

Sermon on Matthew 6:19-34 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Live day by day treasuring and trusting Jesus.

Here we are to gather around the Word again, to the teaching of Jesus that determined to live as his disciples.

As I was studying this week I thought through the refrain I so often hear from people I encounter, “what does a two-thousand-year-old book have to say to my life now?” It is as if the expanding wave of the pandemic, political uncertainty, the exhaustion of 2020 has come to a head and what could an ancient collection of stories speak to us now?

Quite a lot! Ultimately it calls life like it is. Broken and sinful people in need of saving and a better way of life. Here in the focus of our study, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus himself gives us that life - life in the Kingdom, a new ethic, a new way.

That is what we want to tap into today.

Matthew 6:19-34

Live day by day treasuring and trusting Jesus.

The sermon began with calling his followers blessed. The approved of God. He has said that those who recognize their need come and become citizens.

Rolling off of exhortation to live obediently before the Father (who sees in secret) and who gives rewards - Jesus cements what real treasure is - living with kingdom priority as you are cared for by the Father.

Essentially, God has prioritized you (evidenced in Christ’s incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension), so now you can prioritize the kingdom.

Flowing right from being rewarded by the Father, Jesus repositions what we treasure and who we trust.

1) Treasuring Jesus

That sounds Christian, treasuring Jesus, but it is exactly what develops when we are transformed and run after his way of life.

In the vane of rewards, Jesus contrasts money/wealth and the kingdom - the comparison of rewards that are temporary or those that are lasting, heavenly.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where it can decay or be eaten, stolen. Instead pile up treasure for yourselves in heaven, where it is indestructible, eternal.”

If we think of the first listeners to this sermon, and what they treasured (what was normative), it would be money, clothing, and food. That what we take from the text, but also the culture. On a different scale than today. Enough money, unweathered clothing, sustenance.

To lay this on our context, it might be exorbitant amounts of money, material goods, and comfort... things we see as something to be earned, meaningful in the moment, but that certainly won't last.

And Jesus says don't focus on those things, don't obsess about them as if they will save you. But be salt and light that lives for the glory of God and finds our reward in him. Rightly situate your treasure.

It isn't rocket science to figure out what we treasure. What we post about, what we give our margin to. Where our mind goes. Good things that take on status they are not meant to. Becoming “my precious” when before us is the kingdom.

"This is not a call for a life of negation and asceticism. Believers are to enjoy life fully and authentically. But the Christian does not hold tightly to what he has in this world. His possessions and privileges, whatever they may be, are not his focus."

The eyes are the lamp of the body, it is where light gets in. What we focus on colors our lives, if we have a bad eye, everything goes to pot. In rabbinic teaching, the eyes as lights would also represent the generosity of the person - contentment that colors how we live, and how we give.

"Over and over Jesus is relentless in his radical call to a wartime lifestyle and a hazardous liberality." John Piper

So there is something better to be treasured. And it is not just to be experienced later in glory, it is a reward for now, but it resides in heaven. He is inviting his followers to see and savior Christ as the treasure. Settled that you have what you need in him.

We can't have two masters. How often have you heard that verse! Pick who you will cherish, follow, you can't do both. You will be consumed by something - kingdom citizens are consumed by Jesus. You can be rich, you can have abundance, comfort, but you can't be consumed by it.

The lives of light are the invitation to unbelievers, come and meet our treasure.

Matthew 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." (ESV)

Jesus doesn't define what the treasure is, which I think is good for us, we are left to lean into him, see his redemption, his grace, his presence, his love as what anchors us, what we treasure.

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What we prioritize shapes our lives - we live for them - for what we give our energy, time to.

Sitting under the preaching of Jesus then, we check our priorities - see that they are shaped by Christ, the kingdom way of life. Commit to a reorientation toward the treasure that lasts, that no one can steal. Ask for it, put yourself in the place to experience it. Ache for Jesus as your treasure.

When we treasure Jesus, we learn to trust him.

2) Trusting Jesus

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life..." Let your treasure keep you from worry and anxiety. I need this!

What sticks out to me in this line is “I tell you.” This is Jesus the one willingly living in my place, for the joy set before him taking on the cross. He is to be trusted, taken at his word.

Jesus is telling us if you trust God with the big things, salvation, safety, the miraculous, trust him also in lesser things like lunch.

Again it is being consumed by what appears to be lesser things of life - bare essentials, eating, drinking, clothing. Jesus is not saying don't plan, don't provide, sit on a pillow and wait for an angel to bring your grapes. He is saying, in pursuit of those things, don't let worry dominate.

"Prudent provision for the future is right; wearing, corroding, self-tormenting anxiety is wrong." JC Ryle

And he gives us constant reminders of his care. “Look at the birds!”

We can get so consumed with the minutia of life that we rarely slow down enough to notice the birds, to not fill the silence but let the birds remind you of the Father that feeds them.

As I sat reading this week, there was just enough quiet and just enough passion from a little bird outside my window to sing. He was preaching to me.

When you hear the nightingale you have heard a preacher.

Mussolini - narcissistic leader wanting to be the end all be all - said of birds “kill them all.” They speak a bigger word, take us out of our self-importance, and show us provision.

Food that they find, hunt for, but the Father gives them.

And in watching we are to realize that we are of more value than them. The creative genius values you. The birds sing a symphony of his care for you to hear.

We live in a day when we don't fully know what sets off our anxiety. We usually have enough food and drink. But the same applies to our triggers, to have a

supernatural trust in Jesus. To be diligent and rest still in his finished work for us and his promise to provide.

Being anxious, consumed by the worries of life, can't add a single hour to life - it is of no help.

Consider the lilies. Have faith, you are prioritized by the Father, over the field of flowers, over the birds of the air. He's got you. Your Father knows what you need so you can trust him to provide.

In our trust, we are freed up to follow the movement of Jesus. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness - and all these, the lesser things of food and clothing, essentials, will be added.

We wrongly read this if we think it means my seeking the kingdom triggers some lottery somewhere unleashing untold riches. What does say is that as we trust and join Jesus on mission in the kingdom, he will care for us.

We don't read it in isolation as individuals, instead, read it realizing the kingdom forges a family that cares for each other.

You may not worry about food, but whatever it is that stokes anxiety, look around, and see how God provides - how he gives us land to work, how he gives himself that we would be satisfied in him. And make his kingdom the priority, like your treasure, where you focus, energy, margin, and biggest dreams reside.

Our focus as believers becomes living for Christ and aligning with his priority, the kingdom, When we do that, life in all its chaos can be lived for God's glory and becomes our good.

It is an elevating of life, supernaturalizing

"Ambitions for self may be quite modest, enough to eat, to drink and to wear, as in the sermon, or they may be grandiose a bigger house, a faster car a higher salary, a wider reputation, more power. But whether modest or immodest, these are ambitions for myself my comfort, my wealth, my status, my power. Ambitions for God, however, if they are to be worthy, can never be modest. There is something inherently inappropriate about cherishing small ambitions for God.

How can we ever be content that he should acquire just a little more honor in the world? No. Once we are clear that God is king, then we long to see him crown with glory and honor, and according his true place, which is the supreme place. We become ambitious for the spread of his kingdom in righteousness everywhere." John Stott

Therefore, since he is good - take life one day at a time - each day has enough trouble for itself. That is why we ask for daily bread for kingdom work! Bread he gives us.

So Jesus people, prioritize the kingdom ethic and kingdom mission. Look around, take notice of Christ's care, and trust him. In community encourage one another in trust, highlight the ways the Father has taken care of you. And take care of each other for his glory. Share the treasure you have found in Christ.

"Jesus' wisdom is a paradoxical wisdom, the wisdom of the kingdom of God. In this kingdom, we can only be guaranteed sufficient goods if we renounce hoarding and greed. In this kingdom, we know we can have food and clothing if we seek something else than food and clothing. In this kingdom, we cling to a master who is despised and rejected and ultimately crucified. In this kingdom, we can only find life if we first lose it. That is the wisdom of the kingdom, the wisdom of Jesus, the greater Solomon." Peter Leithart

I see the wisdom of Jesus here. It makes sense. But honestly, I don't always live this. I can find myself caught up in the anxious ways of life, from crisis to crisis. And I am routinely astounded by what I find myself treasuring. So from experience, I know my exhortation won't fix you.

Key to treasuring and trusting Christ is a move of God. You can't generate these by yourself - and that is why we seek first, why we cry out, study, pray, worship... that we would experience the presence of God and become those that treasure and trust him.

Psalm 34:4-10 "I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. [5] Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. [6] This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. [7] The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

[8] Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! [9] Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! [10] The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.” (ESV)

Jesus treasured us enough to give all of who he is to save us, to redeem what was corrupted by sin. And we stand as beneficiaries of his grace, blameless before the throne of heaven. Forever. And he cares for us now, providing, placing us into a family, and giving us a purpose.

Now we can live like him. Imitation is adoption realized. And according to the sermon on the mount, it is the best way of living.

B & A - going through life, as expected, excelling, finding their niche. Knowing there was something more.

Meeting God in this ancient book, his presence real to them, transformed their goals, their priorities. They have found their treasure and now are living trusting Jesus to expand his kingdom through them. May it be so with us Reservoir Church!