

LESSON 9: KINGDOM PRIORITIES, PART 1 (MATTHEW 6:19-24)

The righteousness that pleases God requires citizens of God's kingdom to be devoted to God in a way that seeks His kingdom and righteousness above everything else in life. Unfortunately, even good-intentioned people who have a desire to be righteous can easily become distracted by things of this world and fail to seek God in this way. Now, Jesus begins to address this need to put the focus in life on what truly matters (Matthew 6:19-24).

TWO TREASURES (MATTHEW 6:19-21)

Jesus knew how easy it is for people to get pulled into earthly desires and concerns so that they become the primary pursuit in life. People often lay/store up their treasures on this earth. Examples of treasures stored up on this earth in Jesus's time may be clothing and precious metals (i.e. coins). Today, treasures include these and many other material possessions. However, Jesus demonstrates the reality of having treasures stored up on this earth. Namely, moths and rust would threaten to eat away the treasures. Then, thieves could break in (i.e. dig through the clay walls of a house) and steal the treasures. Therefore, whatever you possessed of value could easily and quickly be taken away from you (Proverbs 27:24; James 5:1-3). Elsewhere, Jesus also mentions the threat to earthly treasure that will certainly happen to everyone – death (Luke 12:16-21; 16:19-31; Ecclesiastes 2:18-23). A person should, therefore, have no confidence in treasure that is stored up in earthly places – as it can all be wiped out through various means in an instant! Instead, Jesus said that treasures should be stored up in Heaven. The reason He gives is that treasures stored up in Heaven (where God reigns) are not subject to the decay, destruction, and theft that earthly treasures are subject to. Instead, their reward is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading (1

Peter 1:3-5; Revelation 21:1-22:5). To store up treasures in Heaven requires that you value the things of God and work to carry out His will in your life.

Jesus's teaching is *not* that people cannot have bank accounts to prepare for future physical needs or have nice things, but about the nature of our treasures and the location of our hearts. Verse 21 makes it abundantly clear that Jesus is concerned with where a person's heart (affections, allegiances) is (Colossians 3:1-4). In fact, Jesus demonstrates that the way you can identify the location of your heart is by locating your treasure. That is, are you more concerned with your earthly bank account or your spiritual bank account? Evaluate how much time, energy, focus, money, etc. is spent adding to one versus the other to locate your treasure/heart.

TWO EYES (MATTHEW 6:22-23)

Just as Jesus has illustrated the possibility of having two types of treasures, He now illustrates the possibility of having two types of eyes. He says that the eye is the lamp of the body. That is, the eye is an organ through which light is perceived and one can see and navigate his/her way. A good/healthy eye sees things as it should, while a bad/corrupt eye will distort what one sees (blurred, double vision) or be unable to see (blind). So, the eye that is good leads to the entire body being directed according to what is clearly perceived (filled with light), while the eye that is bad leads to the entire body being misdirected according to the distortions of what has been perceived (filled with darkness). With this image, though, Jesus is not focused on a biology lesson about the importance of a healthy eye. Instead, it is an image to teach about the importance of having the right focus and priorities in life. If you are singularly focused on what truly matters (Heavenly treasures), you will clearly see how you should act and react in life in pursuit of that singular goal. However, if you have either entirely or partially distorted your focus to be about the things of this life, you will not make your life about what truly matters. This life that

focuses on earthly things rather than the things of God will never be truly satisfied (Ecclesiastes 1:8), bring great devastation on themselves (1 Timothy 6:9-10), and have a treasure that will surely be taken away from them (Luke 12:16-21)!

TWO MASTERS (MATTHEW 6:24)

After establishing that there are two types of treasures and two types of eyes, Jesus now focuses on the possibility of someone trying to serve two different masters. The circumstance Jesus is addressing is that of a slave-master relationship in which the slave was under the authority of a single master and could not be loyal to that master and to another master at the same time. During the time Jesus spoke, this type of relationship was common throughout the Roman Empire. So it is with loyalty to Jesus in His kingdom. His servants must be committed to Him, as the One who has bought/redeemed them from the terrible master of sin (Romans 6:15-23; 1 Peter 1:17-21; Luke 9:23-26; 14:25-33). However, it is common for people who want to serve in God's kingdom to only desire to do such on a part-time basis, while they also serve other masters (i.e. money, Luke 16:13). In fact, serving God is unlike the service of many of the Greek gods. With these, it was good for a person to serve as many different gods as possible. Yet, with God, He deserves a person's entire allegiance! Therefore, it is impossible to serve God alongside your devotion to any other master! Jesus particularly singles out the master of money/possessions (mammon, as covetous is equated with idolatry, Colossians 3:5).

CONCLUSION

Being in Jesus's kingdom requires focus and devotion to His service. He has demonstrated this by the need to store up treasures in Heaven rather than on earth, the need to have a healthy focus on serving God, and the need to be loyal to God as your only Master. While there are many opportunities to become distracted by the things of this life, citizens of the Heavenly kingdom must understand the need to prioritize His kingdom and righteousness above all else!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What does it mean to store up treasure on Earth?

What does it mean to store up treasure in Heaven?

Why is storing up treasure on Earth rather than in Heaven foolish?

How can you discover where your heart is?

How can your focus in life be bad?

What kind of focus is needed to please God?

Why is it impossible to serve two masters at the same time?

Why is Jesus the Master who is worthy of your complete devotion?

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