Matthew 6:19-24

3. Law and Grace, 5:1-7:29

iv] Personal Piety, 6:1-7:12
b) Treasures in heaven

Synopsis

Having dealt with a disciple's personal piety, as it relates to the issue of alms, prayer and fasting, Jesus now examines how it relates to living within the secular world, 6:19-34. First, in v19-24, Jesus challenges his disciples to focus on "the kingdom of God and his righteousness", rather than the things of the world.

Teaching

When it comes to living in this world, a disciple needs a single-minded clear vision.

Issues

i] Context: See 5:1-10. Matthew now deals with personal piety as it relates to discipleship in a secular world, 6:19-34. First, in 6:19-24, disciples are exhorted to make their consuming passion eternal verities rather than earthly *mammon*. In 6:25-34, Jesus will go on to tackle the issue of faith in God's providential care.

ii] Structure: *Treasure in heaven*:

Discipleship in a secular world:
Lay up treasure in heaven, v19-24:
Proposition / exhortation, v19-21:
Parabolic saying, v22-23;
being single-minded.
Parabolic saying, v24;
single-minded loyalty.
On earth, trust God's providential care, v25-34.

iii] Interpretation:

Matthew now deals with the business of discipleship in a secular world - living with the things of this world, and in doing so, confronts the twin problems of greed and anxiety, 6:19-34. In 6:19-21 there is an initial exhortation that disciples make their consuming passion eternal verities rather than earthly *mammon*, v19-21, followed by two short parabolic sayings which warn that the choice should be one or the other, v22-23, and v24.

In the passage before us, Jesus establishes "the importance of single-minded adherence to God", Morris. Of course, the degree of compromise evident in our lives, particularly in respect to the things of this world, reminds us that our eternal security depends on taking to ourselves the "single-minded adherence" of Christ. Luz probably better reflects the intention of Jesus' words when he describes them as "healthy common sense: it does not pay to collect treasures" – moth and rust corrupts, and in the end, you can't take them with you. Yet, Jesus' words are not "just the everyday wisdom of common-sense. His words are intended to remind men of that which is necessary in order to preserve life and body *before God*; not only from destruction of time, but also form everlasting destruction. How can man carry on this struggle for existence in the right way? By seeking the Kingdom above all else (6:33). For it is in the Kingdom that we can find the preservation both of life and of the body", Ridderbos.

So, at this point, Jesus is not setting up a rule, but a perspective for discipleship in the world. A disciple needs to keep their focus on heavenly treasure rather than earthly treasure, on eternal, rather than ephemeral verities.

As already indicated, it does seem likely that Matthew's arrangement of Jesus' teachings in chapter 6 provides clues to the problem posed by the impossible demands of the law outlined in chapter 5. The sin problem makes it impossible for a child of God to stand right and holy before God and so appropriate the promised blessings of the covenant. Matthew reveals that the answer to this problem lies in a personal relationship with God in Christ, 6:1-18, which is both loyal / focused, v19-24, faith-dependent, v25-34 and grace-dependant, 7:1-12. By his arrangement of Jesus' teachings, Matthew gives us a clue to the mystery / gospel of God's grace, namely, that a person's standing in the sight of God is not dependent on works of the law, but on divine grace appropriated through faith. Matthew will emphatically make this point in the narratives of chapters 8 and 9.

iv] Synoptics:

All the material in this passage is found in Luke, although within different contexts. Q (usually viewed as a written document) is regarded by most commentators as the source.

v] Homiletics - *Mammon*:

I well remember a visiting theologian arguing that God is a hedonist; he loves life - "When God looked at all he had created, it was very good". Human selfishness has certainly done damage to God's beautiful creation,

but the beauty still shines through. So, it's unlikely that Jesus' advice "do not store up treasures on earth" is designed to promote the beauty of poverty. Scripture extols the virtue of work and provision for the future (Prov.6:6-8), provision for the family (1Tim.5:8) and the enjoyment of God's good creation (1Tim.4:3-4, 6:17, ..).

In our reading today, Jesus is reminding his disciples that there are two kingdoms demanding our loyalty, one is ephemeral, one eternal. In the game of life, a disciple must always keep their eyes on the ball; an eye to eternal verities, rather than the stuff of life. It comes down to priorities. As we share in the bounty of God's creation, we are to keep our eye firmly fixed on the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (6:33).

I am reminded of an Australian saying, "The person with the most number of toys when they die wins". It's not really true; eternity is the prize. You can't take your toys with you. Although, I must tell you, my mother always told us that she wanted to be buried in her ornately carved writing bureau. It wasn't long enough so she never did get to take it with her.

Text - 6:19

The secret of laying up treasure in heaven, v19-24: i] The principle; eternal treasure, v19-21. By contrasting heavenly and earthly treasures Jesus encourages his disciples to make the eternal treasure, a treasure found in Christ, their consuming passion, v19-21. The form of this passage evidences Aramaic poetic style. Note the parallel passage in Luke, 12:32-34. Luke stresses the idealistic nature of the saying ("sell your possessions"), and by linking it with the parable of the rich fool, he encapsulates it within the context of eschatological judgment. Matthew stays with a lifestyle-orientation approach; two ways / two masters / two kingdoms.

Jesus' instructions on "a healthy orientation in the disciple's life", France, provides a clue as to how the sin problem is overcome, so enabling a disciple to stand right and holy before God for the full appropriation of the promised covenant blessings. The answer lies in heaven, not on earth.

μη θησαυριζετε [θησαυριζω] pres. imp. "**do not store up**" - DO NOT GATHER TOGETHER. Imperative. It is often held that this construction forbids habitual action. "Store up" in the sense of "provide for yourselves."

υμιν dat. "**for yourselves**" - TO YOU. Dative of interest, advantage; "for you".

θησαυρους [ος] "**treasures**" – Accusative direct object of the verb "to gather together". That which is an important object of life apart from a devotion toward the Lord. A person's treasure can be anything, eg., "people's good opinion and praise", Lloyd-Jones.

επι + gen. "**on**" – UPON [THE EARTH]. Spatial; "upon".

ὅπου "**where**" – Local conjunction expressing space, seems best, as NIV, but a causal sense is possible.

αφανιζει [αφανιζω] pres. "**destroy**" - [MOTH AND RUST] CAUSE TO DISAPPEAR. Moths certainly cause materials to disappear; "where the moth eats them away", Barclay.

κλεπται [ης ου] "**thieves**" - [AND WHERE] THIEVES. A thief who steals by deception rather than someone who steals by force.

διορυσσουσιν [διορυσσω] pres. "**break in**" - DIG THROUGH [AND STEAL]. As of digging through a mud wall to break into the courtyard of an Eastern home.

v20

Jesus encourages us to provide ourselves with eternal heavenly treasures. The treasures themselves are presented as negations of that which is ephemeral, of this age, and thus disappearing, ie., "they endure forever in all their sparkling lustre, as the irremovable possession of the children of the heavenly Father", Hendriksen. So, a disciple needs to focus on providing themselves a heavenly treasure, rather than earthly treasure, the treasure of divine grace.

The contextual setting for this idea is Rabbinic where it was held that "good works result in a heavenly accumulation of credit that is paid out on the day of final judgment", Strecker, cf. 4Ezra.7:77. The nomistic theology of second temple Judaism, of law-obedience restraining sin and promoting holiness for covenant blessings, is totally undermined by Jesus' teaching that it is impossible to maintain covenant compliance by works of the law, cf., chapter 5. So, it is unwise to view the treasure as eternal reward for "doing righteous deeds, suffering for Christ's sake, forgiving one another ", so Carson. The notion of *reward* in the NT is never what it seems and certainly does not lead us toward adopting pharisaic nomism. In the end, only one person has been rewarded for his righteous deeds and it is his eternal treasure, his reward, that we need to access for ourselves - a blessing of life-giving living water, Jn.4:14, etc. Thankfully, the provision of this treasure is a gift of divine grace.

So, "Seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and everything else will be yours as well", 6:33.

δε "**but**" - BUT/AND [STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURE]. Transitional, here to a contrastive point, as NIV.

εν + dat. "IN [HEAVEN WHERE NEITHER MOTH NOR RUST DESTROY AND WHERE THIEVES DO NOT BREAK IN AND STEAL]" - Local, expressing space; the place of this provision is in heaven.

v21

"If one centres on earthly treasures, so transient, so easily lost, one becomes thing-minded and self-concerned", Filson.

γαρ "**for**" - FOR [WHERE THE TREASURE OF YOU IS, THERE WILL BE ALSO THE HEART OF YOU]. Expressing cause / reason. Possibly explanatory in the sense of drawing a conclusion, namely, the reason for the challenge to provide for ourselves heavenly treasures rather than earthly. Plummer suggests a reciprocal sense is intended; "where our treasure is, there will our hearts be; and where our hearts are, there is our treasure", so the point is "one's treasure tells the tale of one's heart", D&A. Yet, a causal sense is also possible, explaining the reason why a disciple needs to "stockpile heavenly treasures" (Nolland), namely, because the heart/mind follows the treasure. "For your heart will always be where your riches are", TEV.

v22

ii] A parabolic saying on being single-minded, v22-23. Contextually, this parabolic saying seems to support Jesus' teaching on "a healthy orientation in the disciple's life", France. The eye is the window of the soul. If a person is blind, the inner self is left in darkness. If the eye is sound, but what it looks at is dark (the fading light of this age as compared with the brilliance of eternity), then the inner self is doubly dark. If the focus of our life is on earthly verities, rather than eternal verities, we place ourselves in spiritual darkness.

A number of modern commentators suggest a rather lateral approach to the parable's interpretation. For the ancients, the eye is not a window, but a lamp. The *evil eye* adds to the darkness of a person's surrounds, whereas the *good eye* shines light out into the environment enlightening that environment. The righteous are like a lamp dispelling darkness in a lost world, whereas the unrighteous exist in the darkness as servants of mammon. This approach is particularly evident in the translation of Luke 11:36 offered by Torrey and followed by Manson. Torrey suggests that the original Aramaic is not properly represented by the Gk., giving the translation: "if however, your whole body is lighted up with no part dark, then all about you will be light, just as the lamp lights you with its brightness." See D&A, p635-7. So, "just as the healthy, good eye sends light into the world, so too do the righteous, filled with the light of God, dispel the shades of darkness around them. They are like a lamp that gives light to its environment", D&A.

ὁ οφθαλμος [ου] "**the eye**" - [THE LAMP OF THE BODY IS] THE EYE. Predicate nominative, although it could be the subject with "lamp" the predicate

nominative. The eye probably metaphorically represents intent: the evil eye = evil intent, the good eye = good intent. The eye is a lamp in that it enlightens the environment with good intent, or adds to the darkness with evil intent.

ουν "-" - THEREFORE. Inferential, drawing a logical conclusion.

εαν + subj. "**if**" - IF, *as the case may be* [THE EYE OF YOU IS SINCERE = HEALTHY *then* THE WHOLE BODY OF YOU WILL BE SHINING]. Introducing a conditional clause, 3rd class, where the proposed condition has the possibility of coming true. D&A read this conditional clause as causal; "if your eyes are good, then this is because / this shows that your whole body is full of light". The *good eye* (which radiates light enlightening its environment) is evidence of the inner light.

απλους adj. "**good**". Predicate adjective. The word means "single, undivided = sincere = good / healthy" and leans towards a moral / ethical sense, namely, "a single-minded God-like moral disposition", as opposed to πονηρος, "bad", ie., "a jealous stinginess, selfish greed, or meanness", France. So, it is likely that both words carry contrasting double meanings: a single-minded pursuit of the values of the kingdom of heaven, as opposed to an all-consuming pursuit of treasure on earth.

v23

εαν + subj. "**if**" - [BUT] IF [THE EYE OF YOU IS]. As above, so possibly a causal conditional clause, "if, *as may be the case, ... then this is because .....*" If the eye is bad (it has evil intent, driving a jealous stinginess, selfish greed, or meanness, with its consequent pursuit of worldly mammon), *then this is because* the person is full of inner darkness, is devoid of the divine.

πονηρος adj. "**bad**" - EVIL [*then* THE WHOLE BODY OF YOU WILL BE IN DARKNESS]. Predicate adjective. See απλους above.

ει ουν "**if then**" - IF THEREFORE [THE LIGHT]. Conditional clause, 1st. class, where the condition is assumed to be true; "if, *as is the case, ... then* ...." If a person is full of darkness, is devoid of the divine, then how terrible is that void. These words are phrased as a warning - if this is the way you are, you are lost, facing eschatological judgment.

το "-" – THE [IN YOU IS DARKNESS]. The article serves as an adjectivizer turning the prepositional phrase "in you" into an attributive modifier of the noun "light"; "the light which is in you".

ποσον pro. "**how great [is that darkness]**" - HOW GREAT [*is* THE DARKNESS]. Correlative pronoun serving as an exclamation, predicate of an assumed verb to-be. "What a terrible darkness that darkness is!", Barclay.

v24

iii] Saying on single-minded loyalty, v24. The saying "states clearly the intent of the two previous paragraphs; God claims complete loyalty; the disciple

cannot divide his loyalty between God and his possessions", Filson. “It is possible to devote oneself wholly to the service of God and it is possible to devote oneself wholly to the service of money (μαμωνας, “*mammon* / money, wealth, property, toys, ….), but it is not possible to devote oneself wholly to the service of both”, Morris. This seems to be the sense of Jesus’ words, although as Luz notes, the point of the saying in the present context is “not so much the goal of perfection, as the way to it, the ‘better righteousness’”.

Jesus’ idealistic statements are designed to disturb. They often serve to expose our flawed life and force us again to the foot of the cross. On other occasions their intent is to cut through the haze of compromise to provide a clear direction for the Christian life. Often, they do both together. This saying does remind us how flawed we are; who can claim “complete loyalty” to God. Yet, given the context, its intent is directional. We are to make the kingdom of God our highest priority. As for *mammon*, we are best to treat it as part of God’s providential care; a gift from God, rather than a master to serve, 6:33, Mk.10:30.

δουλευειν [δουλευω] pres. inf. + dat. "**[can] serve**" - [NO ONE IS ABLE] TO SERVE. The infinitive is complementary, completing the sense of the verb "is able". The present tense, being durative, probably indicates the sense "habitually to serve".

δυσι κυριοις dat. "**two masters**" - TWO LORDS. Dative of direct object after the verb δουλευω, "to serve"; "give service to two masters."

γαρ "-" - FOR. Introducing a causal clause explaining why a person cannot serve two masters, although the NIV takes it as explanatory rather than causal; "for if he does the result would be that ...", TH.

ἢ ….. ἢ "**either ..... or ....**" – EITHER ….. OR ...Here forming a disjunctive correlative construction.

μισησει [μισεω] "**he will hate**" - HE WILL HATE [THE ONE]. Here with the sense "disregard". The word "hate is very strong, but is used to serve a rhetorical intent.

ανθεξεται [αντεχομαι] fut. "**he will be devoted to**" - [AND] HE WILL BE ATTACHED TO, HOLD FAST TO [THE OTHER]. "Support one, despise the other", Phillips.

καταφρονησει [καταφρονεω] fut. "**despise**" - [OR HE WILL HOLD TO ONE AND] HE WILL DESPISE, LOOK DOWN ON. "He will look up to one and look down on the other", Junkins.

του ἑτερου [ος] gen. "**the other**" - Genitive of direct object after the κατα prefix verb "to despise".

θεῳ [ος] dat. "**[you are not able to serve] *both* God**" - [YOU ARE NOT ABLE TO SERVE] GOD [AND]. Dative of direct object, as above.

και "**and**" - Translated as correlative in the NIV, "both .... and", although τε, or ται is not present, none-the-less a correlative sense is indicated; "you

cannot be the servant both of the God of heaven and of the god of this world's wealth", Barclay.

μαμωνᾳ [ας α] dat. "**money**" - MAMMON, WEALTH, MONEY. Dative of direct object, as above. The word extends to property and possessions. "You cannot serve God and the things of this world *at the same time*."