

Joyful Generosity

The Allure of Worldly Things

Matthew 6:19-34

April 19, 2026

Introduction/Illustration

In last week's message from 2 Corinthians 8, we learned several things about generosity that serve as the foundation for today's message and the rest in this series.

- Generosity is a matter of the gospel, not a matter of the law.
- Generosity is a matter of our hearts, not our circumstances.
- Generosity is a matter of mission, not donation.
- Generosity is a matter of maturity, not an option for some.

Today, we are going to take a deeper dive into that second one ... our heart problem with possessions.

Tell story about Luke's pig.

Segue

(Slide) What should my attitude and actions be toward possessions?

So this is a great question ... one that we all should wrestle with and answer ... and one we will have to wrestle with and answer again and again throughout our lifetime, because money and possessions are an ever-present reality. It's a topic we take to our graves, but thankfully it stops there.

But until then, ***what should our attitude and actions be toward possessions?***

Jesus gives us some very practical counsel in this passage.

(Slide) Understand the Temporary Nature of all Earthly Possessions (vv. 19-20)

19 “Don’t store up for yourselves treasures on earth, 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal.

When it comes to stuff, there are lots of filters we use in order to determine the value of something. For example, one of the requirements for Trey at Samford University is that he have a business suit. Semi-formal events, participating in Greek life, giving a business presentation ... he simply must have a suit.

Fortunately, I have been down this road before (with myself and him), so it wasn’t a slow or laborious process, but there were things we simply had to consider in order to ascribe value to the suit we were going to purchase.

- It needed to be wool or a nice-looking alternative, but not a shark-skin
- It needed to be dark gray, dark blue, or black
- It needed to be solid, not a pattern ... not a plaid or a stripe.
- It needed to be slim in fit (for obvious reasons)
- It needed to be under a certain price point (so, not Italian)
- And, it needed to last a few years (both in terms of its quality and its style)

That last one ... its ability to LAST ... that one was especially important b/c it's not the kind of purchase that you want to remake every year or two, right? I just bought our THIRD dishwasher in 5 years this week. It's infuriating b/c nothing is seemingly built to LAST.

Therefore, do not Treasure Earthly Treasures (v 19).

I say all of that to say this: ***even the things that are built to last don't last.*** Therefore, Jesus says in v. 19, don't invest in them ***TO THE DEGREE*** that you think they are going to last forever. That's what "store up" or "lay up" means in v. 19. It means to not treasure your treasures.

Now, in Jesus' day and in his immediate context, there are two things to remember. First, Jesus is talking primarily to an audience that was quite poor and lived hand to mouth. The idea of following Dave Ramsey's advice of living off of 70% of your earnings and giving or saving the rest was laughable, honestly, to Jesus' immediate audience. The other thing to keep in mind is that wealth in Jesus' day predominantly consisted of precious metals and textiles (it was truly a commodities economy). So people really did stress about moths working their way through their fabrics and the Palestinian climate bringing decay (which might include rust) to their precious metals.

And when it came to storage and savings of these precious items, people would quite literally dig a hole in the dirt floor or in a clay wall of their home and put their items in some sort of wooden or metal strong box, then cover it back up. Not only might this do a

good job of protecting against moths and the climate, but also from thieves. The problem was that thieves knew this was common (and honestly the best) practice, and homes were quite small, so at the opportune time, they would enter the home and dig through (the words “break in” are literally “dig through” in the Greek) and take these items.

But when you’re going to such an effort to protect these things so that they last, the temptation is to treasure those treasures.

Am I Treasuring Treasures?

So, how can you know if you are treasuring your treasures in a way that Jesus is teaching against in this passage?

Ultimately, only you and God are going to know the answer to that question, and always Him before you. But there is more counsel throughout the Bible on this, so let me just tick off a few things.

(Slide) Not Asceticism

Let me say at the outset that Jesus is not encouraging voluntary poverty. Jesus does not advocate in this passage for the complete removal of all worldly pleasures. So, if you think you might be disobedient b/c you’re not completely broke and forlorn or giving away everything you have, that’s not the case. Jesus is not teaching asceticism. The Amish are not your standard.

*Hitchin' up the buggy, churnin' lots of butter
Raised a barn on Monday, soon I'll raise another
Think you're really righteous? Think you're pure in heart?
Well, I know I'm a million times as humble as thou art
I'm the pious guy the little Amlettes wanna be like*

*On my knees day and night scorin' points for the afterlife
So don't be vain and don't be whiny
Or else, my brother, I might have to get medieval on your heinie¹*

(Slide) Providing and Planning is not Faithlessness

The other thing I would say is that saving and investing and budgeting and all those kinds of things are not demonstrations of a lack of faith. Responsible stewardship is a glorious thing ... a biblical thing. God wants us to use our common sense to provide for future needs. So you're not being disobedient to Jesus in this passage if you care and are planning and investing, etc.

(Slide) Profit is not Contrary to Faith

You are not “treasuring your treasures” by wanting to run a profitable and successful business. Later in Matthew, we will actually see Jesus commend wise business and banking practices in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30). Profit, in any economic system, is good business sense that can and should be earned and used for the glory of God. Sometimes that is giving ... sometimes it is reinvestment ... and so on.

(Slide) Wealth is not a Sign of Treasuring Treasures

If you happen to be wealthy or think that you are wealthy, that is not necessarily a sign that you are treasuring your treasures. You can be quite poor (as most of Jesus' audience was), quite rich (as few of us are), or somewhere in between (as most of us are) ... and be guilty of treasuring your treasures.

- Abraham was very wealthy (Gen. 13:2), yet he is called the friend of God (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23).

¹ Weird Al Yankovic, Amish Paradise

- After Job's testing, the blessing of God on his life was his doubled prosperity (Job 42:10–15).
- At Zacchaeus's conversion he was a wealthy tax collector, yet he gave away only half of what he had, promising to repay four times the amount he had cheated anyone, implying that he had plenty left over (Luke 19:2–10).
- And Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus who was wealthy (Matt. 27:57); he is an example of a disciple whom God allowed to keep his wealth so that he could provide privileged service to his Lord.²

How little or how much you have is not a sign that you are treasuring your treasures. It is a HEART ISSUE that manifests itself in TANGIBLE ways, but those TANGIBLE ways may or may not be pointing to that HEART issue.

Instead, Treasure Heavenly Treasures (v. 20).

Now, rather than treasuring our earthly treasures, we should treasure heavenly treasures.

(Slide) 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven ...

What are Spiritual Treasures and do I Treasure Them?

As I have studied this this week, I've just come to the conclusion that "spiritual treasure" should be defined as broadly as possible. Spiritual treasure is everything that you can take with you into Heaven: your character, your obedience, your evangelism and discipleship of others, and so on.

² This list derived from Michael Wilkins, NIVAC Commentary.

But in the immediate context of possessions and finances, I think it's fair to say that Jesus intends to equate "spiritual treasure" with the compassionate use of our earthly treasures to meet the spiritual and physical needs of others. So if you want to know how to treasure spiritual treasures, there you go: give in this temporary world like there is an eternal world.

Understand the nature of your heart toward possessions (vv. 21-32)

(Slide) This may not make sense to you. The idea of prioritizing spiritual treasures Heavenly treasures ... over earthly treasures ... that may not make a lot of sense to you. You get they are temporary, but **why should that necessarily lead to treasuring spiritual treasures more than earthly treasures?**

The answer is twofold.

(slide) **Kingdom Citizenship**

First, you have to remember that to be a Christian to be first and foremost a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. ***We are wayfaring our way through this world ... through this country ... through this very, very small epoch ... and because we are traveling, we are to travel light.***

Illustration

I know some of you are more high maintenance than others. You ask for every conceivable exception on your dish at a restaurant, and so on. And when it comes to packing for a vacation, you *might* need just about everything in your closet or drawers, so you take it with you. You're driving your spouse crazy in the process. I see you out there.

But here's the thing: When it comes to being a citizen of the Kingdom of God, we are all high maintenance. We all have high maintenance hearts. We don't want to travel light. We don't want to prioritize our kingdom citizenship. It's hard, but it's the calling. This is what Jesus is getting at in vv. 21 and 24.

(Slide) 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

24 "No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

(Slide) Idolizing Possessions

And that leads me to the second reason we have to treasure spiritual treasures more than earthly treasures: ***Our heart wants to make them permanent.***

Even though they are temporary, your heart wants to make them permanent. You want to put more weight into them with your identity and being than they were made to handle.

Illustration

Hammocks in the backyard not being able to HOLD THE WEIGHT of the kids. Possessions can't hold the weight of our meaning either.

This idolatry of treasures manifests in two major ways. You can obsess with accumulation which is what Jesus addresses in vv. 19-21). We've covered that.

But it can also manifest itself as an obsession with worry that your needs get met.

Which is why Jesus speaks this gem in vv. 25-32. (multiple slides)

25 “Therefore I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing?”

26 Consider the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they? 27 Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying?

28 And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these.

30 If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t he do much more for you—you of little faith?

31 So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

So the idolatry of earthly treasures doesn't just manifest itself in accumulation, but also in the form of a worry. To BE a worrier is to idolize the very thing that you are worrying about. It is to make it a hammock that cannot hold the weight or stress you are placing on it.

So that's why, in these verses, Jesus talks about God. (Slide)

- Doesn't GOD care more for you than animals?
- Doesn't GOD care more for you than plants?
- Doesn't GOD determine your first and last breath?
- Doesn't GOD know what you need?

“Little faith” in v. 30 isn't about the VOLUME of faith ... It's about the OBJECT of faith. To put your faith in earthly treasures ... faith that may manifest itself as accumulation or worry ... is “little” because earthly treasures are “little.”

Conclusion

Prioritize your heart to have a healthy relationship with your possessions (vv. 33-34)

So, what do we do?

(Slide) 33 But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. 34 Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

We have to put God back on the throne, and fight to keep him there. And if we do that, we will have a healthy relationship with our earthly possessions.

The way for us to attend to our earthly possessions is to prioritize our values so that nothing in this world replaces God as our Master and Provider. That's what vv. 33 and 34 are getting at.

If our base of security is in earthly treasures, then no matter how much "concern" we have, we will never be able to satisfy our needs. If we place our security in our heavenly Father, he will naturally take care of all of our needs.

And more broadly, if you will keep God on the throne and not possessions, you will come to find that earthly possessions do have healthy purposes for citizens of the Kingdom of God. (Slide)

1. to give appropriate care for one's own family and prevent them from becoming a burden to others
2. to help those who are in need
3. to encourage and support God's work in spreading the gospel of the kingdom both at home and around the world

If we put Jesus at the center of our lives to serve and love him with all that we are and have, we will appropriately use all the blessings of life and avoid the modern idolatry of stuff that leads to accumulation and worry.

Here's a clear, gospel-centered ending that naturally flows from your sermon's theme and tone:

Gospel Appeal: The Ultimate Treasure

As we close, I want you to see that everything Jesus teaches in this passage ultimately points us back to *Himself.*

He's not just giving financial advice. He's revealing where true treasure can be found. You see, the call to "store up treasures in heaven" is not a command that we can obey perfectly—it's a mirror showing us that our hearts are naturally drawn to treasure *everything but God.* We've all loved the temporary more than the eternal. We've placed our security in things that rot and rust and fade. And that's not just a financial problem—it's a *spiritual* one.

But here's the good news: Jesus, who had every treasure in heaven, left it all to come and rescue us.

He became poor so that through His poverty we might become rich—not rich in possessions, but rich in grace. He paid the debt our greed created, and through His death and resurrection, He offers the only treasure that truly lasts: forgiveness of sin, peace with God, and eternal life with Him.

So the invitation is this:

If you've been chasing after treasures that will never satisfy, come to Jesus today.

If you've been crushed under the worry of "What will I eat?" "What will I wear?" "How will I make it?" — come to the One who feeds

the birds and clothes the fields, and who gave His life so you could be clothed in righteousness forever.

Seek first His kingdom by seeking *the King Himself.*
Surrender your heart, your security, your treasures to Jesus —
and receive the lasting treasure of a new heart, a new purpose,
and eternal life with Him.

Title Slide