

**“Jesus' Take on the Heart”
(Matthew 6:19-24)
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Introduction:

In the Kingdom of God there can be no division of loyalty to the King. An absolutely sovereign and absolutely loving King requires absolute devotion. And few things compete more for our loyalty to King Jesus than money and possessions. We see this over and over again throughout scripture. For example, in the life of Jesus he once encountered a rich young ruler who thought he could navigate a spirituality that was divided. He thought he could be very religious and very materialistic. He thought he could love God and love money. And Jesus, with surgical precision told him to give all he has to the poor and follow him. What was Jesus saying? Jesus was saying that being a Christian isn't about rules. Being a Christian isn't about checking spiritual activities off your spiritual activities list. And being a Christian isn't about trying to achieve the best of both worlds. Jesus cuts to the heart of the matter and says that being a Christian is about Lordship, about Kingship. It's asking the question over and over and over again in our lives. “Who will be King?”

And it's a question that's repeatedly asked because our lives are always changing and evolving. Our circumstances change, our life stages change—we're children, then teens, then single adults, then married, then parents. Our wealth and status changes as well. We were once college students in debt w/ OSAP loans and now we're raking in 50K or more, we get promoted, we get demoted, we get pink slips, we retire. And it's during these times of change that the question gets asked again. “Who will be King?”

In today's Scripture, Jesus is asking that question yet again. He's asking every single one of us. “Who will be King?” “Where will your loyalty be—to yourself? To your money? Perhaps to your possessions? Or will it be to the King, will it be to Jesus?”

Let's take a closer look.

TNIV Matthew 6:19-24

¹⁹Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²²“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”

²⁴“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

When reading a passage like this we need to be careful of two responses.

1. Be careful of reading into this passage absolutes which are not really there and reading the passage in a way that doesn't include the rest of the bible's teaching on money and

possessions. So people who fall into this trap will generally say things like. “All rich people go to hell.” Or “It is impossible to be rich and at the same time be a devoted follower of Jesus.” People who are like this tend to be self-righteous, judgmental, and Pharisaic. Probably, they are more unhappy with their own mediocrity and it’s most likely envy and self-loathing that drives them to say such things.

2. The other danger when reading a passage like this is compromising your devotion to Christ or accommodating your lifestyle to be nothing close to being fully devoted to Him. So this person would say things like, “That was then, this is now.” Or This person might say, “Well, I’m not as rich as that person” and try and justify themselves. Or “I still go to church and pray.” “I’m not a bad person. I didn’t steal this money or gain it through dishonest means.” But the truth of the matter is that this person loves money and possessions more than Jesus. This person is more committed to their financial portfolio than the Kingdom of God. They’re spending more time decided which car to buy next than they are to which soul to save. (If you sensed a bit of guilt there, that was intentional.) But let’s be honest with ourselves.

So what is this passage saying about money and possessions?

1. Money is not inherently evil. Money is inherently neutral. Money is a necessity. Last week we talked about food in the same way. Food is not evil. Gluttony is. Money is a tool for the work of God. Jesus and Paul had wealthy people who were generous supporters of their ministry. The bible says that it’s the **love** of money that that’s the root of all kinds of evils. (1 Timothy 6:10).
2. It is absolutely not a sin to be rich. Let’s be clear about this, okay? The bible was full of people who were rich, starting with the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Job was filthy rich. King David lived like an oil sheik. A godly man like Boaz (Ruth’s second husband) seemed to be in the middle/upper middle class. Wealth is a blessing of God, but it is wrong to think that all rich people are rich because they are more blessed by God. That’s the prosperity gospel. And as John Stott said, the prosperity gospel is not the gospel. I don’t think you can square that teaching with the Bible.

Many are rich because they are corrupt and because they are greedy. Many who are rich at the expense of their families and their health. Many who are rich live anything but a blessed life. So don’t fall into that thinking.

If God gives you the ability to be rich and he blesses you with wealth, you need not feel guilty about it. Instead be grateful and generous.

3. So it’s not a sin to be rich, but it is absolutely a sin to be greedy. Let’s be clear about this. It’s not a sin to be rich, but it is a sin to be greedy. Because you don’t have to be rich to be greedy. You could have very little and be incredibly tightfisted and stingy. Greed is everyone’s struggle. And we have to come to grips with it. It’s the love of money, greed, covetousness that is sin.

1 Timothy 6:9-10

⁹Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Here's the thing about greed. Greed will derail our spirituality every time. Greed and God are like oil and water—they can never mix. This is one of those things that every one of us will have to learn to navigate as we live out our lives as Christians.

What God desires of us instead is not greed, but generosity, every single time. Generosity is in the constitution of the Kingdom, it's in its DNA. And in the Kingdom of God there is no place for greed. If you've been motivated by greed. If money is the only reason you are switching jobs, or selecting one career over another, or choosing one offer over another, then you are greedy. And for that we must repent. There just is no place for that attitude in the Kingdom of God.

4. It is absolutely inconsistent to be a citizen of the Kingdom but not invest in the Kingdom.

Treasures in heaven are whatever is of good and eternal significance that comes out of what is done on earth (Carson). The investments are in heaven, but the investing is done on earth. Does that make sense? Let me repeat that. The investments are in heaven, but the investing is done on earth. So you and I cannot say, "Yay Jesus" and not put our money where our mouth is." You can't say I love you Jesus, and ignore the poor. You can't worship Jesus on Sunday and pursue greed on Monday. You can't ignore tithes and offerings and say the Kingdom of God and the church and missions and evangelism and children's ministry and my pastors and fellowship and biblical teaching are important to you. It is inconsistent.

For starters, Jesus in this passage is basically saying that investing in this world and ignoring kingdom investments is stupid. Now I know, you're wondering where does it say I'm stupid. I'll show you. Jesus makes a comparison that any child, any idiot would rightly choose.

¹⁹"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

He asks us, "Do you want to play with your pokemon cards now **or** go to Disney world tomorrow?" "Do you want a quarter now **or** a million dollars tomorrow?" "Do you want to be greedy now and go to hell tomorrow?" **or** "Do you want to be generous now and go to heaven tomorrow?" "Do you want to invest in something that is temporary, that has a 100% guarantee of failure **or** do you want to invest in something that is 100% secure and guaranteed and will yield an investment beyond your wildest imagination?"

Later in Matthew Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a Pearl of incredible worth. A worker was working in his master's field and in the process of cultivating and tilling, he comes across a pearl of infinite worth. And what does he do? He sells everything he has, he sells everything that's temporary, to get something of everlasting value and worth.

God is asking all of his citizens to make frequent deposits into kingdom reserves and investments. What are those things? What is it that Christ envisions of his kingdom? Peace, the elimination of poverty, the success of the church, the proclamation of the gospel. These are the things we should be investing in.

5. Our attitudes about money are indicators of our heart. You see the bible, time and time again, says that our attitudes and actions regarding money and possessions are one of the most accurate indicators of our spirituality. I think if we are honest with ourselves and with our

personal experience and observation of others, it would prove that this is true. So it's not the only indicator, but in conjunction with others, it becomes a very accurate indicator. What others would we include? Well, scripture and prayer. Loving relationships. Personal character. Fruit of the Spirit. Things like that. But over and over again in the bible we see that a person's attitude toward and usage of money becomes an accurate indicator of his or her spirituality. If we were to look at your possessions, if we were to look at your bank statements, what would it say about your heart? Why do you think we guard that so privately?

Folks, let's not deceive ourselves. Our attitudes toward money tell us who's Lord.

6. Understand that it is absolutely a sin to allow money and possessions to divide your loyalty to Jesus. We cannot live out divided loyalties.

¹⁹Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

This passage actually speaks of slavery and loyalty, that you can only have, you can only serve, you can only be loyal to one and only one master. This is because this passage is about the kingdom. And there can be no other lords to the Lord of Lords and no other kings to the King of Kings. There cannot be divided loyalty. We cannot love the gifts more than the giver of those gifts.

And so it is impossible to serve both money and Jesus. By trying to serve both, the default becomes the inability to serve the King. The language is very strong here. Love and hate. Devoted and despised. It's not about accommodating both. It's not both/and., rather it is either/or. You cannot serve both. Think about it. Can you work for both Coke and Pepsi? TD and RBC? Samsung and LG? Can you cheer for the Leafs and Canadiens? Yankees and Red Sox? Can you coach two teams at the same time? Can you own a Mac and a PC? Can you love two wives, two husbands? One is hard enough. Can you love both God and money? I say no. God says no. Our loyalty to Christ and his Kingdom cannot be divided.

The bible teaches us to learn contentment.

Philippians 4:7

¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Contentment must be learned in situations of need and in situations of plenty. Often times people think that contentment is only learned in poverty, when we have little or nothing, but I don't think that's true. It's when we have a lot that we also need to learn that this is enough.

1 Timothy 6:6-8

⁶But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Contentment forces us to look at eternity.

In v7 it says we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. This is one of those verses we should have plastered everywhere. It should be highlighted and underlined and memorized. It's a constant reminder of what is really important. God's

important. People are important. The Kingdom is important. It's a constant reminder of what is true. It reminds us that money is good, but it isn't everything. And these are lessons we need to keep learning.

Conclusion:

I think God would want us to have the heart of his servant Job.

Job 31:24-28

²⁴"If I have put my trust in gold
or said to pure gold, 'You are my security,'

²⁵if I have rejoiced over my great wealth,
the fortune my hands had gained,

²⁶if I have regarded the sun in its radiance
or the moon moving in splendor,

²⁷so that my heart was secretly enticed
and my hand offered them a kiss of homage,

²⁸then these also would be sins to be judged,
for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.