

Giving God Your Heart
Matthew 6.19-24
Pastor Jarrett Stephens

We are closing out the *Chasing Sanity* series today with a message I'm calling: **Giving God Your Heart**

Now, this message today has to do with how we view and what we do with the money and possessions that God has entrusted to us. And I titled this message purposefully because the Bible makes the connection that what we do with our money, possessions and resources reflects whether or not God has our heart AND how much of our heart God has!

Randy Alcorn, whose books *Money, Possessions and Eternity* and *The Treasure Principle* were both books that I read and looked to in preparation for this message. He wrote: **"There is a powerful relationship between our true spiritual condition and our attitude and actions concerning money and possessions."**

There is no getting around it...you can't read the gospels without hearing Jesus talk about money and possessions, and giving lessons on how we should steward it. It's mentioned:

- 109x in the book of Matthew...
- 57x in the Mark's gospel...
- 94x in Luke's gospel...
- 88x in the book of John...
- 16 of the 44 parables Jesus gives us deal with the use or misuse of money...

He spoke on this subject 5x more than he did any other subject. 15% of his total teaching was related to how we handle money and possessions. So, what we do with our money and possessions matters...having a biblical worldview about our money and possessions matters!!

Mark it down: We'll be held accountable for what we have done with ALL God has entrusted to us AND how deal with our money and possessions is a reflection of whether or not God has our heart and how much of our heart he has.

Jesus put it like this in the Sermon on the Mount: **Matt. 6:19-21 – "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."**

Now, I want to begin today by underscoring here at the outset that having money and possessions is not inherently wrong or evil. Money in and of itself is morally neutral. It can be used for both good and evil.

The Bible NEVER says it's wrong to have money, it does say that it's wrong for money to have you! And there is a BIG difference in the two.

I want you to notice in this passage we just read (v. 19) gives us a command in the negative and (v. 20) gives us a command in the positive. Let's look at the negative first.

Matt. 6:19 – “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal...”

Illus. Queen Elizabeth – This week, I watched on Monday morning the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II...and the most striking part to me about the entire ceremony was the final minutes when they removed the crown, orb and scepter from the top of the queens casket (**SHOW B-ROLL**).

I just thought in that moment, it was incredibly picturesque of a truth we all know and that is you can't take your earthly treasures with you – whether you are a queen or a peasant, once you breathe your last, what you have toiled for, accumulated, and stored up will be yours no more!

The scripture testifies to this: **Eccl. 5:15 – “As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand.”**

Psalm 49:16-17 – “Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases. ¹⁷ For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him.”

This is why Jesus says don't “lay up for yourselves treasures on earth” – it's not that earthly treasures are necessarily bad, it's just they won't be around for eternity!

And so, the argument of scripture is if you are going to invest in something...if you are going to work to accumulate, accumulate where it matters! Get the BIGGEST and BEST return on your investment and that happens when you lay up for yourselves “treasure in heaven” (v. 20) - that's the positive command!

Matt. 6:20 – “but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

Earthly treasures tarnish...earthly treasures fade...earthly treasures get stolen and most of all earthly treasures take our focus and our eyes off the eternal...of the Kingdom!

Now, you have to remember the context in which Jesus is speaking here. This is the Sermon on the Mount. It's Jesus preaching about this revolutionary Kingdom he is bringing about, and citizens of the Kingdom of God – they are to live differently than those that are just living for the here and now.

Those that are living for the “here and now” (Matt. 6:1-4) they want their good deeds to be seen and rewarded by man – Jesus says, “when you give, do it in secret and God will reward you!”

- That’s a different kind of living – that’s Kingdom living!

Those that are living for the “here and now” (Matt. 6:5-15) when they pray, they want to be heard and recognized for the depth and vocabulary of their prayers – Jesus says, “when you pray, go into a closet where no one sees you or hears you but God, and he will reward you!”

- That’s a different kind of living – that’s Kingdom living!

Those that are living for the “here and now” (Matt. 6:16-18), when they fast, they want people to take notice and see how holy they are – Jesus says, “When you fast, wash your face, keep a uplifted spirit, your fast isn’t about others taking notice, but God and he will reward you!”

- That’s a different kind of living – that’s Kingdom living!

It’s in THIS context that Jesus says, people living for the “here and now”, they lay up treasure on earth, but Jesus says, Kingdom living means we lay up treasure in heaven! It’s a different kind of living!

I want to remind you Christians in this moment that this world is not our home! Having a biblical worldview means that we understand our real home is not in the “here and now” but instead, we are pilgrims just passing through!

1 Peter 2:11 – “Dear children, I urge you as sojourners and exiles...”

Heb. 13:14 – “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.”

Phil. 3:20 – “Our citizenship is in heaven...”

And so, question for you, Champion Forest...are you using the resources, possessions and money God has entrusted to you in a “here and now” kind of way OR are you living like a citizen of a greater Kingdom?

How you answer this question is of critical importance because again there is a link between how you see and use your wealth and whether or not your heart is the Lord’s AND how much of your heart is the Lord’s!

Turn with me to Luke’s gospel, chapter 12. This is a parallel passage that is teaching the same truth as Matt. 6 except, Jesus goes a step further in a parable in Luke 12 stating that if you are laying up for yourselves treasure on earth (that isn’t going to last)...if you are living for the “here and now” then you are a fool!

Luke 12:13-21 – “Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” ¹⁴ But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over

you?” (Jesus wasn’t going to get in the middle of this family argument, but he did use this situation to teach and warn about greed and covetousness and living for the “here and now”) ¹⁵ **And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”**¹⁶ **And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully,** ¹⁷ **and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’** ¹⁸ **And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. (he’s laying up treasure!)** ¹⁹ **And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”** ²⁰ **But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’** ²¹ **So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”**
Let me give you very quickly what I call three enemies to Kingdom-focused Living.

1. **Selfishness** – Did you notice how many times the word “I” or “My” was mentioned in this parable? 6x the word “I” and 5x the word “My” - in just four verses! Of the 54 words in these nine verses 18 are in the 1st person. Any guess who this man is thinking about? Only himself!

One of the reasons we live for the “here and now” is because ALL of us have this selfish bent that wants MORE and MORE for ourselves. In our flesh, we don’t think of others...we don’t think of God. We think ONLY of ourselves!

Now, I think it is very important to underscore the fact that Jesus NEVER criticized the man in this parable for being wealthy. Evidently, he gained his harvest in an honest way – (v. 16) “the land produced plentiful.”

Again, being wealthy and having possessions is not sinful and there is nothing inherently wrong with making a lot of money or owning nice things.

We should of course heed verses like **1 Timothy 6:9 – “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.”**

Proverbs 23:4 – “Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist.”

It’s not wrong to have wealth, but we can’t let our wealth have us! And the only antidote to our money and possessions NOT having us is GIVING.

What does giving do? It’s kills this Enemy of Kingdom living called selfishness.

John Wesley – “Money never stays with me. It would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it should find its way into my heart.”

He also said, **“Not how much of my money will I give to God, but how much of God’s money will I keep for myself.”**

Wesley knew that the money he had wasn't really his and so he gave. And every time we give, we destroy the root of selfishness that creeps into our lives. I was told one time "Never suppress a generous impulse." And I think that's a good word. A second enemy of Kingdom-focused Living:

2. Stinginess

There are two forms of greed in life. One form of greed is what I call the "takers". They are all about more, more, more...it's all about accumulation and getting more than their fair share!

Another form of greed are those that I refer to as "keepers". They are the ones that hold tight to what they have...they "get, get, get" and then they "keep, keep, keep".

You have "takers" and you have "keepers"...and this man was a lethal combination of both! He thought that God's blessing...and it was God's blessing...God gave him that land...God made the sun shine and the rain come and that crop to grow...this was God's blessing!

This man took God's blessing and thought it was strictly for his benefit. What a problem this man had (v. 17)! – "What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?"

Well, boo-hoo! This poor, pitiful man...what a problem to have! So much blessing, he has nowhere to store it! And so, you know what he does? He builds a bigger barn...he gets a storage unit!

Illus. Storage Units – I thought about this, this week because you see them everywhere, I thought I'd do a little research on it.

Did you know there is somewhere between 50,000+ storage facilities in the United States and Texas has the most with 5,361. To put it in perspective, there are more storage units than Starbucks, McDonalds, Wendy's, Pizza Hut and Dunkin' Donuts combined! Total revenue of the self-storage industry in 2019 was 39.5 billion dollars!

What's the point? "Pastor Jarrett, are you against me having a self-storage unit...a place I can put some of my stuff?" No. My garage right now is FULL of stuff!

I just bring this up to say it's easy to point the finger at this guy in the parable say, "What a stingy person! I can't believe that he would build a bigger barn." When in reality, this is exactly what we do all the time!

We build bigger barns to hold more of our things! It's just an illustration of how much we hold onto and hoard, and if we're not careful the god of greed will get us and we won't even know it!

Greed is deceptive...a stingy spirit conceals itself. As **Tim Keller** wrote in his book *Counterfeit Gods*: "**Greed hides itself from the victim. The money god's modus operandi includes blindness to your own heart.**"

And do you want to know what the antidote to stinginess is? The same thing as selfishness – it's giving!

The man's problem was NOT that he was wealthy...that's typically not our problem as well...and by the way just so we're all on the same page here, we are ALL extremely wealthy.

Did you know if you have \$4,210 to your name you are better off than half the people around the globe (that's according to Global Wealth Report). Over three billion people live on less than \$2.50 US Dollars a day. More than 80% of the population lives on less than \$10 USD per day. We're all extremely wealthy...and that's not bad!

What we can't do is do what this man did and let our identity and enjoyment of life be tied to our wealth! He was selfish. He was stingy. And a third enemy of Kingdom-focused Living is he was:

3. Short-sighted.

Luke 12:19-21 - “And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” (Finally, security! In the eyes of the world this man is a success! But in the eyes of God?) But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.’”

“Fool” – In the Old Testament, a fool was described as someone who made choices as if God didn't exist or live as if God has not spoken. It literally means to “be devoid of mind”. He wasn't living in a focused kind of way! This man lived for the “here and now”.

He never once thought about the fact that one day he would stand before God and give an account for his life...think about the arrogance and pride and presumption to think that we are promised another day.

James 4:13-14 – “Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.”

This man had accumulated, accumulated and accumulated, thinking that now he could live the high life! Now, he could finally sit back and enjoy what he has worked so hard for...he could “relax, eat, drink and be merry.”

But the Lord, “demands” from him... “requires” from him his soul...this was a commercial term used of a loan. This man thought he owned his life – it was all about him - “Me, my, I” – But in a moment, God calls for a return on the loan...he demands his life!

Now, who will get to enjoy his possessions because he is not taking them with him! As **1 Tim. 6:7** – **“for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.**

This man is so short-sighted that he only lives for the present when it is the eternal things that really matter. He forgot that this world was not his home and laying up for himself treasure on earth...it was a sure sign that God didn't have his heart – it's the heart that Jesus cares about!

That's why I called this message “Giving God your heart”. If you think this is a message about the church wanting your money, you're seeing it all wrong. First, God doesn't need your money. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps. 50:10). (Ps. 24:1) – the earth is the Lord's and everything in it!

God doesn't need your money...he wants your heart. And how can we know if God has our heart? Go back to our Matthew passage and listen to the zinger Jesus drops on us.

Matt. 6:21 – **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

We know if God has our heart by how we handle our money, resources and possessions. Are we selfish, stingy and short-sighted...living like the rest of the world? OR are we living Kingdom-focused lives?

Jesus says bluntly here: You show me where your treasure is, and I'll know exactly where your heart is. And it's so true.

To quote **Randy Alcorn** again: **“Jesus is saying, “Show me your checkbook, your credit card statement, and your receipts for cash expenditures, and I'll show you where your heart is.” What we do with our money doesn't lie. It is a bold statement to God of what we truly value.”**

Here's the thing though...how we handle our money doesn't just reveal whether or not God has our hearts and to what degree, what Jesus teaches here is that what we do with our money and resources will also determine where our heart goes!

In other words, maybe you are here today and don't really have a heart for God and the advancement of his Kingdom. I mean, it's church...let's be honest! It's just not high on your priority list and how you spend your money would show that. But you want it to be...you love the Lord...you want your heart to be in it more?

According to Jesus, the way that happens is by putting your treasure there! Guarantee you, you start giving MORE to the Lord's work and you will care about the LORD and his work MORE.

Why? Because you have skin in the game and it's a scriptural principle...if you want God to have your heart in a greater way than start giving to God at a greater level! Where your treasure is, your heart will be also!

Illus. Giving – Let me just bring this in close to home and I did not plan that our budget year would be ending this weekend and our new budget would be voted on this week...I'm not smart enough to plan it this way! But talking about God having our hearts! We can say that all day long, but most of us are not even tipping him when it comes to giving.

According to NP Source, Christians are currently giving roughly 2.5% of income to their church. During the Great Depression it was 3.3%. The average giving by adults who attend US Protestant churches is less than \$900 per year averaging about \$17 a week.

Now, I want you to take our church out of it for a second...don't even think about this in terms of our church. I do want you to think about how you are stewarding your resources and maybe you are giving to charitable causes that are meeting needs outside of this church – that's great...just how much? Is it more than a tip?

The point is if we want our heart to care about the Kingdom, the way it gets there is by investing in the Kingdom. And if you are a member of Champion Forest, (let me bring it to us as a faith family here) – let me say it like this?

Illus. Curtis Elementary – what kind of Church would Champion Forest be? If everyone gave, we would have no problem doing what we believe God is calling us to do around here!

- We could buy the land to start another campus in the future should God lead us to do it...
- We could build out our North Klein Campus...
- We could expand our Community Ministry Center to do more than feed the hungry and create more Christ-centered ministries that would help us meet the needs of our surrounding community...
- We could create a ministry called CF Creative and help resource at a higher level other churches all over the country...
- We could plant MORE churches...help MORE pastors through the CF Connect...
- We could upgrade the technology in this room and help expand our media ministry to get the message that is preached here each week all over the world through radio, television and the internet...
- We could fund MORE missionaries...give MORE to our ministry partners...
- The list is ENDLESS.

What it's about though, is your heart. What Jesus wants more than anything is your heart...what you do with your money, possessions and resources...it simply shows whether or not he has it.

Illus. Wrong Way Riegels – It's football season. Have you ever heard of Roy "Wrong Way" Riegels? Jan. 1, 1929 – University of California playing in the Rose Bowl against the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets.

Midway through the 2nd quarter, Riegel who played offensive and defensive line picked up his teams fumble 30 yards away from the Yellow Jacket's endzone, but instead of running toward

their goal line got turned around on the field, lost his bearings and went 65 yards in the wrong direction.

His QB chased him down and finally tackled at their own one yard line. They decided to punt the ball out of their endzone on the next play rather than take the risk of calling a play and the Yellow Jacket's blocked their punt giving them a safety.

Distraught...Riegels didn't want to go back in. Coach had to talk him up and he ended up having one of the greatest 2nd half ever – he blocked a punt, but ended losing the game 8-7. WRONG WAY Riegels was what he was known for the rest of his life.

For some of you in your giving, you've been going the wrong way for a long time. And I just want you to know that you with the help of God can turn it around and start going the right way...my encouragement is to START.

Talk about it as a couple...pray about it...ask God what you should do – It's not about the amount...it's about the heart! Give God Your Heart.

Let's pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.