

## Treasure: Where's Your's?

(Stewardship Sermon Series #1)

Proverbs 2:1-5 & Matthew 6:19-23

Rev. James Ramsey ~ November 9, 2014



A friend tells the story of the day he and his wife packed up everything they owned (except for some clothes and a few pieces of luggage) and put them in a storage facility. They were in a time of transition between one home and another and would be living with relatives for a few months.

After packing, they found that the contents of their home fit into a 10' x 20' storage unit. My friend closed the door, put a lock on it, and left all his stuff in that unit, next to hundreds of others. All that he had ever saved for, deliberated over, and purchased was stacked in that small room. At first he would go by every week or so just to check in on it. Eventually he didn't do that anymore, and for three months he admits he didn't need one single thing from the unit.

Seems like everywhere I go lately I'm seeing these PODS – portable storage units. I see them in driveways, in side yards, in the corners of parking lots. After a little research, call it Google Time, I learned there is 2.3 billion square feet of rentable self-storage space in the United States. We have so much stuff that our homes can't hold it. Moving can be overwhelming!



We've got a lot of stuff, but our treasure cannot be found in stuff. I want to talk these next few weeks about Treasure. I don't intend this to be an indictment on stuff. We have stuff that is precious, useful, hard-earned. But we will consider our stuff in perspective to the abundant life God offers.

My friend admitted that when he and his wife moved into their new home after three months with family, they used almost everything they had packed away. The couches, the refrigerator, the beds all went to good use. What my friend learned and we can absorb, even if we never have to move, is that all those things that went into storage, or could be put into storage, these things are not treasure.



What is Treasure?

And where is yours?...

Do you ever feel that the things you most value and love get the least of your time, attention, and money? Jesus said that our hearts follow our treasure. So, no matter how much we would want to give our hearts to God, if our time, energy, and money are flowing to other things, then our hearts will not be content.

I have the opportunity and privilege, as a pastor, to be with people in their final stages of life. My parents, now, are in the twilight of their lives. Rarely in such conversations do people talk about their stuff, the things they have acquired on earth—the kind of treasure, Jesus says, that moth and rust can destroy, the kind that thieves can break in and steal. My Dad talks about his family, about the good times we have shared together. People in their last moments also talk about their friends, about defining moments with God, or important accomplishments -- children they have taught, mission trips they have taken, neighbors they have helped.





They share memories of vacations and laughter, and share stories that are amusing and meaningful. They talk less about salaries and more about promises shared with God and with people.

I want us to consider in these Treasure sermons, where you are investing your life. There's no denying that we're partly talking about money.

That's because Jesus talked about money. In fact, biblical scholars have shown that Jesus actually talked more about money than about heaven and hell combined. How many money stories can you think of from the Bible? ...Stories like the Widow's Mite? Jesus talked more about money than anything else, save one subject...and that is -- the Kingdom of God. Eleven of Jesus' thirty-nine parables are about money. One of every seven verses in the Gospel of Luke talks about money. Why did Jesus talk so much about money?



When you read over Jesus' Sermon on the Mount you see that Jesus is examining the heart. He cares about the hearts of God's people. Jesus talks



about money and treasure because he knows well that these things affect our hearts. Jesus understands that money stresses our relationships. Money causes division in and among people. Money and its pursuit can be all-consuming and burdensome.

You can see this in one of my favorite modern movies THE HOBBIT: Desolation of Smaug. The Dwarves are consumed with getting their treasure back from the dragon. But it is well-known that the treasure and the hoarding of it, were the beginning of the Dwarves problems in the first place. They hoarded their treasure to the exclusion of neighborliness – people suffered because of their lust for Gold – it ultimately led to ruin.



Those who have lost jobs, who cannot pay their bills, who are underemployed, will tell you that it is not just a financial issue but affects their emotional and spiritual well-being. Again: Jesus talks about money because he cares about our hearts.

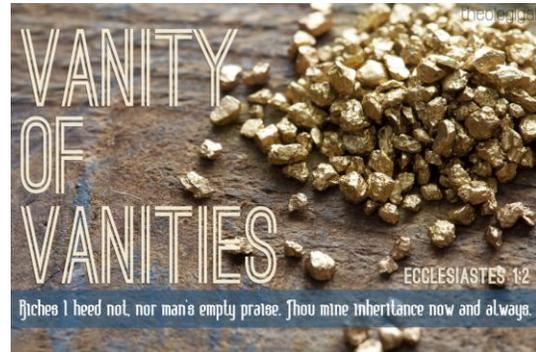
We assume that where our heart is, our treasure will follow. Sometimes that might be the case, but Jesus suggests exactly the opposite of that. Where our treasure is, Jesus says, there our heart will be also. This is not just a matter of semantics. Jesus knows that the place where we spend our money will become our treasure, whether we want it to or not. Financial commitments require time and energy. They pull our heart in a direction that perhaps neither we nor God ever intended. If you buy a house that requires a large percentage of your income, you have no choice but to spend time and energy and money in paying for it. When you put your treasure into anything, your heart will follow.

In THE HOBBIT, you get the idea that the Dwarves never really recovered from their obsession with gold, that if they were able to recover their treasure from the Dragon, they would eventually have the same problems in the future.



The biblical writer of Ecclesiastes repeated in exasperation, "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity." He had all the possessions he wanted, treasure upon treasure, but it did not satisfy the longing of his heart.

He says to himself, "Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself." But again, this also was vanity...I also had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and of the provinces...Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure...and again, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun."



What Do You Want to be Investing In? If you didn't have your debt or commitments, and if you could choose where to store up treasure, where would it be?

As you consider where you would store up treasure, take a moment to assess realistically where your treasure currently is?

What do you treasure?

Vacations?

Family?

Stuff?



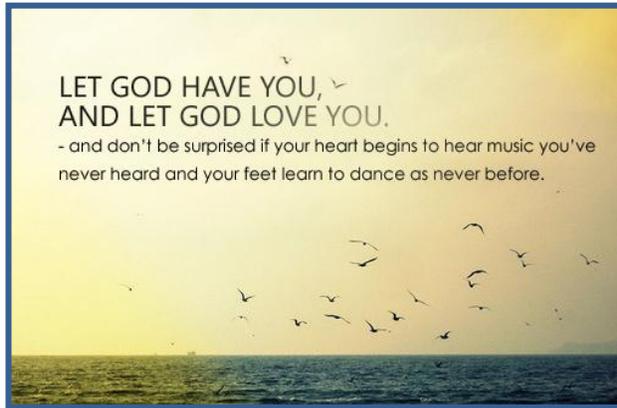
What will you value at the end of your life?

Laughter? Children? Deadlines?

What are you investing in?

Invest your heart...

Invest in Jesus.



Jesus invites us to lay up treasure in heaven. When we are investing our lives in the things of God, we find that our hearts blossom.

We no longer feel disconnected from God but more and more feel a sense of God's graceful presence. What beginning steps can you take to lay up treasure in heaven?

As we think from our perspective...how we might invest in Jesus and His Kingdom, let us remember the perspective of God...where is heaven's treasure?

Remember Jesus talking later in his Sermon:

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?



And again, Jesus encourages his disciples: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows."

Where is heaven's treasure?...Right here on earth...in us.

We are God's treasure!