

Matthew 6:19-34

A Christian's Ambition: Not Material Security But God's Rule

Friday, May 13th, 2005

Introduction:

In the previous two studies, we have considered the influence of a right view of our Heavenly Father on our "acts of righteousness" – the practice of our faith. In this study, we will consider Christ's teaching on how this right view of our Heavenly Father relates to our ambitions as believers.

"...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." – Matt 6:33

As a child, what did you hope to be when you "grew up"? What is your ambition now?

Read Matthew 6:19-34.

A Right Treasure, Vision, and Master (v.19-24)

How are the values of "treasures on earth" and "treasures in heaven" contrasted in v. 19-21? (Prov 23:4-5) What does it mean to "store up for yourselves treasures on earth"? (Luke 12:13-21)

- Treasures on earth: material wealth (money, possessions), entertainment, youth/beauty, security, status, fame (praise of men)
 - perishable & subject to theft / not lasting - accumulation of goods / extravagant living / materialism
 - **confining our ambitions, interests and hope to anything that ends with this life**
- Prov 23:4-5 *"Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle"*
- Treasures in heaven: salvation, faith, hope and love (see below for full discussion)
 - eternal & safe from theft / lasting - **temporal activities with eternal consequences**
- Luke 12:13-21 – Parable of the Rich Fool
 - (note context): told in response to members of the crowd pre-occupied with division of earthly inheritance;
 - warning: *"Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions"* (v. 15)
 - parable tells of a man pre-occupied with building up earthly inheritance and security; v.21: "...stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God"; revealed as foolish because his life would be taken from him that day

What is wrong with this practice? (James 5:1-6; Luke 16:19-31) What is Christ NOT prohibiting when he presents this teaching? (Prov 6:6-11; 1 Tim 5:8; 4:3-4; 6:17)

- James 5:1-6 – storing up earthly treasures leads "rich people" to oppress workers / harvesters → ie. the self-indulgence / hoarding of wealth is associated with oppression of the poor; the "rotting" of the material possessions will testify against you.
- Luke 16:19-31 – Rich man → unmerciful; lived in luxury while the beggar (Lazarus) lay at his gate; hoarding of wealth with hard-heartedness toward the needy – eternal consequences
- NOT prohibiting possessions in themselves; "saving for a rainy day" / working to ensure needs of family are met; enjoying God's gifts with thanksgiving

Read 1 Tim 6:3-21. What is revealed about storing "treasures in heaven"? ..."treasures on earth"?

- Treasures in Heaven
 - contentment – great gain (v.6); stems from... 1) right perspective (v.7: brought nothing into the world, cannot take anything out...); 2) right sense of true need (v.8 – basic needs of food and clothing)
 - v.11 – pursuit of righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness
 - v.12 – not easy: "fight the good fight of faith"; requires effort: "take hold of eternal life" → this starts with a confession of faith
 - v.13 – right view of God's presence and Christ's example
 - v.18 – use of earthly riches – "be rich in good deeds", generous/willing to share → "in this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age..."
 - v.20 – guard what has been ENTRUSTED to you – a right view of our possessions – we are STEWARDS
- Treasures on Earth
 - v.3-5 – false belief in godliness as a means to financial gain (eg. television evangelist)
 - v.9 – leads to many "foolish & harmful" desires → ultimately to ruin and destruction
 - v.10 – love of money → root of all kinds of evil; wander from the faith
 - v.17 – arrogance / foolishness: hope in the uncertain

The eye is described as the lamp of the body. How does this relate to our hearts and ultimately the condition of our whole bodies? (v.22,23)

- "fixing our eyes" – related to the ambition of our hearts – our VISION (what you focus on)
 - if set on glorifying / honouring God → throws light on all that we do
 - if set on selfish desires / gain → moral darkness / sin

How does what we treasure and fix our eyes on relate to the ultimate commitment of the heart? (v.21, 24, cf. Matt 19:16-24; Isa 42:8; 48:11)

- where your treasure is, there your heart is also
- you cannot serve both God and mammon – EITHER, OR (no in between)
 - Mammon – wealth
- Matt 19:16-24 rich young man – challenged to sell all his possessions and give to the poor to live righteously (in obedience to God)
 - was UNABLE to give up the money → love of money = idolatry
- Isa 42:8; 48:11 – the Lord will not share glory due His name with any other
- not an exclusive problem of the wealthy

A Right Ambition (v.25-34)

How does the choice of our master (v.24) affect our ambitions?

- “THEREFORE” – if our treasure, faith and loyalty is to God (who sustains even the birds and clothes the lilies) there is no need for us to be anxious – our master determines what we seek and are anxious about...
- reject the anxiousness over earthly treasures
- seek first the kingdom of God

Review v.25-34. What reasons does Christ give to teach us that anxious thoughts are unnecessary?

- NOT doctrine of “health & wealth” – clear teaching that we will experience trouble & need to work (recall Prov 6:6-11; 1 Tim 5:8)
- v.25 – life is more than food, body is more important than clothing → the enjoyment of God (not physical pleasures); approval of God (not man); glory of God
- example of the birds and lilies → they do not toil and labour and yet the Lord provides for their daily needs (not a lesson on laziness)
- v.27 – no benefit of anxiety – can’t add to our lives
- v.32 – anxiety puts us on the same level of non-believers who do not know God; reveals that we do not believe that our Father in Heaven knows our needs
- v.33 – when we seek His kingdom first, he works for us and provides all our needs
- v.34 – each day has enough trouble of its own – no need to be troubled in anticipation

What is the ultimate source of the anxious thoughts that Christ deems as unnecessary? (v.30; cf. v.7,32; Heb 13:5)

- v.30 – “... O you of little faith” – unbelief in the promised and sovereignty of God leads us to doubt and worry
- v.8,32 – Our Heavenly Father knows our needs
- Heb 13:5 – “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have because God has said “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you”
- wrong ambitions – earthly security, comfort, pleasure

What are we to concern ourselves with? How does this ambition relate to what we have already learned in our study of the “Lord’s prayer”? (v.33, cf. Matt 6:9-15)

- v.33 – *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”*
- recall:
 - Lord’s prayer – we are to concerned primarily with the Glory of our heavenly father – His name, kingdom, and will
 - Lord’s prayer – we acknowledge dependence on God for all of our needs
 - His Kingdom – the Lord’s reign / the reign of Christ → evangelism
 - His Righteousness – the influence of Christ on society → evangelism; being a “salt and light”

Reflection and Application

As He has throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Christ presents would be followers with contrasts as He provides practical teaching on what you should cherish (treasures on earth vs. treasures in heaven); what you should focus your life on (darkness vs. light); and what you should seek after (earthly comfort and pleasure vs. His kingdom & righteousness). The value of your choice will be revealed in time and judgment (1 Cor 3:10-15). Your choice, as demonstrated by your life (not your words) will determine the sincerity with which you can pray:

*“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven...”*

What do you find yourself worrying about? Do you need to submit this area of your life to God?

Is your heart focused on the name, kingdom and will of God? How is this demonstrated in what you treasure and in your ambitions?