

Money!

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[0 : 0 0] So when you preach on the sermon on the mount, there's a necessary self-transcendence that has to happen as a preacher for both Derek and I. Because you know that every time Jesus gives one of these commands that you're really bad at it.

And so we're talking about idealized selves here. And this is a church community that has given my family so much. And so I preach this sermon very much knowing and thinking about that.

The greatest example in modern literature of what Jesus is talking about here and a character to is of course Tolkien. The Hobbit and the Lord of the Rings.

You remember in the Hobbit, Tolkien's one of his major points that he's trying to make is through the character of the dragon. Smog the terrible, smog the impenetrable.

And you remember it's the nature of dragons to go find places where lots of treasures stored up and to break in to kill everybody and then to bury themselves in it.

[1 : 0 8] And if you remember that's all they want to do. The dragon doesn't use the gold. He just lays in it. Or Tolkien does the same thing in a different way with Sauron in the Lord of the Rings trilogy.

You remember Sauron the Great Eye, he wants something and it's not gold, but he wants to possess the whole of the earth. He wants people.

He wants land. He wants everything. And he wants it just because he wants it. This is the two central motifs across all of Tolkien's writing. There's a great example of literature of the greed that we're talking about tonight.

And I think Tolkien was proposing to us a question that Jesus is proposing to us in this text and that's this. Is it stuff that truly makes you happy?

Is it mammon that really makes you happy? Do we need to have it? Do we have to have it? When you go to the bank on Friday with the check that you get from work and you put it into RBS or whatever it is into the deposit box, is that the location of your week where you say, Ah, security.

[2 : 2 9] I'm safe now. Or when you go on Saturday to Princess Street or wherever it is and you fill up the bag and you go to the checkout and you go home and you hang it up in your closet or put it in your cabinet, you say, Ah, now I'm okay.

This is what we're talking about. Now the context of this text is the Sermon on the Mount and we've been going through the Sermon on the Mount and there's two things we said every time that the Sermon on the Mount tells us about and the first thing is that Jesus comes to us in the Sermon on the Mount and he speaks with authority and he said, you've heard that it was said, but I'm now saying this to you and his point is to expose us.

You think you haven't committed adultery, but I'm here to tell you you have. He comes to expose us and so the first thing he says to us is this, look, you want to be a kingdom of God person, you can't do it.

I'm exposing you. If you want to be a kingdom of God person, you have to look at the one who's sitting right in front of you. That's the first point of the Sermon on the Mount, but the second point is this.

He then says, now if you know me, I'm calling you into action. The Sermon on the Mount is an ethic. It is a way of life. It's not just there to tell you you're a sinner that can't do things well.

[3 : 54] It's there to tell you you need to do something if you're saved in Christ. You have to step out and act into the world. It calls us into moral agency.

So what this passage is really getting to tonight. We're about to explore it a little bit is this. He's asking you to assess your desires.

This is fundamentally a text about desire, treasure. What do you love? What's your first love? What's your true love?

What do you love as an end into itself as an ultimate goal? Listen to what Augustine said about this text. Saint Augustine, the early church father, he said, with greed, there's no defect in the gold or the money.

There's no problem in the thing itself. But the problem is my desire. I love it perversely because I love it more than God. Just like lust is not a defect in the physical body, which is beautiful and worth longing for.

[5 : 03] But it's a defect of my soul where I abandon the far more pleasing and far more beautiful reality of my soul's union with Christ. So the two questions I just want to ask really briefly before we take the Lord's supper together is this.

What does it mean to lay up treasures on earth? And what does it mean to lay up treasures in heaven? So first, what does it mean to lay up treasures on earth? You see that in verse one.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures, verse 19, sorry, treasures on earth where moth and rust are destroyed and where thieves breaking and still. And then in the reciprocal, the positive way to say it.

But instead, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where these things don't happen. Jesus talks about money a lot. If you read the gospels, he says things like, woe to the rich.

Woe to the rich or go sell your possessions and give them to the poor and you will be in the kingdom of heaven with me. Or Paul who says the love of money is the root of all kind of evil.

[6 : 13] It's radical stuff we get from the text. It's radical stuff when it comes to money. And it's radical for a reason. Half the people in the Roman Empire in the first century were starving at any given time.

The income inequality that the wealth was so far one sided, very few people possessed most of the whole empire. And so Jesus is saying these things in a context for a reason.

Now some take these texts, all of the ones that Jesus talks about money, and they think of it in an all or nothing way. At the end of the passage, Jesus says you cannot serve both God and money.

So in history some people have said, okay, what we need to do then is get rid of the money. Get rid of possessions. We call that monasticism, right? We leave the world of the material and we enter into a place where we just deny ourselves of material.

So that's one way of reading. We're becoming poor, but look, Jesus came to root out poverty. Becoming poor surely is not the answer.

[7 : 30] Jesus came to say no to this age in which poverty exists. He didn't come to make people poor. He came to get rid of poverty. He came to make people rich, in fact.

And so it can't just merely be that the answer, the ethic here is get rid of your stuff. You hear these, read these texts and you need to go home tomorrow and you need to get rid of it.

It can't simply be that. Paul says, in fact, in 1 Timothy, to the rich I say, don't stop being rich.

Instead he says, don't be haughty and use your possessions for good. So Paul confirms this. It can't merely be that. But the word lay up means the verb there in verse 19.

Do not lay up for yourselves. It means to hoard. It literally means to hoard. So we have the idea here of hoarding. Now we're helped a little bit in understanding what it means for us to lay up treasures on earth by the illustration that Jesus gives.

[8 : 38] So you'll see in verse 22 and 23, the eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

Now he's just told us, don't lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. And now he says all of a sudden, your eye is the lamp of the body. And the reader says, what in the world does this have to do with laying up treasures on earth?

Right? It's a really enigmatic puzzling phrase. Ancient writers often talked about the eye as a lamp. So Jesus is the only one that does this.

There are a number of people that do this. And the reason they did it is because their medical doctors or whatever, their biology said, they thought that the eye actually projects light onto objects.

So it's not simply that you look at an object by receiving light from it. I think that's what we think now, huh? Can a medical doctor in front of it? Yeah, I just want to make sure. I'm no doctor.

[9 : 41] But anyway, they actually thought it was a two-way street. So if you wanted to see something, you received light and you stored it or somehow, and you projected onto objects.

And at the same time as the light projects onto the object of you. So what he's saying simply is this, look, if you've got a coating over your eye, like Derek did this week, like you have a gray lens over your eye, when you look out at the world, your eyes project gray, right?

It projects gray onto the world. And his point is, look, you can't see reality. If your eye isn't working as a lamp, if your eyes aren't shining the light out onto the objects, you just see darkness.

Now, here's his point. What does this have to do with materialism? What does this have to do with laying up for yourself's treasures in heaven? Here's the point. Materialism is one of those sins that you're just totally blind to if you have it.

Tim Keller says it this way, you know, when you're committing adultery, you don't all of a sudden just say, oh, that's not my wife, you know, like when you're committing other types of sins, especially sexual sin, you don't say, oh, I'm not supposed to do that, right?

[10 : 59] It doesn't surprise you. But with materialism, it's a sin that does surprise you. What he's saying is, if you're a materialist, if you're prone to the sin of greed, you don't know it.

You can't actually see the truth, because your whole body is full of this darkness. You've got the materialism coating over your eyes. Everything that you look at, you want, and you do everything you can to make sure that you're not the God that's greedy, right?

So what he means is that we're prone to this sin, but we don't even know it. We don't even know it. We can't see reality.

In modernity, it doesn't help that we live in an age, especially since the 70s, where we think about everything in economic terms.

Our society does, right? So the idea of the economic is absolutely totalizing in our world. If you think about how we measure the success of a nation, you know, how does a nation flourish?

[12 : 11] What does it mean to be a flourishing nation? GDP. Gross domestic product, right? Or profit. Is it product? Product, yes, product. I thought I had that right. Again, not a doctor, not an economist, I guess.

It's GDP, right? We measure success completely in economic terms in our world. We're told to do that from the top down. We think about our lives in terms of success entirely in economic terms, right?

I've experienced this in the University of Edinburgh, where you can see in universities, and this is an ongoing hot topic in the UK as well as America, is that sometimes we don't think about the end of education.

We think about the end of profit, right? Is the university making money? Or is it educating? And how do those things butt heads against each other? In the modern era, we think about everything in terms of economy.

Look, did you choose your job based on the salary? Was that the first question you asked when you thought about the job that you wanted to get?

[13 : 17] What is your end goal in working? What is your end goal in working? Jesus is offering to us in this text an alternative.

And he's not saying that repudiate the material and love him instead. He's talking about a reorientation of desires. What is it that actually gives you, that you actually love?

What is your first and highest love? Look, there's nothing wrong with being rich. What's wrong is being mastered by it.

And so that's why at the end he says you cannot serve both God and Mammon. You cannot serve both God and Mammon. Now, we don't have to give up one or the other.

It's not a choice in choosing the Lord and repudiating the material. That's not what's being offered to us. And so this brings us what it means to lay up treasures in heaven.

[14 : 21] So secondly, what does it mean to lay up treasures in heaven? The medieval theologians, it's time for our lesson in medieval theology for the week. I'm sure everybody's excited.

The medieval theologians talked about the metaphor here of light in the eye a lot. I mean, pretty much every single one of them did. And what they said was this, seeking after God is like living in a cave or a cavern your whole life in darkness.

And seeing shadows and seeing firelight and seeing some rays that come down. But you don't really know what's going on out there. And then you go up to the surface and the first thing you do is you look at the sun.

Now, if any of you have ever been in a cave or asleep in your house in Scotland and the light finally comes over at like 10 or 11 a.m.

And you finally look outside and maybe the sun comes out for a second. And you look at the sun and what happens to your eyes when you see the sun?

[15 : 29] It hurts them. You're blinded, especially if you have blue eyes like me. Now, that's a medical fact. I know that one's true. You're blinded, right? And you have to look away.

And so what the medieval theologians were getting at is that when you finally come out of darkness and see the glory that is the sun, the light shining in your eyes, it makes you turn away.

You can't even handle it. And what you're forced to do actually then is turn around with your back to the sun and to look out at the world by the light of the rays of the sun at everything else.

You see? In other words, if you want to know how you're supposed to love stuff, materials, money, land, the food you eat, the drink you drink, you need to stand in the light of the sun and let the rays of the sun illuminate it.

You have to stand within the love of God to see how you ought to love everything else in light of the love of God. That's what's going on here. You have to make God your master in order to properly love materials.

[16 : 40] You see? Heather and I are doing this little project this year, 2016, and our project is to watch through the British Film Index's top 50 films in all of history.

So if you're a British in here, congratulations. The British Film Index is the top dog. It's the Harvard. It's the Oxford. It's the Cambridge of all film indexes of who decides what the best films in history are.

It's the British Film Index. So congrats. You guys have decided what the best films in history are. Now, the great irony of it all is that almost all of them are French. So take that for what it's worth.

But anyway, we've decided to do this. And for 50 years from 1952 to 2012, there was one film that stood atop the British Film Index's top 50 film list.

For 60 years, it rained. Anybody know what that one was? George, you should know because I told her yesterday. It was Citizen Kane.

[17 : 55] So Orson Welles Citizen Kane, 1941. It was displaced in 2012 by an Alfred Hitchcock film called Vertigo. So Citizen Kane, so we watched this one a few weeks ago, black and white.

It's really old school, but it's a lot of fun. Citizen Kane is about this man named Charles Foster Kane, who's a newspaper tycoon in America, in early 20th century America.

And as a little boy, he lived in the middle of nowhere, western America, and he was absolutely poor. Dirt poor, lived in a little cabin with his mom and dad, and they realized that their cabin actually laid on top of an abandoned mine that was full of gold.

Just absolutely tremendous amount of gold. And so all these companies come in. They want to buy the property. They want to trick these foolish poor people into selling the property for a million dollars when it's worth like a hundred million or something like that.

So finally, the mom decides that she's going to sell the property, but she's going to put it entirely in her son's name and sell it as some kind of trust to a bank.

[19 : 08] But he's still the owner, not to possess it until he's 25. And what happens in this is that she actually is forced to give up the rights to her son, Charles Foster Kane.

And so one day the bank men come along and they tell little Charles that it's time to go with these men. They're taking him to Chicago. He's seven or eight years old, and he's playing outside in the snow on a sled.

He doesn't understand, you know. But he becomes a son of a bank, literally adopted by a bank. And he grows up in boarding schools and all these things.

And his wealth, when he comes 25, he's got 60 million dollars in the bank in the 1920s or 30s. Richest man in America buys a newspaper, dominates the news, dominates everything, tries to run for president, doesn't get it, fails in multiple marriages.

He wins at everything, but he hates it. And everyone wants him. They want to be around him. They want to work for him. They want to be married to him.

[20 : 15] But what they find out once they get in a relationship with him is that he can't offer love. He never can offer love to anybody. He wants something from them, and then he just wants them to stick around and serve him, but he will not reciprocate love.

And so what finally happens by the end of the film is he builds this grand kingdom in Florida called Zanadu. It's a precursor to Disney World, I think.

And it's literally unbelievable in the film. It's the biggest kingdom you could possibly imagine. And he lives there by himself with his last wife and his servants.

And he's amassed the treasures of Rome, ancient Rome, of Greece, of everywhere. And it's all there. His wife leaves him, his final wife leaves him, and he's all alone.

And the only thing that he knows to do in his dying days is walk around with a snow globe in his hand. And he keeps repeating one word, and it's the word rosebud.

[21 : 15] And nobody knows why. He's crazy. He's senile. He's completely lonely. Richest man in America. He's got nothing. And the very final scene after he dies, and I'll end this illustration with this, the camera pans over this giant hall, millions of objects, Roman, Greek, Rembrandt, Da Vinci.

I mean, everything you could imagine, the treasures of the world, he has stored them up. And it hones in after two or three minutes, it finally hones in down to one little box.

Nobody ever could figure out why he kept saying the name rosebud. And he hones down to this one little box, and it's a little box with his boyhood snow sled. The one that he was riding on when the bank came to adopt him.

And it says on the snow sled, Made in America by Rosebud Company. The only thing he could remember about being loved by his mom and dad was the sled.

And the little snow globe, because he was picked up on a snowing. Look, when Jesus says that you can't have it both ways between man and God, he's not saying that when you choose God, you need to get rid of your love for the material world.

[22 : 36] Charles Foster Cain could not love things, and he could not love people, because he had never known what it is to be loved. He could never return love, because he had never received it from his father.

Jesus is saying to us tonight, you cannot love stuff rightly as you ought to love it, unless you first know what it is to be loved by the father.

It's not until you know the love of the Son, the love of Jesus Christ, that you're going to be able to turn around and love the world, stuff, drink, eating, money, materials, and the way that they ought to be loved.

The medieval theologian said, if you want to see God, you look at the Son, the S.O.N., the Son. And then you look at everything else in light of the Son.

Jesus was self-forgetful. Jesus was rich, but he became poor. He gave stuff away. He loved food. Jesus did.

[23 : 43] If you flip through the Gospels, you'll know how many times he said at banquet tables with people that he wasn't supposed to. He loved wine. He loved it. He filled up the gala, the basis of, with gallons and gallons of wine at the wedding.

He loved the material world. He said, I long for a place to lay down my head, a pillow, but no one will give it to me. The Son of Man has nowhere to put his head.

And he loved the world, the material, the good gifts that he created so much that he gave his life. Look, in the resurrection, we are affirmed that Jesus came back both to save us from our spiritual and ethical problem, as well as to save us unto a material world.

He walked with a resurrection body. And so when it says here to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, heaven is not some ethereal far off cloud, cloudy place in the sky where you float about like an angel.

Jesus showed us what heaven is going to be. This is what he means when he talks about the kingdom of God. He showed it to us when he walked with a resurrection body in John 21 and he asked Peter if he wanted to have breakfast with him.

[25 : 06] The kingdom of heaven is all things restored. The kingdom of heaven is our highest good. And so in this whole chapter, Matthew chapter 6, if you've been tracking the last few sermons, we've talked about prayer, we've talked about fasting, and we've talked about, and now we talk about giving and our relationship to money.

And constantly Jesus has repudiated the Pharisees and said, look, they're praying, they're fasting, and they're giving, and they're doing it so other people will see them, and that's their reward.

That's their treasure. That's their kingdom. It's right now. It's not going to get any better. That's the reward they have. And so if you want to know what the reward is, what the treasure in heaven is, it's the kingdom in heaven, the kingdom of God that is yet to come, that is not yet, but it is a kingdom where material is fully restored to what it ought to be.

You noticed in the text about praying and giving and fasting in Matthew chapter 6, that Jesus constantly says the Pharisees do these things so that they will be seen by others.

And what he's getting at here is whether you have a sin of wanting to be seen by others or a sin of materialism, they all basically boil down to the same thing, and that's an idol of self.

[26 : 32] Smaug knew this, Tolkien knew this when he was writing the Hobbit. It wasn't gold that Smaug loved so much. And this is the trick here.

It's not really about the money or the mammon or the stuff that you're so obsessed with. Smaug says this about his golden, look around you, I am the king under the mountain.

The old king under the mountain is dead and where are his kinfolk that come to seek revenge? I am the king under this mountain. When we're obsessed with stuff, that's really what it's about.

I am the king of this tiny world I live in. I am the king of this pile of money I sit on. I am the king of my own destiny. I am the captain of my own fate.

At the end of the day, the grand irony is that Jesus saying, look, I know you want stuff. I made you to be embodied spirits. I made you to long for stuff, for food, for the good gifts of the earth, for what farming does give us.

[27 : 43] I made you for that. I know you want those things. I know you want to have that stuff. I know you want to be rich. But the grand irony is that when you give that stuff up in this life, Jesus promises you that he will give it to you in the next.

That's the irony of the idol of stuff. The people that want stuff so badly in this world will never fully have it, you see.

Unless they know what it is to be self-forgetful and to look to the cross, a theology of the cross that gives things up. The last thing I'll say is this, and then we'll celebrate the Lord's Supper.

There are two really brief ways that you can obey the command that's implicit here. The first is this.

How do you treat money? How do you treat stuff in the kingdom of heaven to store up your treasures? The first is that you bear the cross of Christ in the way you treat your stuff.

[28 : 46] In other words, we have the idea in the Old Testament of the tithe, the 10% right, which is no longer a command for us.

But the idea of the tithe is simply this. Is your giving actually a sacrifice? If you make millions and you give your 10%, you're probably a materialist.

You're probably suffering with a sin of greed. Because it doesn't make a dent. It's nothing but a few extra cars that you couldn't buy this year. But if you're making 15,000 a year with a family and you're giving 10%, that hurts, doesn't it?

That hurts. So the question is, are you bearing something of the cross of Christ when it comes to the way you treat your stuff? And the second thing to take away is this.

We need to see the giving away of our stuff as a liturgy of reshaping our desires. Now what's a liturgy?

[29 : 55] A liturgy is a form of worship. It's a practice, a habit. Anything that you do habitually that transforms you into something. If you want to be good at loving something, do it all the time.

It's a habit. It makes you love it. If you get up early every day, you get good at it and you start to love it, this is a liturgy. We do a liturgy when we come to worship. We do a liturgy when we come to the Lord's table. Giving away our stuff just like fasting and praying are liturgies that make you desire the thing you give towards.

Nobody likes giving away their stuff at first. Nobody likes fasting, do they? It's hard. But when you do it and you celebrate it, you come to love it.

You see, giving away your stuff is a habitual pattern of learning to love Jesus, desire God more than things. This is the same idea as fasting.

Look, we don't fast because food is bad if anybody in here fast at all. We don't fast because food is bad and because God is good. It's not a God versus food thing.

[31 : 06] We fast because it's a liturgy that brings us away from our normal relationship to food to remind us that food is not our master, but God is.

And in being reminded that food is not your master in fasting, you come back and you see food in a different way. You come to the table and you thank God for giving this good gift.

You give your stuff away and you come back to your stuff and say, thank God for this. All right, now we come to the Lord's table.

The greatest liturgy ever prescribed to us by Jesus himself. We come to the Lord's table because when we do it, it's a habit in which the sacrament shapes our desire for Jesus Christ.

It shapes our desire by bringing us into the past. We look at the cross and the resurrection and we look at the banquet feast of the future of Revelation 21. The Eucharist, the Lord's table, the giving thanks to God for the bread and the wine for the body of Christ is one of these liturgies that shapes our desires along with fasting and giving and praying.

[32 : 22] So let's come to the table now with a heart that understands that this was given to us as gift. Let's pray.

Our Lord and God, we ask, Father, that you would shape our desires, that you would conform us to the image of Christ, that we would long for Him more than anything. And we ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen.