

A Christian's Ambition

Matthew 6:19-34

In this section of the SM Jesus teaches in the style of the Old Testament wisdom literature – a series of succinct sayings, images drawn from daily life, and short stories with a brief teaching conclusion. Although this unit is made up of many parts, one theme seems to tie it all together: *freedom from materialism or possessions*. Elsewhere in the Gospels, Jesus gives urgent attention to what we should do with wealth, put it into the service of other people (Mark 10:21; Matthew 19:21), but here, in Matthew 6:19-34, Jesus is concerned with the problem that wealth poses for us. Wealth cannot sustain us in this life, and we can't take it with us. Given the wrong place in our goals, values or priorities, wealth can destroy us. Jesus doesn't teach that the material is bad, for it is not. He does not imply that we have no material needs, for we do. The material has its place to be sure, but we perish with the perishable if we bury our hearts in it.

1. We all tend to be people who treasure what we honour and highly prize; we all have a “treasuring instinct.” When you were a child, what did you treasure more than anything else?
2. **Read Matthew 6:19-24.** According to Jesus, why should we store up for ourselves treasures in heaven rather than treasures on earth (vv.19-21)? Do earthly treasures include insurance policies, investments, savings, and personal property?

How do we store up for ourselves treasures in heaven?

3. In biblical usage the “single eye” stands for generosity (Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 8:2; 9:11,13; James 1:5). The “evil eye” stands for stinginess (Matthew 20:15; Deuteronomy 15:9; Proverbs 23:6). Since the saying about the two eye conditions (verses 22 & 23) comes between Jesus' saying about storing up treasures (vv. 19-21) and serving either God or Money, what does the imagery about the eye mean? What is Jesus saying to us?
4. Why is it impossible to serve two masters – God and Money. Can't we serve God and wealth simultaneously like some people who hold two jobs and are able to meet the demands of both bosses?
5. Jesus begins the next section on worry or anxiety by saying, “Therefore I tell you.” How will the choices we make in verses 19-24 affect our capacity to live worry-free lives?
6. **Read Matthew 6:25-34.** Jesus gives us a warning about our attitude toward material and physical needs. What exactly is Jesus encouraging us to avoid (vv. 25-30)?
7. Why is it foolish to worry about our physical and material needs (vv.25-30)?

8. Jesus seems to be saying in 6:25-34 that if his disciples focus on him, if they make him the centre of their existence, they will not want for food or drink or clothes. They'll fare better than the birds and look almost as good as the lilies. The trouble is, God does not seem to provide, at least, not always. Why are so many of his people starving and freezing to death each day?

Does Matthew 25:41-45 or Acts 4:34-35 provide any insights?

9. What questions or issues does this passage raise for you?
10. How has this passage challenged you to re-examine your goals, priorities, and ambitions?

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to look hard into my own life and desires and recognize the dependencies I have surrendered. Are they my home? My family? My job? My education? They are all dear to me. But grant that I may love you so much that none of them stands between us, now or in the future. I am not a Saint Francis of Assisi, Lord. I need to learn to put my faith in you and go forward trustingly. Through Jesus who gave up all from the very beginning and trusted you completely. Amen.