



THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE
SERMON *on THE* **MOUNT**
SESSION 7: EYE ON THE PRIZE



LifeGroups
Do Life Together

New Hope Church

THE JOURNEY THROUGH SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

SESSION SEVEN: EYE ON THE PRIZE

MATTHEW 6:19-24

FOLLOW ALONG

Start _____ **with God**

Take _____ **with You**

Keep _____ **on the** _____

INTRODUCTION:

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 6:1-18.

Who is the person in your life that is the most challenging for you to extend grace and forgiveness?

In your circle of friends and family, who would you like to see more than once every so often? Can you make that happen?

Have you found yourself leaving social media, turning off the TV, or any other activity in the last few years simply because you realized it was making you focus on how bad things are getting?

Who are you looking forward to seeing in heaven (besides Jesus!)?

What habits or tricks have you used to help you start your day with God?

Going Deeper

When you imagine a person who is wealthy, what thoughts come to your mind?

Do you perceive yourself as wealthy? What reasons do you have for your answer?

As we delve further into the Sermon on the Mount, it's important to keep in mind that Jesus had a dual purpose for delivering this message. First, He spoke directly to His disciples, those who believed in and relied on Him. His words encouraged them to hold on to their faith and to trust in God's Word while following Christ. Second, the Sermon was also intended for those who were present but did not believe in Him. Through his teachings, Jesus held up a mirror to these individuals so that they could see their desperate need for God. Within this section of the Sermon, Jesus spoke about the Christian heart's orientation - describing it as a person's devotion, loyalty, and affection. Through a series of contrasts, Jesus revealed the true nature of His listeners' hearts.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 6:19-21.

Despite our knowledge of Jesus' teachings, why do we frequently feel compelled to pursue temporary earthly wealth? What specific examples of material possessions are enticing enough to divert us from seeking eternal treasures in heaven?

What approaches do Christians use to work towards accumulating heavenly riches? Why is it critical to recognize that Christians do not labor to earn heaven, but rather as individuals who are already saved through Christ?

Does your way of life demonstrate a greater dedication to the pursuit of temporary earthly wealth or eternal heavenly riches? In what ways is God prompting you to react to this realization?

In this initial section, Christ draws a comparison between two types of treasure. The commands He gave were the positive and negative of the same command. In verse 19, we read, "Don't store up," and then in verse 20, "But store up." Christians are called to produce fruit while they sojourn in this foreign land. When God rescues a lost soul, His purposes go beyond saving him or her from the penalty of sin and eternity in hell. God's great rescue of sinners is the starting point of a life of joyful service to the King until death. This is why Paul reminded the Ephesians that they were crafted in Christ Jesus for good deeds (Eph. 2:10).

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 6:22-23.

In what way is generosity related to accumulating treasures in heaven? How do these aspects correlate with one another?

What inspires Christians to donate their material possessions selflessly and generously towards ministry work and the benefit of their community?

Have you noticed a correlation in your life between the significance you place on treasures in heaven and the extent to which you are willing to donate your earthly belongings? How can you evaluate this in your personal life?

In this section, we find a rather confusing teaching of Christ. Because this teaching was grounded in cultural idioms that have not been passed along to us, we need to dig a bit deeper to get at the intention of Christ. In ancient Israel, the idea of having a healthy eye was a reference to someone who was generous. A person who was generous and not stingy was full of light. The person who hoarded his goods was full of darkness.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 6:24.

What are some ways a person might seek to serve both God and money? Have you ever encountered this temptation in your own life?

Does the Bible condemn money as being inherently sinful? Did Jesus forbid Christians from dealing with money or regarding it as a necessary evil? Elaborate.

How can you accurately determine whether you are serving God or money (or any other idol) in your existence? What alterations must be made to ensure that you serve God exclusively?

The human heart is not capable of simultaneously worshiping both God and money. Christians must choose between the two, as they will either love one and hate the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. This is because God requires whole-hearted devotion in worship, and the heart cannot be divided in two separate directions.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What do you consider your most valuable possession? If people were to watch you every day, what would they say is your most valuable possession? Which possessions do you refuse to part with?

Are there any possessions you cling to too tightly?

How does your attitude towards material possessions affect your generosity towards God and others?

What would be the impact on the world if Christians held material possessions with an open hand, believing that they will receive eternal treasures in heaven? How would this way of living impact our local community?

PRAYER

Close in prayer adoring the Triune God for who He is and what He has done. Ask for the discernment to examine your own heart and life, especially your relationship to money.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 6:19-24

6:19-21. Verses 19 and 20 are almost exact parallels, designed for easy understanding and easy memorization. This is a critical passage. Here the king drew an ultimate contrast between on earth and in heaven. He urged his followers to forget earth and think of heaven. We must not waste our time trying to get ahead in this world. It is the same idea he expounded in 16:24-27. What does it profit a person "if he gains the whole world"? Jesus was demanding that his disciples look up and ahead—"for the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory. . . and then he will reward each person according to what he has done" (Matt. 16:27).

Jesus was summarizing why the kingdom servant is motivated to practice righteous acts. It is not for temporary honor among men on earth, but for eternal reward before the Father in heaven. The point of this life is preparation for the world to come. The present tense verb here can best be translated, "Stop storing up treasures on earth!" But Jesus does specifically command us to store up for yourself in heaven. Moths were universally known as a destructive force (Job 4:19; Isa. 50:9; 51:8). Burglary was especially common in the day of mud-brick homes. Break is the Greek term meaning "break through." It literally means "dig through." There is no permanence in this world. You cannot take your treasure with you into the next world, but you can send it on ahead through kingdom-oriented stewardship.

Jesus not only saw nothing wrong with his followers working for reward; he went so far as to command it. The New Testament clearly encourages it (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 9:24-27). Jesus' words in the last few verses of the Bible emphasize it: "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done" (Rev. 22:12).

This concept of storing up heavenly treasure by doing good works was common in rabbinic tradition, and so it would have been easily understood by Jesus' audience and Matthew's readers. (New Testament passages that expand on this concept, including specific examples of behaviors that have eternal significance, include Matt. 5:12,30,46; 6:6,15; 10:42; 16:24-27; 19:21,27-29; 25:40; Luke 12:16-21; 2 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 6:13-19.)

6:22-23. The conditional "if" statements of 6:22b-23a are parallel, again using the form of poetic wisdom literature.

These two verses can be confusing until we look at them in the light of the preceding and following context. We have not departed from the theme of the person's attitude toward material wealth. Jesus spoke of a small part of the body as being very important to the body as a whole, much as James claimed that anyone who could tame his tongue could tame his whole body (James 3:1-12). No muscle of the body can relax if the eye is uncomfortable. Both Jesus and James were speaking of the inner human control over one's attitude toward wealth and one's choice of words. These two limited aspects of human choice can have profound consequences for the entire person (the whole body, figuratively speaking).

In keeping with the figurative language, the light would be an accurate perspective on the value of material wealth, while darkness would be some warped distortion of this truth. The person with a generous eye can see clearly, and life can be guided in wisdom and safety by such light. The person with a covetous, selfish eye is walking in darkness and is bound for harm he cannot see. Poor perspective causes stumbling.

6:24. The center of this verse is, again, a symmetrical parallel pair of statements, poetically memorable. The term Money is from the Aramaic mammon, meaning "wealth" or "property." It is anything in which a person places confidence. Jesus carefully chose here the picture of a slave. There could be no doubt about the issue of control. No person can serve two masters.

Any compromise of allegiance in this issue reminds us of the Lord's attitude toward those who are "lukewarm" in Revelation 3:15-16. It seems to suggest he thinks even less of those who claim to serve him, but have other loyalties, than he does of those who claim no loyalty to him at all. The terms hate and despise should be taken to mean "be less devoted to," "disregard," or "love less." On the other hand, love and be devoted to would imply a higher priority commitment, not necessarily an exclusive commitment.



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