

Christ Community Covenant Church
Stewardship of Life: "Whatcha gonna do with whatcha got?"
Dave Scherrer – October 28, 2012

"Whatcha gonna do with whatcha got?" That could be the name of this series but we decided to give it a kinder gentler name. **Stewardship of Life**, that seems nice! Besides that name "Whatcha gonna do" . . . isn't really good theology. It would have to be Whatcha ya gonna do with the time and gifts and financial blessings that are God's that He has entrusted you with for the sake of the Kingdom and for His glory? That's kind of a long name. So we will stick with Stewardship of Life. Time, Talents and Treasures, we have a job to do! We need to roll up our sleeves and man and woman up to the task of taking care of God's stuff. And when it comes to talking about finances, our treasures – we are all in good company

We are in good company!

First, speaking pointed words about money and possessions puts me in good company, namely, with Jesus. Randy Alcorn reckons that "15 percent of everything Christ said relates to this topic –more than his teachings on heaven and hell combined" (*The Treasure Principle*, Multnomah, 2001, p. 8). Let's look at some of the things that Jesus said about money:

And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Mark 10:21

So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:33

For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." Luke 18:25

And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Luke 12:15

Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. Luke 12:33.

And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham." Luke 19:8-9

Jesus "saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, 'Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them'" Luke 21:1

"But God said to [the man who built even bigger barns], 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." Luke 12:20-21

"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head . . . Follow me" Luke 9:58

Over and over Jesus is relentless in his radical call to a wartime lifestyle and a hilarious and even reckless liberality ("she put in all that she had").

And giving takes on purpose with Jesus. One time he refers to the Old Testament minimum of giving a tenth of your income, endorses it, and then calls for a way of looking at life and money way more radical than the mere tithe.

"You tithe even your spices," he said to the Pharisees. "That's right. You should. But you have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness." Matthew 23:23

We all know I would think that giving is a vital part of the Christian life, especially for those with the means to give. Our teaching today centers on this important passage in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:19-21, 24-34

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

"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. "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? 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 which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 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? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Three imperatives from this passage

- "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" v 20
- "Do not be anxious," found three times v 25 and 33
- "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" v 33

How do we lay aside treasures in Heaven?

First by abandoning all hope in the things of this world and setting your priorities on eternity

This is the idea that "you gotta want it!" It means making the stewardship of God's stuff vital in your life. It will not happen unless you **set your mind on it** and make it a heart hope. For some of us this may mean repenting of unintentionally selfish lifestyle. Scripture is clear:

Col. 3:1-5

If then you have been raised with Christ, ***seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*** For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you.

Do you hear the active nature of this? The personal responsibility. It is on us. We cannot say, "I didn't know." Or "I didn't know you meant me!" Or even, "I was going to get to it when personal finances were more under control." There is really no room for anything but "all in."

To lay aside treasures in heaven we must be devoted to the idea of letting go here. Now when I say this, mostly it means letting go of the things that are in our hands.

2 Cor. 4:18

. . . For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Laying aside treasures in heaven means attending to the things that breaks God's heart

Matthew 25:33-40

And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Treasures in heaven involves giving, not accumulating, here.

It means letting go with intentionality; on purpose - with purpose. Some of you are saying, "It's working, I am not accumulating anything but debt." And this is hard. That's why we will spend more time on the biblical approach on giving in two weeks.

What we are seeing today is that seeing that laying up treasures *in heaven* and laying up treasures *on earth* are not good bedfellows. You have to choose between them. You can't say, "Well how about both?" That's the point of verse 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."

There is something about God and money that makes them tend to mastery. Either you are mastered by money and therefore ignore God or make him a bellhop for your business, or you are mastered by God and make money a servant of the kingdom. But if either tries to master you while you are mastered by the other you will hate and despise it. This is why Jesus said it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Much money makes a cruel master.

But let's be more specific. If Jesus means "devote your life to accumulating treasure in heaven" – which I take to mean increasing your joy in God in heaven – what is the main thing he has in mind that we should do now? My judgment from the context would be that it is giving rather than accumulating. If laying up treasures in heaven is the opposite of laying up treasures on earth, then probably laying up treasures in heaven will be NOT laying up treasures on earth but giving them away in ways that magnify the worth of Jesus.

Jesus confirms this: laying up treasures in heaven is giving money away for Christ's sake rather than accumulating it. In Luke Jesus is recorded as saying, *"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys."*

Here Jesus explains how you "provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old" and how you "provide yourselves with treasure in the heavens that does not fail," namely, "Sell your possessions and give to the needy." That's how you do it.

In other words, possessions on earth are not for accumulating, they are for distributing in ways that Christ is honored and our joy in heaven is increased. When we give – especially when we give so generously that we have to sell something to have anything to give – we show that Christ is our treasure and that we love others more than we love our own security and comfort.

Randy Alcorn, again in *The Treasure Principle*, says, "I'm convinced that the greatest deterrent to giving is this: the illusion that earth is our home" (p. 44). It's not; Christ is our home. And therefore to live is Christ and to die is gain. And it will be all the more gain as we learn to lay up treasures in heaven by giving.

The Spiritual Law: You Reap What You Sow! Always!

Galatians 6:7

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

This verse describes an unalterable law that affects everyone in all areas of life—family, work, and pleasure. It is both a warning and an encouragement.

We reap what we sow, more than we sow, and later than we sow Every backyard farmer appreciates the meaning of this principle. Let's examine these four truths and make sure we understand the implications.

Four implied truths

- First, this truth applies to *everyone*, whether Christian or non-Christian.
- Second, we reap *what* we sow.
- Third, we reap *more than* we sow.
- Fourth, we reap *later* than we sow.

First, this truth applies to everyone, including both Christians and non-Christians. The principle of Galatians 6:7 is irrevocable; there is no escape, either for the believer or for the unbeliever. It is a law of life.

Did you notice how the verse begins? It says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked." To mock God is to turn up one's nose at Him or attempt to outwit Him. But this is foolish. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." If you were required to appear before the Lord's judgment seat in the next five minutes, what kind of fruit would you be able to show?

Second, we reap what we sow. This fact is welcome news for those with good habits. But it is a frightening thought for anyone currently involved in ungodly activities. We would not plant crabgrass and expect to harvest pineapples. Likewise, we cannot sow disobedience to God and expect to reap His blessing.

Third, we reap more than we sow. Why do farmers plant seeds? Because they expect to harvest a great deal more than they sow. A single kernel can yield dozens, scores, even hundreds of seeds. It is the same way with both sin and righteousness—a small seed like a decision to do either good or bad reaps a much bigger crop, for either joy or sorrow.

Jesus used agrarian images to show that when we allow God's Word to produce positive qualities in us, the results multiply: *"The one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."* Matthew 13:23.

On the other side of the ledger, the prophet Hosea describes the consequences awaiting those who choose wickedness: *"They sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind."* Hosea 8:7

Fourth, we reap later than we sow. Some are deceived because their present seed has yet to produce a crop, again good or bad. So they continue down their course, mistakenly believing that there will never be a harvest.

But unlike the crops of the field, which are gathered at approximately the same time each year, there is no regular timetable for the harvest of life. Some results come quickly; others take a long time. But do not be deceived—their season *will* come. And by going the second mile now and doing more than is required, we will collect rich dividends later.

"For whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." What a comforting and assuring thought to those who faithfully labor under difficult circumstances! Righteousness in such situations *will* produce a rich harvest in the future, for our heavenly Father always keeps His promises.

Make this season *A First!*