“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures **on earth...**”). The problem with earthly treasure (in all its forms) is that it is insecure – it is susceptible to the fallenness of the world. The natural

world (moths and rust) and human depravity (thieves who steal) make earthly treasure constantly susceptible to loss. It is a bad investment; it is a superficial way to live. In contrast, Jesus encourages that living for heavenly treasure is far better. So notice that Jesus is not calling his disciples to be unmotivated, careless, wimpy, weak, or ambitionless. Rather, he is calling for the values of his disciples to be expressed in the real world of what they spend money on, what they collect, what they long for, what they esteem, and what they value. And he connects this to the heart – “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” In other words the location of our investment shows what our real values are.

Money and the heart are inseparable. The things that we really love are the things that we spend money on. Additionally, the things that we spend money on captivate our hearts. The heart is involved on both ends. Just think of the last major purchase you made. Think about how much time you researched, discussed, and evaluated the purchase. And then think about how you felt the morning you knew you were going to close the deal. Think about how you cared for the purchase, how careful you were with it after you bought it, how much you cleaned it. Think about how much happiness it brought you. Things can make us happy, and if we are not careful, things can become our treasure.

Which is why you have to give! Yes, I said *have to*. Listen, superficial religion is claiming to be a follower of Jesus and not having it show up in how you handle your money and how you give. And giving is the only remedy for materialism. So if you don't give you really give evidence that what you really love is gain not God. A lack of giving is one of the surest signs of superficial religion and hypocrisy.

What is your goal?

The next section is a hard passage until you replace the word “eye” with the word “goal” and the word “body” with the word “life”, capturing the real meaning behind the passage.¹ If you do that the passage would read: Your goals are the lamp of your life. If your goals are right, your whole life will be full of light, but if your goals are bad, your whole life will be full of darkness.” Do you see Jesus’ point? You felt this before. Some of you are living this way right now.

Jesus is saying here that if your goal is to live for this life, it ruins everything. If your goal of life is all about the here and now, getting to the top, making lots of money, buying all the stuff your heart wants, and making a name for yourself – how the great the darkness will be! Again, Jesus is not against ambition, personal growth, or even wealth! But he is very much against seeing those things as the end because viewing treasure through that lens means that the real object of the earthly treasures and the real reason you live is for you! You live for your own gain and not God.

¹ Fredrick Bruner, The Christbook – Matthew 1-12, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004), 323.

We need to be warned here about the goals in our hearts that no one sees: craving a promotion because of the power it will give you, buying a car because of the image it presents, financing a home you can't afford because it is what all your friends are doing, longing for the latest technology because of the crowd you will be with. Again Jesus is not against promotion, cars, houses, and cell phones. He's against the lust for personal glory that can be so connected to what we do with money.

Who is your master?

Verse 24 brings a final summary to what Jesus is saying. There is a principle – “No one can serve two masters,” and an application – “You cannot serve God and money.” He indicates that the heart doesn't functionally pledge allegiance to two masters – “for either {you} will hate the one and love the other or {you} will be devoted to the one and despise the other.” You cannot have two masters.

Now it is important that you not limit the scope of this command to just money. You might think, “Well, I don't have a lot of money – so this is not a problem.” Or you might think, “I budget my money, I give regularly, and I don't overspend – no problem. But this verse is broader than that. Many of us grew up with another translation of this verse which sounded like this: “You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Mammon is means more than money. It includes possessions, property, wealth, and money. And yet the concept of mammon is even bigger than those things, which is why the NIV capitalizes the word money. It refers to the spiritual force that works to draw us into its orbit and out from the service of Christ.² It is the functional god of materialism, success, and gain.

Jesus is pressing the issue of divided loyalties or spiritual schizophrenia, and he is identifying the impossibility of living this way. In other words living for God and for your own success, living for God and materialism, living for God and possessions won't work. You cannot work for God and moonlight for gain.³

So Jesus wants us to look carefully at our treasure, our goals, and our master. He wants us to look carefully at what we are really living for, and this issue is very important for American Evangelical Christians. Why?

Because materialism, consumerism, and whole concept of the American dream is part of the cultural air we breathe, and it can wage war on our souls. Let me give you a few examples:

² Bruner, 325

³ IBID.

- It can lead a child to throw a tantrum at Target because her Mom wouldn't buy her the newest Dora doll today.
- It can cause a teenager to beg, plead, and "do anything you want" so that he can have cell phone because a cell phone has now replaced car keys as a status symbol.
- It can lead a college student to constantly buy the latest technological gadget because he hates being viewed as "old-school."
- It can lead newly a married couple to go into debt way over their heads because they cannot imagine living below the standard of living that their parents had.
- It can lead a worn-out, depressed mom to head to mall when she feels down because buying a new outfit feels so good.
- It can lead an aspiring, professional to sacrifice his or her ethics and family by being consumed with making Regional Vice-President.
- It can lead to buying homes, cars, memberships, clothes, jewelry, vacations, and education not just because they are necessarily but because of what they will bring.

Let me be clear: the problem is not money or stuff. Poor and wealthy people share the same bent. We all have to ask ourselves – Am I living for God or am I living for gain?

2. Are you living for worship or worry? (vv 25-34)

The next section also relates to the question of what we are living for, and it is directly connected to the previous section. That is why the first word of verse 25 is "therefore." Jesus takes the teaching regarding money, possessions and things, and he pushes it even further showing us the ramifications as it relates to worry and anxiety.

The message for this entire section could be summarized like this: If your treasure, goal and master are in God, then you need not worry. There are two implications of this:

- Living for the fleeting gain of this world will result in worry because of the temporary nature of everything that you hope to gain.
- Worry is a belief problem, and is therefore sinful.

How is worry sinful? There are two main reasons. First, it reflects a lack of trust in God since the anxious person lives as though God does not care. Secondly, it reflects a lack of acceptance of God's providence in our lives since the anxious person lives as though God is not really in control.⁴ So worry doubts God's love and his power, and that is why it is sinful.

⁴ Jerry Bridges, Respectable Sins, (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 2007), 64.

Jesus calls us to see that worry is another expression of living for the wrong goal, living with the wrong focus, and he calls his followers to live in a God-centered, worshipful trust. Worry is a symptom of earthly-mindedness, and to combat it Jesus gives seven promises:⁵

1. Life is more than food and clothing (v 25)

The first promise highlights the fact that there are bigger things in life than food and clothing. Jesus says, "Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" He is telling us here that there is a bigger picture that we need to keep in mind. We all know it to be true that we are too quickly consumed by the wrong things. Life is more than getting what I want!

2. You are more valuable than birds (v 26)

I thought about changing this point to sound more respectable. Such as: "You are most valuable to God" or "You are loved more than anything in creation" or "God will take care of you." But I chose to leave birds in the promise because Jesus chose them as an example for a reason. He is saying here that God provides for one of the simplest and meaningless creatures on the earth; he will certainly provide for you. That is why Jesus says, "Look at the birds." The point here is not so much about your value as it is about God's power. God is able to provide for meager and relatively meaningless creatures like birds, surely he can care for you.

3. Worry does you no good (v 27-28a)

Okay this is very simple – worry doesn't do a thing! It accomplishes nothing. In fact worry is my attempt to try and do something about an uncontrollable event. It is a subtle assault on God's rule. If you could do something about the circumstances, you would. But since you can't – rather than trust – you worry. And it does nothing.

4. God overflows with care (v 28b-30)

How much care does God have? He is never limited in what He has. He takes care of the lilies of the field, even making them beautiful without any effort on their part. God overflows with care for the most meaningless flowers in the field. He cares for you so much more. Therefore, we have to believe that God has not, nor ever will run out of the resources to care for our needs.

5. God knows what you need (v 31-32)

God is not sitting on the sidelines or asleep at the wheel of your life. The gap that you feel between what you want and what you have does not mean that God has abandoned you or

⁵John Piper, Future Grace, (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 1995), 56-59.

that he doesn't care or that he is playing games with your life. God knows what you need better than you do. And he will act to supply what you need when the time is best.⁶

6. God will give you all you need to do his will and give him glory (v 33)

Here is a great challenge and a great promise that summarizes almost everything this morning: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." What does this mean? It means that "if you will give yourself to his cause in the world, rather than fretting about your private material needs, he will make sure that you have all you need to do his will and give him glory."⁷

7. There's enough grace for each day (v 34)

This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible because I used to hate it. Seriously, what Jesus says at first doesn't seem comforting. "Sufficient for each day is its own trouble" sound like someone saying, "Don't worry about tomorrow because it is going to really bad." That isn't comforting! However Jesus is saying something very important. Namely, that there is enough grace for the troubles that we face TODAY. In other words, you cannot pull tomorrow's grace in for today's issues, and you don't have grace for tomorrow's troubles yet. Therefore, worrying is trying to deal with life's issues without the God-given and timely supply of grace.

These seven promises are given to us so that we can win the battle worry. How do you use them? You preach them to your heart when the flooding feelings of worry come crashing down upon you. As Martin Lloyd-Jones used to say, you grab a hold of yourself and speak truth to your heart. You preach God's truth to your earthbound, possession shackled, materialistic, circumstantial heart.

It means you do two things: First, get tough with yourself and pray through the seven promises or as many as you can remember: "Lord help me, this worrying is sinful, it isn't doing a thing, I know that I can trust you; you have everything I need; I want to do you will; and I believe that there is enough grace for what I face today." Secondly, use the temptation to worry as a reminder for what you are really living for – "God, my heart is so weak; I'm so filled with anxiety, and I want to renew my commitment today to live for you glory, not my own satisfaction. Help my joy to be in you, not my circumstances. Help me to live for the worship of you not for worry."

So do you see how worry is connected to gain? They are rooted in the same soil! Worry and a lust for gain reflect a tethering of ourselves to earthly concerns – living for the wrong kingdom. Both of them, in different ways, beg the same question: what are you living for?

⁶ Piper, 58

⁷ Piper, 59

You see money, possessions, and circumstances are not the problem. Getting more money, finding a new job, selling your house, getting a raise, getting out of debt is not going to solve this! Because the real problem is something far more important – your goal in life!

Jesus came to save people from their sins. He came to bring us into a right relationship with God by giving his life for our sins. And those who receive Christ are not only forgiven, they now live for a new King. They live in this world with an other-world mentality. They see everything through a lens of Jesus. That is why if you haven't received Jesus you will always live for the non-fulfilling things in the life – the new job, the new relationship, the new city, the new hairstyle, the new technology – but it will never satisfy. And that is also why you will never be free from worry. In fact you **should be** worried. Why? Because you are living for the wrong reasons.

Real religion means living for the right goal. It means that we do not let the shackles of earthly goods and stuff and gain hold us. It means that when life is uncertain we do not let our minds go down unhelpful and unholy paths.

It means that we chose to live for **God** not gain; we choose to live for **worship** not worry.

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