

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 10 September 2023. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Kingdom Treasures

Matthew 6:19-24

About 130 years ago, in the little town of Brooktondale, New York, a young girl named **Rhea Ross** was struggling through her childhood. Her early childhood was a tumultuous one, on account of the fact that her father was a drunkard, who wasted away his family's money. Rhea's mother, Bertha, was a Christian, who loved the Lord; and every day of her life was painful, as she tried to hold their impoverished family together. Bertha tried to tell her husband that he needed Jesus; but Martin wanted nothing to do with his wife's God, nor with her "religion."

However, Martin's wife, and all her Christian friends, would not cease to pray for him; and finally, the day came when the Lord prevailed upon his heart. Martin repented of his sin, and placed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and he became a radically different person—a new creation in Christ. God delivered Martin from the bondage of alcohol, and made him into a powerful ambassador for Christ. Not only did Martin serve the Lord faithfully for the rest of his life, but he eventually became the pastor of a Baptist church right there in Brooktondale.

In 1910, a 16-year-old young man named Howard Miller got saved at that church; and in time, Howard and Rhea were married, and served God together. After Howard's death, Rhea spent the rest of her life teaching piano to the Christian young people in her town (especially the children of pastors), so that they could use their musical abilities in their local churches to bring honour and glory to the Lord. Rhea kept herself very busy; however, she never forgot the miraculous way that God had changed her father. His conversion to Christ was a powerful, watershed moment in her life. One day, when she was 28 years old, as she was strolling through the fields near her home in Brooktondale, she was thinking about her father; and she recalled how he had said, time and time again, that he would "rather have Jesus than all the gold and silver in the world, and all the houses and land that money could buy."ⁱ As she thought about this, the words to a poem began to form in her mind; and she sat down and wrote the now world-famous words, "I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold; I'd rather be His than have riches untold. I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands; I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand, than to be the king of a vast domain, or be held in sin's dread sway. I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today."

At one time, the "treasure" for which Martin Ross had lived his life was alcohol; but he renounced that treasure, and found his new treasure in Christ, and in His righteousness. So it always is whenever a person is saved. When a person is born into God's family, he is given a new mind; a new desire to serve God; and the power to serve God. Yet, even for the believer, it is not always easy to keep one's eyes on the right "treasure." The world, the flesh, and the devil are constantly battling against the Christian's heart, mind, and will. These three enemies promise peace, contentment, and pleasure from sources other than Christ. That is why, in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had to warn the citizens of His Kingdom not to covet the praise of men. In the last few sermons, we have seen how Jesus warned His disciples against doing their almsgiving, prayers, and fasting, for the purpose of being seen and admired by others. Now, Jesus is warning them against coveting the things of this world. In this morning's message, we will see that, ultimately, there are only two kinds of **treasure** for which you can live; only two kinds of **eyes** with which you can focus; and only two **masters** whom you can serve. However, you cannot serve both of them—only one. The title of this message is **Kingdom Treasures**.

Read Matthew 6:19-24.

I. The two kinds of treasure (vv. 19-21)

There is a truth that I have observed over the years, both in my own life, and in others' lives: and that is that **people invest in things that they consider important; and they do not invest in things that they do not consider important.** Jesus said, "*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" Every day, you and I are laying up treasures—things that we value and esteem. However, the question is, "*What is your treasure?*"; and, "*In which bank are you laying up your treasure?*" Jesus makes it clear that there are only two kinds of treasure—worldly treasure, and heavenly treasure; and there are only two kinds of "banks" into which you can place your deposits—the Worldly Treasure Bank, and the Heavenly Treasure Bank.

First, let's examine worldly treasure, and the Worldly Treasure Bank. Here in **verse 19**, Jesus solemnly warns us *not* to lay up for ourselves treasures upon earth. (**Read verse 19 again.**) What are some "worldly treasures" that we can lay up in the Worldly Treasure Bank? It can be all manner of things. For many people, their "treasure" is money, property, and land. For some, it's sensual, immoral pleasure. For some, it's alcohol and recreational drugs. For some, it's food: they love to gorge themselves, and overeat. (As the Apostle Paul put it, their "**god is their belly.**") For some, it's fashionable clothing, jewellery, and hairstyles. For some, it's a nice career, a nice house, and a nice car; and they pour all their time and energy into saving up to acquire these things. For some, it's family. They'll put their family over God any day; and they'll forfeit service to God in preference to family without giving it a second thought. For some, it's ease, comfort, and sleep—not because they have a physical ailment that causes them to be fatigued, but simply because they're lazy, and don't want to roll out of bed and go to work, or to go to God's House. (As Solomon put it, "**As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful man upon his bed.**") For some, their treasure is *pride* in their work, education, and achievements, and in the fact that "*I pulled myself up by the bootstraps.*" For some, it's entertainment, movies, recreation, or sports. For some, it's power, fame, and control over others. For some, it's health. "My health is my wealth," they say; and therefore, if God were to call them to take the Gospel to a place where their health might be endangered, they wouldn't even consider God's call, much less obey it. For some, it's anger and fighting. They actually *like* to be angry and bitter at people; and they look for opportunities to be rude and sarcastic, and to pick a fight! For some, their earthly treasure is *religious pride*; and this religious pride drives them to give, pray, fast, and "sacrifice" in various ways, for the sole purpose of being admired by others. Of course, Jesus had already warned His disciples against *this* particular "earthly treasure" when He warned them not to give alms, to pray, or to fast, to be seen by others. Those who do religious things to be seen and admired by others already have their reward here on earth, in the Worldly Treasure Bank: and their reward is the praise of men. So it is with *all* these other things. If your "treasure" be a nice house or car, then that house or car *is* your reward; but that's all you're going to get. One day, it will rust or rot away; and you will *not* be able to take any of these things with you beyond the grave. On the day you depart this earth, your "account" in the Worldly Treasure Bank will instantly be deleted, and your assets liquidated.

What is *your* treasure? Is it money? If so, money will pass away. Solomon wrote, "**Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.**" Do you invest a lot of money in clothing, in order to impress others? In so, James warns that "**Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten**"; and Peter instructs the ladies to let their adorning "**not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.**" For those of us who are children of

the Kingdom, even essential things, such as food, are not to be hoarded in great abundance for ourselves. Even the manna that God sent down from heaven bred *worms* when the children of Israel attempted to hoard it for themselves. Why? Because God wanted them to depend on Him for their *daily* bread. A child of the Kingdom says, ***“Feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD?”*** In contrast, a worldling says, ***“What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?...This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”***

My friends, if you have never been saved, this message is for you. If you have never placed your faith in Christ, then you have *never* laid up any riches in Heaven at *all*. You are like that wealthy farmer in Jesus’ parable (whom I was just quoting), who said to himself, ***“Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”*** To that foolish man God said, ***“Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”*** Jesus spoke this parable *specifically* to those who lay up treasure for themselves, and who are ***“not rich toward God.”*** If you have never received Christ as Saviour, that’s you! God *wants* to save you, and use your life to lay up treasure for *His* Kingdom; but if you refuse to surrender your life to Him, and you pass out of this life without Christ, you will suffer an eternity of weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, away from the presence of the Lord.

Now, if you *do* know Christ as your Saviour, you aren’t off the hook! In fact, this message applies *primarily* for you. Remember, Jesus preached this sermon to His *followers*—those who were already children of the Kingdom. Why did Jesus need to admonish His followers to lay up treasure in Heaven, and not on earth? Because we still have a sin nature; and we are still inclined to think like the natural man. The moment we get our eyes off Christ, we will, by default, be drawn in by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. That is why Jesus had to remind His followers to *lay up treasure in Heaven*, which does not rust away, and which cannot be stolen. **(Read verses 20.)**

As believers, our desire in this life should be to lay up *heavenly* treasure, in the Heavenly Treasure Bank. Yet, what *is* heavenly treasure? It is anything that brings honour and glory to God—whether it be giving your tithes; giving to missions; giving to those in need; going to God’s house to worship Him; singing praises to Him; spending time with God in prayer; interceding for pastors, missionaries, and other believers in prayer; fasting, and humbling yourself before God; witnessing to the lost; discipling and mentoring a younger brother or sister in Christ; giving a cup of cold water to God’s servant; or putting out tea for the tea table, hoovering the floor, or scrubbing the toilets, in God’s house. When done with the right motive, these things, *in and of themselves*, are “treasure.” How so? Because these things are what your heart delights in! Remember, Jesus said that ***“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*** Your ***“treasure”*** is *whatever you value* in your heart; and if serving God, and serving others, be the things that you value, then those things are like “treasury notes,” which are being exchanged for treasure in Heaven!

For the child of the Kingdom, just to hear the Lord say, ***“Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,”*** will, in itself, be “treasure in heaven.” Is this what motivates *you*? If hearing the Lord say ***“Well done”*** be what your heart treasures, then you *will* hear those words, ***“Well done”***; and your reward will not be taken away from you. You *will* receive crowns one day; and you *will* rule with Christ in His Kingdom. Yet, even in the Kingdom, the thing that will give those crowns value is that they will reflect honour and

glory upon your *King*, and not upon yourself. You will be basking in the joy of your *Lord*, and not in the joy of receiving glory and honour for “*me*”!

Read Matthew 25:14-23.

There is nothing in this world that we can take with us to glory. Earthly things (such as money) have value only when we use them as tools to bring glory to God, and thus lay up treasure in Heaven. Yet, that having been said, *there is* one thing on this earth that we can bring with us into the Kingdom; and that is the *souls* of those whom we have won to Christ! The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*” Every soul that is redeemed from sin, death, and hell is like a precious, shining jewel to God. Therefore, we should spend the resources which God has given to us to win people to Christ, so that His Kingdom will be adorned with the shining “jewels” of ransomed souls!

Read Malachi 3:16-18.

Read Luke 16:9-13.

In **Colossians 3:1-4**, Paul wrote, “*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*” Christian, do you believe these words? Do you *really* believe them? If you really believe that the “*things above*” are the most important things in life (in fact, the *only* things that ultimately matter), then the “*things above*” are what you will set your affections upon. If you really are seeking the Kingdom of God above all else, then you will sacrifice your time, talents, money, material resources, intellect, knowledge, skill, physical strength, emotional energy, and spiritual gifts, for the Lord. If you really believe that *your very life* is “*hid with Christ in God*,” then you will love the Lord with your whole heart, soul, and mind. If you really believe that *Christ* is your “*life*,” and that you will appear with Him in glory one day, *and* that you will give an *account* to Him on that day, it will profoundly affect the way you view your possessions in this world. You will view your possessions as not really being your own, but the Lord’s; and you will view yourself as a *steward* of the Lord’s property. This reminds me of something that a Christian brother in the U.S. said to me in an email years ago, after he had given a sacrificial gift for the Gospel work here in Ireland. I thanked him for the gift; but he responded back, “No need to thank me: I’m just the delivery boy.” Obviously, he viewed his money as not *truly* being his money, but the Lord’s; and since the Lord wanted him to use it for the advancement of the Gospel, he did not dare disobey.

Brethren, God is jealous over us, because He loves us, and *owns* us. We belong to Him, body, soul, and spirit. We are “*bought with a price*”; and we should therefore glorify Him in our body and spirit, “*which are God's*.”

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

We have seen that there are two kinds of treasure—heavenly treasure, and earthly treasure. Yet, what is it that *motivates* us to seek either heavenly or earthly treasure? Our hearts! Let’s read **verse 21** again. (**Read verse 21.**)

Jesus says, **“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”** Where is *your* heart, Christian? Actually, the better question is, *which* heart has control of you? If it be the *old, fleshly* heart that is in control, then you will crave earthly treasure; and the earthly treasures that you lay up will burn up like stubble at the Judgment Seat of Christ. On the other hand, if the *new* heart be in control, then you will pursue heavenly treasure, which will never pass away.

Your “treasure” is that which you love—that which your heart values and esteems more than anything else. Your “treasure” is that in which you trust; that on which you cast all your aims and hopes; and that into which you pour your sweat and toil. Your “treasure” is that to which you devote yourself. Take the Lord’s Day, for example. Is it the *Lord*, and the worship of Him in *His* house, that you seek on the Lord’s Day—or something else? Wherever you are “depositing” your investments, that is where your heart is: and that is where your treasure is. What does your investment portfolio say about your heart? Is the Lord Jesus Christ, and His Kingdom, supremely important to you? Or is it something else?

II. The two kinds of eyes (vv. 22-23)

(Read verses 22 and 23 again.) There are only two kinds of treasure that we can pursue—earthly treasure, or heavenly treasure. Likewise, there are only two kinds of “eyes” with which we can focus our gaze. If you have an “eye” that is wholly focused on Christ, His Kingdom, and His righteousness, then your “eye” is like a clear, burning lamp, which is filling your whole being with light.

By the way, the word for **“light”** in these verses is *luchnos*. This word refers to a “lamp”—such as the clay lamps that people used in the first century. How brightly a lamp shone depended on whether it was filled with oil; and oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit. What does this mean, then? It means that when you are allowing the Holy Spirit to control your thoughts, desires, and ambitions, your “eye lamp” will shine brightly, and fill all your deeds and actions with righteousness. On the other hand, if your eye be **“evil”** (in other words, if you are focused on honouring yourself, and pleasing yourself, instead of to honouring and pleasing God), then your eye will be **“dark”**—like a lamp whose flame is flickering out, because the oil is nearly gone. The room will be filled with dark shadows; and you will stumble in sin.

Now, make no mistake about it: if you know Christ as your Saviour, you cannot lose your salvation. You are sealed with the Holy Spirit until the Day of Redemption; and He will never leave you. However, **1 Thessalonians 5:19** says that you *can* quench the Spirit of God by yielding to sin; and, as we already saw earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, you *can* hide your light under a bushel. This matter of quenching the Spirit, and hiding your light under a bushel, is so serious, that Jesus mentioned it in at least two sermons, on two separate occasions. Let’s look at the other occasion when Jesus mentioned it.

Read Luke 11:34-36.

Christian, whenever you take your eyes fully off the Lord, your life will quickly grow dim. You will begin to think and act as you did before you were saved. If your eye be **“single”** (singly focused on the Lord), then your **“whole body”** will be filled with **“light”**; but if your eye be **“evil”** (focused on something of this world, instead of on Christ), then you will be filled with **“darkness.”** You *can vacillate* back and forth between being filled with the Spirit and being filled with fleshly thoughts, depending on whether you are surrendered to the Lord at the moment, or not; but when you live this way, you are unstable and unsteady—like

someone who is trying to walk across a room without falling, when the lights keep being turned on and off, on and off, like a strobe light!

Christian, the Lord wants your **“whole body”** to be flooded with spiritual light, with **“no part dark”**! Keep your eye singly on Him! By the way, when Christ talks about a “single eye” and an “evil eye,” He is *especially* talking about what kind of “eye” we have toward *riches*. (That’s the whole context of this passage!) If the “riches” that you value are Christ, His Word, His righteousness, and His Kingdom, then your whole life will be filled with the “light” of love, goodness, kindness, and giving to God and others. Your whole lifestyle will reek of the sweet savour of self-sacrifice. The Apostle Paul said, **“To me to live is Christ.”** These are the words of a man whose eye was singly focused on Christ. Paul’s “eye” was entirely aimed at bringing glory to God. On what is *your* eye focused? On Christ? Or on something else?

III. The two masters (v. 24)

(**Read verse 24.**) Christ has told us that there are only two kinds of treasure—heavenly treasure, or earthly treasure. He has also told us that there are only two kinds of “eyes” with which we can focus—either a **“single”** eye, or an **“evil”** eye. Now, Jesus makes another narrow statement. He says that there are only two masters that you can serve; but you can’t serve both! The one Master is God; and the other is **“mammon.”** What is **“mammon”**? *Mammon* is an Aramaic word that was carried over into Greek, as *mamonas*; and it refers to “riches, money, possessions, or gain.” Simply put, you are either serving God, or gold!

Now, you’ll notice that the Lord doesn’t say, “You *must not* serve God and mammon,” or, “You *should not* serve God and mammon”: no, He says, “Ye *cannot* serve God and mammon”! It’s *impossible* to serve both. *Why* can you not serve God and mammon? Because when you are serving mammon, you are really serving *yourself*. The love of money is part of the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” which John warned against in **1 John 2**; and these three things are all emanations of the *love of self*. Just as the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit are three Persons in one God, so the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are three manifestations of the god of “self”! When you live to acquire earthly gain, your life theme is, “It’s all about me!”; and your god is yourself.

Love for God says, “Keep the Lord’s Day holy”; but the love of mammon says, “Use that day to have fun and recreation, or to make some more money.” Love for God says, **“Be careful [anxious] for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”** However, the love of mammon says, “Be careful for *everything*, because it’s a dog-eat-dog world out there; and you’d better lay up as much treasure as you can for *yourself*, because no one else is going to provide for you, except *you*.”

Now, there is something I’ve noticed over the years: and that is that, more often than not, lost people fully realise that they are choosing to serve gold instead of God! They *realise* that they cannot continue to pursue their worldly ambitions, and also follow Christ. The Rock stars **Jerry Lee Lewis** and **Elvis Presley** were good examples. These men didn’t grow up in truly Christian homes; but they *were* exposed to Bible preaching in their youth—enough so, that they knew full well that the path they had chosen was evil. Jerry Lee Lewis, especially, always feared where he was headed after death. Lewis said that once, in a conversation with Elvis Presley, he asked, “Elvis, I’m going to ask you one thing before we part company here. If you die, do you think you’d go to heaven or hell?” Lewis said that Elvis “got real red in the face, and then he got real white in the face, and he said, ‘Jerry Lee, don’t you ever say that to me *again*.’”ⁱⁱ These lads *knew* they were on their way to hell, and they tried to make a “nod to

God” by singing a Gospel song now and then; however, they would not repent of their drugs, booze, fornication, adultery, love of material wealth, and love for the world’s wicked music, and place their faith in Jesus. Neither of them ever had any peace. As recently as 2015, when Lewis was 80 years old, he admitted, “I was always worried whether I was going to heaven or hell...I still am. I worry about it before I go to bed; it’s a very serious situation. I mean you worry, when you breathe your last breath, where are you going to go?”ⁱⁱⁱ Tragically, both these men are in hell today because they chose to serve mammon instead of Christ.

Read Mark 4:3-8, 13-20.

Whatever interest Lewis might have had in the Gospel earlier in life was quickly choked out by the love of things of this world; and his life never brought forth the fruit of salvation. Now, in contrast, consider the case of **Adoniram Judson**. Judson was a man who *almost* shared the same fate as Lewis and Presley. Even though his parents were godly believers, Adoniram realised, at age 12, that he could not pursue worldly ambitions and Christ at the same time; and so, he consciously chose to serve himself, and mammon (although he *pretended* to be a Christian until he was out on his own). During his college years, a worldly friend named **Jacob Eames** persuaded Judson to become a Deist (someone who believes that there is “some kind of God,” but who denies the God and Christ of the Bible). However, God was gracious to Judson, and used a bizarre circumstance to jar him to reality. At an inn one night, Judson heard a dying man next door crying out to God in agony, but obviously finding no peace, or answer from God; and the next morning, when Judson went to pay his fare to the innkeeper, he found out that the man who had died that night was his friend Eames, who “happened” to be in that same inn! For the next week or so, Judson cried out to God, and confessed his sins, and sought for assurance that God could really forgive him, and save him; and He did! Judson went on to take the Gospel to the people of Burma; and many people were saved through his witness! Judson chose to serve *God* instead of gold; and his life was changed forever!

Lost people often know very well that they have chosen to live for the things of this world instead of for God. But what about believers? Are *believers* capable of living for things of this world? Yes, they are. When believers get their eyes off Christ, they will *automatically* begin to pursue the things of this world; and the sad (and curious) thing about it, is that Christians often deceive themselves into thinking that they *can* serve both God and gain.

Read 1 Timothy 6:3-11.

As believers, we have been given the “mind of Christ” (the ability to think like Christ); and *because* we have the ability to think like Christ, we *do* desire to serve God in our “inner man.” However, many Christians do not have their eyes on Christ, and thus are not willing to surrender all to Him; and therefore, they fool themselves into thinking that “gain is godliness.” They assume that “Because my bank account is full, and things are going well in my life, it must mean that God’s smile of approval is upon me.” They content themselves that they are serving God by going to church now and then, and by picking up their Bible every once in a while; but the reality is that they are what Jesus called “*lukewarm*”—neither cold nor hot. They do *not* have a passionate love for the Lord, and a passionate desire to serve Him. Like the church of Laodicea, they do not realise that they are “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” before God. They are trying to walk the line between serving things of this world and serving God; but it’s not working. Christian, you cannot serve the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and love God with all your heart, soul, and mind at the same time. God demands that you surrender *all*, and that you serve Him with a single eye to His glory. Christian, are you doing that?

Conclusion: As we close this morning, I would ask the question, “Does God have all your heart?” First of all, have you been *saved*? Have you ever repented of your sin, believed on Christ alone, and received the New Birth? If not, I urge you to do so today! Christ will not save a man whom He cannot command. You must ask Him to come into your heart, and be your *personal* Lord and Saviour! If you are saved already, I would ask, “Have you gotten your eyes off the Lord to any degree?” Is your eye singly on the Lord, and your whole body full of light? Or is your life partly dark, because you are trying to love Christ and love things of this life as the same time? If so, let Christ have your *whole* heart today!

ⁱ Arthur Eedle, “I’d rather have Jesus” (Part 3) About Rhea Miller and Bev Shea, <https://prophetictelegraph.co.uk/59-id-rather-have-jesus-part-3-about-rhea-miller-and-bev-shea/>.

ⁱⁱ Simon Hattenstone, “Jerry Lee Lewis: ‘I Worry about whether I’m going to heaven or hell,’” *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/aug/08/jerry-lee-lewis-interview-heaven-hell>

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*