

***“Building a Heart for Heaven” – Matthew 6:19-34***  
**December 27, 2020 –8:15AM & 11:00 AM Service**  
**Faith Presbyterian Church, Tacoma, WA**  
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Matt. 6:19 “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.

Matt. 6:22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Matt. 6:24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Matt. 6:25 “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matt. 6:34 “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

This is the word of the Lord.  
*Thanks be to God.*

Let’s pray together.

In December 2019, around this time last year, people all around the world were excitedly thinking about the coming new year.

Most people were thinking about their new goals, or how to improve their financial situations, jobs, or businesses. Others were planning on spending more time with family or improving their health.

But as we all know, nobody saw this pandemic coming. In fact, I found numerous authors writing articles entitled, ***“How to Make 2020 Your Best Year Ever!”*** It goes without saying that these articles have not aged well! But as they say, “hindsight is 2020.”

And while it is not my intention to crush New Year’s resolutions or healthy goals or aspirations for the new year, as Christians, we need to be aware that there *can be* a very serious problem with resolutions – at least the way the world approaches them.

You see, Scripture teaches us that this world is not about us. Our lives are not ours. It isn’t about making next year “our best year” nor should our lives be focused on having our “Best Life Now” as some false preachers proclaim.

Our purpose as Christians is at odds with the world around us. We are here for much more than finding joy and fulfillment in *this* world. The Bible teaches us that there is more to life than having the American Dream of the beautiful house with the white-picket fence, the balanced family, and the healthy financial portfolio.

And while we know this, in another sense we really don’t live it. We struggle with this. We long for the things this world has to offer. We want joy, fulfillment, and abundance *in this life* – right now. And I fear that this perspective on life impacts not only our New Year’s resolutions, but our entire way of living. And we are not alone.

Jesus’ preached this sermon because believers were clinging to this world. Their hearts were rooted in worldly things. As we read the gospels, we learn that the disciples were often confused by Jesus. We read of them drawing swords, jockeying for position, seeking power and being disappointed when Jesus died on the cross and didn’t become an earthly king, freeing them from their oppression and hardships.

There is nothing new under the sun. We still long for these things. We still want power, safety, wealth, and stability. Not much has changed.

**See, here in Matthew 6, Jesus preaches that our purpose in this world is not to settle in and get comfortable, but rather to be heavenly-focused. In this passage, he drives home his message in four ways, so that we don’t miss his point. He tells us to build up hearts that seek:**

- 1. A Heavenly Treasure**
- 2. A Heavenly Outlook**
- 3. A Heavenly Master**
- 4. A Heavenly Kingdom**

And Jesus starts by calling us to have hearts that seek **Heavenly Treasure**.

A few days ago, millions, if not billions of presents were being opened all around the globe. Why do we give gifts? What is the message that we are seeking to communicate when we give someone a present?

We are trying to say, we care about you. I purchased this for you to bless you or to bring you joy because I love/care about you.

And wouldn't it be really strange if the gift suddenly became the object of our affection, instead of the person who had given us that gift. If, for example, after I gave my wife an engagement ring, she started distancing herself from me. If she started obsessing over the ring and forgot all about me. That would be strange.

And God has given us beautiful things in this world, to enjoy and delight in. Good things. But often we become so captivated by the gifts that God has given, that we forget the Giver of that gift.

We have so many things in this world that we love, good things that God has given us. That show his love to us. But according to this passage, these good gifts can become far too valuable in our minds and hearts.

And we focus our attention on the gift rather than the giver. And this happens far too easily. Our pull to this treasure can consume our thoughts and desires in ways we would never expect.

We once had a beautiful German shepherd named Chasqui. He was such a great dog, but he had a very intense animal instinct for chasing animals. It was such a strong desire, and he was a strong dog.

When he would see his "prey" his muscles would tense up, his ears would shoot up, his every move and sense would become fully fixated on the one thing he wanted. He didn't care if cars were coming or if there was danger in the path between him and his objective. In some ways he would lose consciousness of everything around him but his one objective.

And something similar happens when our intense desires kick in. We lose sight of all else but that goal. We pursue it with all our strength and plan our lives around it.

It is for that reason that Jesus here calls us to fight against the danger of falling in love with the things of this world. For when we treasure worldly things, our heart grows attached to this world.

He says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth." And he isn't referring to chests full of gold. When we think of treasure, we should realize that we can treasure almost anything. Even good things.

What do you dream about and long for?

For some of you it could be health. You might be in the middle of difficult suffering. You may long for your good health back.

For others of you, it is financial success. Maybe you long to be really good at your job or the best in your field. You want to be liked by those around you and want people know you are the best.

Your treasure could possibly be a desire to find love. It could be that you want love in your life, and you don't have it.

It could be a desire for children, or perhaps even certain things for your children.

The desires might not be bad desires, but when the desire takes a priority position in your life, or when your desire is so strong that you want it more than your ultimate Desire, your treasure has become greater than God in your heart. We become fixated and consumed by them.

We do this these things, because as Jesus teaches in this passage, our hearts are connected to what we *long* for. The thing we treasure most is like a strong magnet that just pulls and pulls on our hearts.

Jesus here tells us to fight against earthly treasure that is fading and instead to "lay up" our treasure in heaven.

And this is a command that requires action. Jesus is saying that we must actively work on laying up our treasure in heaven. Our hearts should be pulling us toward heavenly desires – everlasting treasures.

And as we learn later in this passage, we must choose. We cannot lay up treasures in both heaven and earth. We must choose. For laying up treasures in heaven requires forsaking the fading treasures you have clung to in this world. Treasures that will fail you and cause your heart to despair.

Jesus calls us to cast aside our fading earthly aspirations to seek true and lasting heavenly treasure. For where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also.

### **Heavenly Outlook**

But how do we do that? We know our hearts must be focused on the heavenly things. But ***how do we prevent*** our hearts from just replacing one worldly desire with another?

We must pursue a heavenly outlook. When we do not see things clearly, we fall back in the same error than we did in the past. If our "eye is unhealthy", "dark" or "bad/evil" (v. 22), then all we will see is darkness and evil.

In other words, if our vision is bad, all we will long for are the things of this world, not the things of heaven. Our vision will be distorted, confused and faulty. Our outlook on life, our desires and our longings will all be for those things which cannot satisfy.

When our outlook is focused on this world, which is the polar opposite of a heavenly outlook, we cannot see things for what they are.

So rather than call sin what it is, we lie to ourselves. We deceive ourselves into thinking that just “one more episode” or just one more “YouTube video” is harmless.

We lie to ourselves in so many ways. Whether it is saying “just one more round” as we play games late into the night, or perhaps while browsing the internet in ways that we know can lead us down the wrong path.

We’ll excuse overeating or undereating with a variety of excuses from health to stress. When offered another drink, we know when we should say “no”, but we deceive ourselves into thinking, “it’s not really a problem.”

The ways we deceive ourselves, to justify our laziness, our or overworking, our temperament or our pride should shock us more. It is easy for us to see when others do it, but as Jesus teaches us here, if our vision is darkened by sin, we don’t see our problems clearly.

So how do we build eyes that have a heart for heaven rather than a heart for this world?

We fill our vision with light.

Again, as with Jesus’ command earlier, we must do the hard work of laying up treasures in heaven. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we must work to fill our lives with light.

And the only way we can do this is through God’s Word.

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God....In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1)

How can we fill our lives with light? God’s word does it. His word shines on all the darkness in our life. Because when the light shines in the darkness, nothing can overcome it.

A couple months ago, I received a call from my friend Marcian. We went to school from 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade together and lived across the street from each other. I remember being really intimidated by him. He was a strong athlete, he was one of the most popular kids in school, and he was not a believer. When we moved away, we lost contact for 24 years. Until two months ago.

He found me on the internet and called and told me that he wanted to thank me for telling him about Jesus when we were kids. I was stunned.

I just shook my head in disbelief. I didn't do anything. I remember feeling horribly about barely having an awkward conversation with him once, and feeling it went terribly wrong.

He said, I remember that conversation, and I want you to know that God used that to change my life. Then he said something that I'll never forget: "Nathaniel, the light of Jesus is so strong, that even a little of it will change people!"

My friend Marcian, who I think is watching this right now, is now my brother in Jesus, not because I was eloquent or convincing, but because as he put it, "a little bit" of Jesus' light hit his heart and that light overcame the darkness! Praise the Lord!

Brothers and sisters, the sins in our lives can only be overcome one way. And it is with the light of Jesus. And that light is in his word, and it is in the preaching of his word, it is in prayer and it is in the fellowship of the saints.

Maybe you are thinking that our church is struggling and has many problems. If only things were different, if only this were better, if only, if only, if only.

And it is true. With the saints in heaven, that will be glory, but with the saints on earth, it is a very different story. We are all sinners, we are all inadequate, we all offend each other. We must repent and we must grow. This is true.

AND YET. And yet, even though we have broken, faulty and inadequate people, even "a little bit" of Jesus' light comes through that brokenness. It is through these sinful and broken people that God has chosen to shine his light.

If we are here, we come for Jesus. This church is his bride. We are God's people. And we have vowed to love her and to protect her and to unify her and as a church to lift high that light so that others can see Jesus through us.

In 2021, I pray that we will pursue that light together as one body. That we will, like a moth, be drawn to the light. That we would pursue that light with complete determination and focus. Fixated on Jesus, and on him alone.

And it must start by us filling our eyes with the light of Jesus in his word. This is the light Jesus has given us. You must be reading God's word daily; we do not live by bread alone.

Even if you cannot read, there are so many platforms, and ways to do this and groups. I exhort you to find someone today and commit to some sort of daily reading challenge with them. Make no excuse for the flesh. Do it today. Find someone today here at church.

As I said last year, I will pursue you on this and I pray your elders will encourage you to this end as well.

Last year, a group of 45 of us men started a Read the Bible in a Year challenge. I praise the Lord that almost all of us were able to get through several months of reading (more than we might have otherwise) and I think more than half are only four days away from completing the whole Bible.

If you have not joined in, or you need something less intense than 3 chapters a day, we have several options. Men, and Women, youth and children. Every day, we must fill our eyes with the light of the Scriptures that we might overcome the darkness with the light of Jesus. And even “a little bit” of his powerful light will transform us!

This is the Heavenly Outlook we need – in order to have hearts that long for heaven, our minds and hearts must be filled with the light of Jesus daily. In this way, our hearts will pursue those things that are good and right and reject the evil that we face each day.

### **Heavenly Master**

In the next verse, Jesus shows us that though we cannot see it, our hearts seek to serve two masters. We deceive ourselves into thinking this isn't the case, but time and time again we fall back into seeking to serve our flesh while also seeking to serve Jesus.

It is not unlike someone who says, “I can quit anytime.” Most of us know that this is an expression often given by someone who is trying to convince others (and themselves) that their addiction is under control and are probably living in denial of their problem.

And when we think of addictions, we usually think of people who struggle with drugs or alcoholism, who display the external signs of their addictions.

But addictions are not limited to alcohol or drugs. There are all sorts of strong, gripping addictions that control us. We touched briefly on addictions like television, video games, X-rated materials, and unhealthy eating habits. But there are many other addictions in our lives. Work is an addiction for many. What strong inclinations do you have in your life that cause you to indulge in something repeatedly?

Paul writes to the Romans (6:16) “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?”

In other words, Paul is explaining that whatever urges, inclinations that you indulge in your life, that you are obedient to are actually enslaving you and mastering you.

We are slaves to that urge that we obey. As much as we would like to believe that we can “quit” our sin “anytime”, if we continue to repeat the same sins, and give into the same impulses, and continue to be mastered by sin, we are enslaved to it. Sin becomes our master.

Jesus explains that we cannot have two masters. You will always love one or hate the other. "You cannot serve God and money." If you continue to live in sin, you are hating God.

James explains it this way, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." James (4:4)

Here we see entertaining sin, is playing with fire. Jesus here tells us that this is not an option.

But how do we become free of the bondage of sin? How do we become free from slavery to money and the treasures of this world?

It is the same message again. Jesus is calling us to die to self and to our flesh and to live for God.

That means we serve him. We humbly submit to him as our Heavenly Master in all areas of our lives. We become his bondservants and we live to serve him, dying to self. We leave no stone unturned and seek to die to sin.

Gal. 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh *I live by faith in the Son of God.*"

and "BY the Spirit [we] put to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13).

If we look at the entirety of this passage, Jesus is, in nuanced and targeted ways, telling us over and over again that we must die to self. That our calling as believers is to love God (above self). To love him with our hearts, our eyes, and in our obedience to his word.

He is telling us to die to our self-serving resolutions and live for him and his purposes.

And that takes us the final piece of this passage.

**Building a Heart for Heaven is to seek a Heavenly Kingdom.**

Up to this point in the passage Jesus' message seems mostly heavy on rebuke. And it is a rebuke that I think we all know we need. We have so much room to grow. We have much to repent of.

But then the next thing Jesus does is that he tells us to stop worrying. We can't be anxious about our lives. Worrying about food and what we wear, or our how we provide for our families.

What?! How can we not worry? It seems like we just went through a major checklist of all the things that we are doing wrong and need to correct in our lives!

It just feels overwhelming. Plus, we all know how many times we have messed up in just the last few days. We carry our guilt and shame.

We can't even make good New Year's resolutions without being self-centered!

But here is the thing. God cannot relax his standards to make things easier for us. His holiness is so important because it is WHO he is. He is Holy, Holy, Holy. And we too must be holy.

That is why Jesus came. To make us holy. To reconcile us with the Father. Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

We are not alone. *Christ lives in us*. He who began a good work in us is still working in us and he will keep on working on us until he takes us home again and completes it. He is not done yet. He is at work in us.

This is who Jesus is. Jesus has done nothing but provide for us from before we even had consciousness. Before we were born! He has forgiven our sins and made us righteous. He has given us life eternal in abundance and he has conquered sin and death. He provides for our food and clothing. He has been with us every single step of the way, even in the deep valleys and in the horrors of pandemics.

Jesus has always been with us and has always been merciful to us. And he will never leave or forsake us.

Jesus lives in us, and he will help us to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." (v. 33)

Jesus says that he provided more beautifully for the birds of the air and so dressed the lilies of the field in ways that even Solomon in all his glory could not achieve. That is incredible!

Solomon, the man who had it all, had nothing in comparison with God's provision for the lilies of the field that are alive today and thrown into the fire tomorrow.

If God provides for all of these, how much more will he provide for you and me!

He washed the feet of fishermen. He touched the bleeding and the leprous. He was with the outcast. He came to earth and stooped down to the lowest of the low. All for the Kingdom of Heaven and all for our good.

Jesus is better than anything in this world. This world has nothing on what is in store for us.

To seek the kingdom of God is to embrace God's gift of Jesus in us. To build our hearts for heaven and embrace his purposes in our lives. For as we seek him, and serve him, he will provide for our every need above and beyond our expectations.

This is the joy of having Jesus as our master, our vision, and our greatest treasure. Amen.

**This sermon draws on material from:**

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