

Laying Up For Yourselves Treasures.

Text: Matt 6:19-23

1) The wrong way

Suggested Hymns:

2) The right way

204, 344, 298, 178, 157

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 6:19-23, ¹⁹ ***“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ “but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

²² ***“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“Lay up for yourselves treasures!” is an admonition pleasing to most people. In fact, they are busy at all times heeding this advice in one way or another. But there is a vast difference in the object and manner of their hoarding.

While some people are completely absorbed with the task of amassing earthly goods and are bent on the pursuit of material blessings, others bear in mind the supreme importance of spiritual gifts and blessings, and ***“earnestly desire the best gifts.”***¹

Our Lord Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, gives us Christians proper instruction when He says, ***“Lay up for yourselves treasures,”*** and proceeds to point out the wrong way and the right way of laying up treasures. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Laying Up For Ourselves Treasures The Wrong Way

Our text begins, ¹⁹ “*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.*” Here the Lord tells His disciples of the wrong way of laying up treasures. He speaks of treasures on earth, treasures that have value for this life only. After these things most people seek. They aim to find their treasures here on earth.

One person finds his treasure in the riches of this world, in wealth and material possessions. His aim is to acquire property, jewels, properties, fine clothing, fields, stocks, bonds, and the like. In the possession of these things he finds all his joy.

Other people seek favour among people of influence, popular approval, and political prestige. Still others aim at mental accomplishments, at new heights in scientific research.

Against these things the Lord warns. He does not forbid the possession of wealth, the quest after knowledge, the desire to be happy in life or to enjoy the favour of others. But the manner in which these people strive after earthly things may be wrong.

When Jesus says, “*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth,*” He is warning against counting these things as the best, and the most valuable in themselves. He is warning against esteeming them higher than spiritual blessings, more glorious than eternal glory.

Do not lay up treasures in such a way as to covet an abundance of earthly things, always grasping for more and more, clinging to riches like a miser, trusting in wealth, health, influence, and saying to these, *You are my hope.*

Again, Jesus warns against being content with these things, as though they were all that people need and desire. In short, He says, Do not lay up treasures for yourselves and posterity in this world while neglecting to lay up for yourselves treasures in eternity.

Earthly Treasures Are Uncertain Possessions

The Lord has good reasons for giving this solemn warning to His disciples. For earthly treasures are not lasting. They are subject to loss and decay. *Do not*

lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

The hymnist writes, “*Change and decay in all around I see.*”² Moths may ruin the most costly fabric; rust and dry rot and other effects of moisture, temperature, and climate may eventually destroy or make our possessions useless.

Moreover, the more valuable they are, the more the wickedness of man devises ways and means to deprive us of our treasures. Thieves break through and steal them; the dishonesty and incompetence of men, the social and economic and political conditions in a country, earthquakes, floods, droughts, wars, epidemics, industrial strife and unrest, panics and depressions, conspire to deprive people of the things they prize as their most valued possessions.

If ever in the history of the world the truth of Christ’s words has been substantiated, it has been during the past decades, with the stock crashes, recessions, and wars with their unparalleled destruction of people and materials. Yes, earthly possessions carry in themselves the germs of decay.

Earthly Treasure and the Heart

What is more, against such laying up of earthly treasures the Lord warns because it robs people of their heavenly treasures. Our text says, ***For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*** The heart follows the treasure as the needle follows the magnet or the sunflower the sun.

Where the treasure is, there one will find love and affection. People who lay up treasures the wrong way will care for the things of this life; in them they will put their trust and their hope; in them they will find their chief joy and delight. Remember the rich man in the Gospel reading!³

In short, such people are covetous, materialistic, earthly-minded, and worldly-minded, seeking their greatest good here on earth. The Apostle says, ***Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.***⁴ This warning is ignored by such people. What is the result?

The answer is given in our text,²² ***The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.***²³ ***But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!***

They remain spiritually blind. Jesus says in these words, that as long as the eye is well and sound, one can see all objects clearly and can recognise them. But if the eye is sick, one sees everything with obscured vision. Nothing is clear, everything is blurred.

You would make mistakes, or missteps, that would not occur when the vision is clear. Thus it is with covetousness and earthly-mindedness, with clinging to worldly things. Such an attitude dulls our spiritual sense of sight.

Just as the cataract creeps almost imperceptibly upon a person, gradually dimming one's sight until complete blindness sets in, so love of money, love of earthly treasures and pleasures slowly but surely robs people of all love to God, to the neighbour, and of faith. It leaves them blind and in spiritual darkness. It is all the worse because these people still think that they can see.

Thus seeking to lay up treasures in this way they lose their true and lasting treasures, eternal salvation. No wonder that Jesus warns so earnestly against this sin. No wonder that He so urgently admonishes us to lay up treasures in the right way.

2. Laying Up For Ourselves Treasures The Right Way

Our true riches are our treasures in Heaven. Our text says, *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*. These are not treasures that are found in heaven only and not on earth. They can be possessed and enjoyed even in this life. They are riches that are intended for a life after death, for heaven.

What are these treasures? When we consider that the salvation of men is the Saviour's chief concern, then it is not difficult to know what these riches are.

The treasure in heaven is a reconciled God who was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. The Lord Jesus has atoned for the sins of men and has made peace through the blood of His Cross. We appropriate Him and His salvation, forgiveness of sin and a reconciled God by faith.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. And where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

These are the treasures of which the Lord speaks: the reconciled God as our highest Good, the Saviour Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit of God, the means of grace, faith in the Redeemer, forgiveness of sins, a Christian life, and eternal salvation. How inestimably valuable! They are more to be desired are they than gold and silver.

The Safety Of True Riches

And how safe are these heavenly treasures! *Neither moth nor rust destroys [them] and where thieves do not break in and steal.* Take note that the devil seeks to rob us of our God and Saviour, our faith and the means of grace, our peace of mind and our hope of glory.

But as long as we have a loving God in heaven, we need not fear. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. His word, faith, pardon, peace, life, salvation are the treasures that cannot be destroyed by evil forces.

The Lord says in Isaiah 54:10, ¹⁰ *For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,*” Says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

We read in Psalm 33:4 *that word of the LORD is right, And all His work is done in truth.* The word of the Lord will stand forever as we read in Isaiah 40:8, *“The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.”* And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached to you.

We are preserved for heaven, we who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; and heaven is kept for us, for the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away is reserved in heaven for us.

And finally, the Good Shepherd Himself promised in John 10:28, *neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.* That is, His sheep, His believers with all their heavenly, spiritual treasures.

The Call To Lay Up True Riches

We are to heed the admonition of the Lord and lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. He wants us to strive more and more to increase our spiritual treasures and not to be satisfied with a few, but to keep on gathering more.

Lay up for yourselves, be zealous, diligent, as you continually gather in such a manner as to forget all else that you might obtain, like the merchant in the parable who sold all that he had to buy the pearl of great price.

Hence, we are admonished in Scripture to increase in the knowledge of God, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, to prove our own selves.

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, persevere and grow in faith; use diligently the means of grace and every opportunity for spiritual growth.

How is it with you? Are you laying up treasures? If so, in what manner? Are you seeking only the things of this world? Are you bent only or chiefly on material possessions and material advantages? Are you worrying chiefly about the clothing and shoes, the food and drink you need for yourselves and your dependents?

It is certainly not wrong to provide for your own, to save up for a day of emergency. But are your energies and thoughts directed exclusively or most prominently to earthly things? Remember, ***“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***

There are too many people, also in Christian churches, whose chief interest seems to revolve around money, a job, food, drink, and material things, leaving little time for them to think of spiritual things. They think that they have found lasting treasures and worth-while possessions, whereas Scripture says in 1 John 2:17 that ***the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.***

A rich man showed his beautifully furnished palace to a hermit, expecting the hermit to compliment him on his good fortune. The hermit commented, ***“You have, indeed, a well-arranged residence. But there is one door too many in the house, and you ought to wall up that door.”***

On being asked for an explanation, he said, ***“The door through which your corpse will be carried out. As long as you leave that open, it is impossible that your happiness can last eternally, and that which does not last eternally is not happiness.”***

Are your treasures lasting or are they merely earthly? Repent, if you have been covetous or earthly-minded! Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Lay up for yourselves heavenly treasures.

Put your talents and treasures to use in His kingdom lest it possess and use you. And as you continue to make use of Word and Sacrament, you will grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Saviour.

Then you will better realise in what true riches consist, you will be rich toward God, and the Lord will graciously bestow upon you the eternal riches and glories of heaven. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 1 Corinthians 12:31

² Hymn 543

³ Luke 16:19-31

⁴ Colossians 3:2