
The Writer's Inkhorn

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Continuing Reflections on the Word for Your Personal Growth in Christ

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Treasures in Heaven's Bank

Scripture Text:
Matthew 6:19-34; Colossians 3:1-2



Have you checked your bank account statements carefully, lately? Since we have entered into an era of easy electronic ways for thieves to steal your identity *and* your money, all of us would do well to be diligent about where we spend our money and what electronic footprints we are leaving behind. It is really a scary time that we are living in, in that respect. And it reminds us of the verse that says, *“Unless the Lord keeps the city, the watchman watches in vain.”* Sometimes, no matter how many precautions we take, things still happen over which we have no control.

On the other hand, there are other things that we can control, somewhat. We can “lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.” We can pay close attention to the deposits we make in Heaven's Bank.

The proclamation here from which this lesson is taken is one of the most well known in all of the Scriptures: *The Sermon on the Mount*. All of chapters five through seven of Matthew's gospel comprise the Sermon on the Mount, and I'm convinced that this is one sermon we need to keep going back to on a regular basis – as in our daily Bible reading, at least once a month.

What is presented there is a set of goals for every saint of God to strive to achieve. Mind you, it is only for those who have already become disciples of Christ. Do you not know that most of the Bible is written *for us, to us, and about us?* *We* are the ones who need it. Sinners

only need to get saved, and *then* the rest of the Bible becomes relevant to and for them.

When we fully surrender our lives and ourselves to the will of God, there are endless possibilities for rich and fulfilling lives. These chapters are designed for just that purpose and represent God's *best* plan for our lives. All He has *ever* wanted was the best for us – His children – but somehow I think we either do not believe that or do not fully understand that, because too many of us are bent on going our own way, and doing things according to what *we* think is best for us. So as believers, we really do need to meditate here on this particular passage of Scripture and revisit it more often.

Once you are already saved you already have eternal life. This is what I am trying to convey to you. Jesus wants His disciples to know that once we receive Him as Savior, we have life eternal, but hear what John says Jesus said: *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* Prior to that Jesus began by saying, “The thief comes to steal...” Yes, you should know that you can *be* saved, and the thief can still steal your peace, your joy, your dreams, if you let him. If you are not careful, you will be saved and still not be experiencing the abundant life God desires for you to have.

Look a little closer at the instruction given to the saints in this Sermon on the Mount. In the fifth chapter we start with the **blessings** of discipleship -- more commonly known as the **Beatitudes** . Then He talks about the **influence** of disciples -- salt and light. This is such a critical piece -- this business of being salt and light in our homes and families, the village, the marketplace, and the nation -- that this could be another whole sermon by itself. Next, there is a

contrast of God's kind of righteousness with the old way of doing things according to Mosaic law. There is a discussion of true righteousness that is not for show, but is sincere; there are instructions in prayer -- often called "The Lord's Prayer," and a discussion on true treasure, chapter 6:19-34, the section from which our title is taken. The remainder of the Sermon deals with freedom from judging, freedom to trust God, and the dangers of discipleship. (Yes, there are some risks involved in **true** discipleship. There is a saying, "Salvation is free, but it costs something to follow Jesus." The Sermon ends with the comparison of obedience to the two builders.

Perhaps this brief outline helps you to see why I say you need to read all of this passage regularly. There is so much needed instruction about how we ought to be living right down here with one another, day by day. It will not be of benefit to God *or* to us to wait until we get to heaven to try to learn how to treat each other. That will be a little late, don't you think?

Now that we have the big picture, let's go back to where our theme is located. It is part of the section in chapter 6, verses 19-24, which tells us that we must not be drawn away from total loyalty to God's kingdom by worry over material things. Then, verses 25-34 explain why we don't need to worry. It is because "...your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things." I have included some of those verses here for your convenience: **19-21; 24, 33-34**

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Pay special attention to verses 21, 24, and 33. There are three key phrases you need to remember. The first is, "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The second one makes this point even stronger: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon -- riches, wealth, affluence. Notice, Christ *does not* say, "Ye cannot *have* God and mammon," but rather, you cannot serve both. Whatever you have, **you** own. Whatever you serve, as used in this context, owns **you**. Do you need a case in point? Some of us saints own our houses and cars, but *some* of our houses and cars own us. *Some* of us have children, and *some* of our children have us. Need I go any further? Do you see the difference? You need to keep this straight, as God intended.

Then, verse 33 seems to connect us back to verse 20. How do we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven? That brings us to our third key phrase, by "seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." How do we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven? By spending time in the word of God. How do we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven? By prayer and fasting and consecration. It is this sense of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, after the things of God that we should so want to experience. When is the last time you felt a real hunger for God?

Consider the words of some of the writers of the Biblical text. The psalmist, David, seemed to have a special gift for expressing his desire for God:

As the hart (or deer) pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: ... My tears have been my meat day and night ... (Psalm 42:1, 2a, 3a)

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsts for thee, my flesh longs for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. (Psalm 63:1)

My soul follows hard after thee..."
(Psalm 63:8a)

My soul longs, yea, even faints for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God.
(Psalm 84:2)

I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsts after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah. (Psalm 143:6)

With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: (Isaiah 26:9a)

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby. (I Peter 2:2)

Do you not know that our Father **longs** to have fellowship with us? He desires us to desire *Him*. Hear the word of the Lord:

But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if

thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. (Deuteronomy 4:29)

Seek the Lord, and His strength: seek His face evermore. (Psalm 105:4)

Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: (Isaiah 55:6)

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you. (Hosea 10:12)

For thus says the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye Me, and ye shall live:
(Amos 5:4)

Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. (Zephaniah 2:3)

The Apostle Paul, exhorting the Athenians on Mars Hill, said:

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: (Acts 17:27)

Is there anything more important for us in this life as saints of God, than seeking God, seeking a closer relationship with the God who wrought salvation for us through the death of His only Son, Jesus? What else really matters? This is the only way to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. There is a song, the words of which are:

Lord, You are more beautiful than silver. Lord, You are more costly than gold. Lord, You are more radiant than diamonds. Nothing that I desire compares to You.

There is **nothing** that we can ever desire that compares to Him.

Since this is forever and always the case, why not make Him the central focus of our lives? The Scriptures are full of evidence that every longing after God will be satisfied, every hunger and thirst filled. One of my favorites is a familiar one, and comes from Jeremiah's letter of advice to the captives in Babylon:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will harken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, says the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity... (Jeremiah 29:11-14a)

We often hear the first part of that -- the 11th verse, but we don't much focus on the conditions that **we** must meet. **When** we seek for God with all of our heart, **then** He will turn our captivity away. Doesn't this sound like God's reply to Solomon, as recorded in II Chronicles 7:14, after the dedication of the temple?

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

God is God, and as such, is certainly able to turn our captivity away – solve our problems – even without our seeking Him. But the point is that God is all about relationship. None of us wants to be in a one-sided relationship. We want our love to be reciprocated. We long to be in the company of those who long to be in *our* company. Our heavenly Father desires the same from us – His children. And it is this intimate relationship with the Father and Son, through seeking Them and seeking to know Them, that allows us to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

I recall a dream my mother had when she was in the tuberculosis sanatorium in the early fifties. She said that she dreamed that there were shelves in the corner of her room, and there were packages wrapped up, as in newspaper and laid up on those shelves. And the Lord spoke to her and told her that they were the prayers that were laid up for her. She had prayed and sought the Lord when she was well and able, so that she has something to draw upon at a time when praying was more difficult for her.

What will happen to *you* if there comes a time when *you* cannot pray for yourself? Will you have made enough deposits in Heaven's Bank that you will have something from which to draw? It is time to seek the Lord that He may come and rain righteousness upon us, so that our lives may be filled to overflowing, both in the here and now, *and* in the hereafter.



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