

## Time And Treasure.

Text: 1 John 2:17

1) Time and Worldly Treasure

Suggested Hymns:

2) Time and Spiritual Treasure

556, 163, 331, 559, 22

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 1 John 2:17, <sup>17</sup> *And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.* (NKJV)

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

Dear friends in Christ,

On the last evening of the year our thoughts turn to the great realities of life. We quite naturally give some thought to time. As we think of the flight of time, we ask, What is there in life that is permanent? What is there that is permanent and still has value? What constitutes a permanent treasure? On the basis of our text let us bring these thoughts together as we consider *Time and Treasure*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. Time And Worldly Treasure.

Let us first consider the definition of time. Our text contains the time element — “*passing away*,” and “*abides forever*.” It is difficult to define time. The dictionary has the definition of times as, “*That in which events are distinguished with reference to before and after — beginning and end.*”

We have learned to measure time: Minutes, hours, days, and years. Formerly time was measured by a by a sun-dial. We read in 2 Kings 20:9–11, <sup>9</sup> *Then Isaiah said, “This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing which He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees or go backward ten degrees?”*

<sup>10</sup> *And Hezekiah answered, “It is an easy thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; no, but let the shadow go backward ten degrees.”*

*<sup>11</sup> So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the LORD, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.*

We have also the division of time into watches as we read in Exodus 14:24, *<sup>24</sup> Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the LORD looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians.*<sup>1</sup> And in Matthew 14:25, *<sup>25</sup> Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.*

We have an important time reference in Genesis 1:1, ***“In the beginning.”*** God is not subject to time, being eternal.<sup>2</sup> Time is given to us as a special gift, and we are to make the best possible use of it. We read in Ephesians 5:15–17, *<sup>15</sup> See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, <sup>16</sup> redeeming the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*<sup>3</sup> Let us today think of time as the passing of the years.

Let us now consider the definition of Worldly Treasure. A treasure is anything of highly estimated value. In a figurative sense it is anything on which we set our hearts. We read in Matthew 6:21, *<sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

A worldly treasure is one found in the material world — money, goods, real estate, pleasure, and honour.

In the next part of the sermon let us see what effect time, that is, *“the passing years,”* has upon worldly treasure.

### **Time Exposes Worldly Treasures.**

Time reveals how illusive and deceptive worldly treasures are. The promises of worldly treasures are indeed bright and glorious. They seem to contain the answer to every desire and quest. But after you once have them, these worldly treasures all too often begin to “burn.”

There is the fear of loss, the fear of responsibility, and the fear of attack. What promised to be a treasure has become a liability. Note how illusive honour and popularity are. The world will honour a hero and give him the crown of popularity until another person comes along with a better record and a greater service. We see that in the Olympics.

Likewise a person may be honoured for a record non-stop flight from one place to another. But tomorrow the crown is given to another, who has bettered the record by an hour.

Hence it is folly to seek honour and popularity, We read in Ecclesiastes 10:1, *<sup>1</sup> Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment, And cause it to give off a foul odor; So does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor.*

And in 1 Peter 1:24, *"All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away.* Time exposes every worldly treasure as deceptive, illusive, and unreliable.

Time reveals how futile worldly treasures are in the hour of emergency. Of how much value are your worldly treasures when death comes? We read in Luke 12:20, *<sup>20</sup> But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'*

Those of you who were seriously ill during the past year, how much help did you receive from any wealth or honour you may have had? How much comfort did you get out of all your worldly treasures during the past year when you came face to face with the fact that you are a lost and condemned sinner?

How much consolation did you get from those treasures as you looked into the cold, still face of a loved one? It is in the emergencies of life that worldly treasures fail us. Time has exposed how futile worldly treasures are in the hour of need and emergency.

### **Time Records The Destruction Of Worldly Treasures.**

Worldly treasures are only temporal. Our text says, *And the world is passing away, and the lust of it.* Not only the treasures but even the desire for them passes away. We read in 1 Corinthians 7:31 that *the form of this world is passing away.* The hymn writer Henry Francis Lyte wrote: *"Change and decay in all around I see."*<sup>4</sup> Compare this to Matthew 6:19 where we read, *<sup>19</sup> "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.*

The final destruction of all things is described in 2 Peter 3:10–12, *<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass*

*away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

*<sup>11</sup> Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*

Many great treasures have been lost and destroyed in the course of time. Consider all the great wealthy kingdoms of the world which once could boast of great treasures that today have vanished — Egypt, Greece, Rome.

Consider the loss of great sums by the wealthy. A man who a year ago tonight enjoyed the comforts of a luxurious home may at this hour be glad to have the shelter of a tin shed. A bank account which on last year showed a balance of thousands may today be all zeros. The Psalmist writes, *<sup>6</sup> Surely every man walks about like a shadow; Surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches, And does not know who will gather them.*<sup>5</sup>

Yet men will go to great lengths to obtain worldly treasures. The world is full of treasure-seekers. History has shown that Cocos Island was constantly overrun by treasure-seekers. This island is located 340 Miles Southwest of Costa Rica. For years organised groups searched for the two most important treasures believed to be buried there, Captain Davis's Spanish gold and the "treasure of Lima" taken there by Captain Thompson in the ship, "Mary Dear." One man even lived on the island for twenty years. The treasure seekers included many prominent people.

Then think of the millions people who during the past 365 days have lived with just one ambition, to obtain worldly treasures. How foolish when time has shown these treasures to be deceptive and reveals the repeated loss and destruction of these treasures.

No wonder Jesus forbids the hoarding of treasures. We read in Luke 12:32–33, *<sup>32</sup> "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup> Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys."*<sup>6</sup>

And as we are marking time on this last Worship Service of the year, let us permit time to bring us its unimpeachable message, ***“The world is passing away, and the lust of it.”***

## **2. Time And Spiritual Treasure.**

What are spiritual treasures? The kingdom of heaven is likened to a treasure.<sup>7</sup> The Fear of the Lord is a spiritual treasure as we read in Isaiah 33:6, ***“Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, And the strength of salvation; The fear of the LORD is His treasure.”***

Religious instruction is a treasure,<sup>8</sup> as is religious knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Faith in Christ is a spiritual treasure.<sup>10</sup> We should think of spiritual treasures as including everything belonging to the Christian faith and life.

### **Time Cannot Destroy Spiritual Treasures.**

Time brings with it many attacks upon spiritual treasures. The Christian faith is continually under fire. Attacks of unbelievers, present-day materialism, modern ungodly education and propaganda, the temptations from within and without in our the nature of our Old Adam.

But Scripture teaches the permanence of spiritual treasures. Our text says, ***but he who does the will of God abides forever.*** To do God’s will is a fruit of faith. We read in Ephesians 2:8–10, ***“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”***

To do God’s will indicates possession of the treasure of faith and love. We read in John 15:5, ***“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”***

The Word of God is permanent. We read in Matthew 24:35, ***“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”*** Time cannot change Christ, as we learn in Hebrews 13:8, ***“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”*** “A changeless Christ for a changing world.”

“A noble Christian woman, as she lay dying, overheard the doctor whisper, ‘She’s sinking fast.’ The dying woman smiled and replied, ‘I’m not sinking; I can’t sink through a Rock.’”

Since spiritual treasures are eternal, it follows that they are “time-proof.” As we today think of the change that comes with the passing years, let us remember the unchangeableness and permanence of spiritual treasures.

### **Time Does And Will Record The Triumph Of Spiritual Treasures.**

Here are some instances where faith has triumphed. — Moses renouncing the royalty of Egypt in order that he might serve God and his people. Daniel spared, honoured, and respected though disregarding the royal edict. Job, having lost all his worldly treasures, keeps his faith and emerges as victor.

In your own personal life, what was it during the past year that helped you over the brink of despair, that sustained you when every prop gave way? Many of us can no doubt confess that the past year would have been a dark one had it not been for these spiritual treasures: the Word of God, the gift of faith, and the privilege of prayer. Blessed are you if the past year recorded the triumph of spiritual treasures in your life.

Martin Luther wrote,<sup>11</sup>

And take they our life,  
Goods, fame, child, and wife:  
Though these all be gone,  
Yet have our foes not won;  
The kingdom ours remaineth

But especially will eternity record the triumph of spiritual treasures. Our text says, ***but he who does the will of God abides forever.*** Faithful adherence to the spiritual treasures carries with it the promise of eternal triumph. We read in Revelation 2:10, ***Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.***

“Near the Capitol building in Rome is a room that was a school-room, full eighteen centuries ago. Across its threshold one morning came two schoolboys with their books. In an idle moment one with a bit of charcoal traced on the wall a rude cross with an outstretched figure hanging on it. Beneath it the boy cartooned the face of his companion and wrote this inscription: *‘Alex worships Christ.’*”

The empire has fallen, gone are the towers and the temples. The Forum itself has passed to dust, but that boy’s attitude toward Christ abides.

Likewise it will be with us. The years will go, and with them will pass our ambitions, prosperities, successes, and friendships. But what we think of Christ will stand forth when life's outer scaffolding falls away, leaving the soul with its open secret revealed.

As on New Year's Eve we write "finish" to another year in the march of time, let us remember that God gives us time only that we might accumulate more of the treasure that does not corrupt but that *"abides forever."*

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,<sup>12</sup>

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name:  
*On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;*  
*All other ground is sinking sand.* Amen.

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

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<sup>1</sup> See also 1 Sam. 11:11

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. 3:8

<sup>3</sup> See also Col. 4:5

<sup>4</sup> Hymn 543 v2

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 39:6

<sup>6</sup> See also Matt. 6:19; Matt 19:21

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 13:44

<sup>8</sup> Matt. 13:52

<sup>9</sup> Col. 2:3

<sup>10</sup> 2 Cor. 4:6-7

<sup>11</sup> Hymn 195

<sup>12</sup> Hymn 331, ALHB 347