

The Lord's Investment Advice
Matthew 6:19-25

Turn to Matthew 4, please. Our main text is Matthew 6, but we'll start with Matthew 4, where Jesus calls the first four disciples. Matthew 4:18f tells the story. All four Gospels begin with some version of this story.

Matthew 4:18-22 - As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of people." At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

In simplest terms, this is what it means to follow Jesus. This is every believer's starting point. Everyone, picture yourself outside your home, cleaning your yard, or standing by your car, or talking to a friend, and Jesus walks past on the road. He stops and he looks at you, and he says "follow me."

What that means is, you walk away from your car and your house and from everything inside, and you walk down the road with Jesus and a few others who he had already called. Jesus becomes your life. That is what those first four men did, nothing more and nothing less.

We read this story near the end of Matthew 4. Matthew 5-7 are a long sermon of Jesus, which we call the Sermon on the Mount, but it is the Discipleship Sermon.

In this Discipleship Sermon, Matthew 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained what following him means. It was for Peter and Andrew and James and John, so that they would know what they had gotten themselves into. What had they said "yes" to when they followed Jesus?

And more importantly, the Sermon on the Mount, the Discipleship Sermon, is for the people who *would* follow but who *can't*. We can't because Jesus no longer walks down the road and asks.

So if we would say yes in the way Peter and the others did, but we *can't* because Jesus is not asking *in that way* any more, in what way *is* he asking? That is the right question, and the answer is the Sermon on the Mount, Discipleship Sermon.

That's why Matthew writes the story of the first four disciples being called near the end of chapter 4, and puts the Discipleship Sermon right after it in chapters 5-7. It is for people who read Matthew 4, and want to follow, but they cannot because Jesus is no longer walking on our streets.

And the Gospels describe people like Mary and Martha and Lazarus, people who believed in Jesus and loved him, but he did not ask them to leave home and follow, and they did not. The Discipleship Sermon explains following for people like that.

It has nothing about actually *leaving* house and family, because at the center, following Jesus is a way of living *in* your house and family.

Where is My Treasure? - 6:19-21

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Storing up treasure is good. Don't get rid of that. Saving up what's valuable is a good idea. People are made to do that. “But,” says Jesus, “*don't* collect stuff on earth. Bad investment. Guaranteed to lose value. Savings like that rot while we save them.”

Don't miss the kindness in this. Jesus does not speak here about helping other people, or serving God. Jesus does not say anything here about what's good and what's bad. He's telling people not to be silly or foolish.

He's trying to help those who save and store up. What are we collecting? Surely not things on earth! It doesn't sound kind to us, because we are attached to our collections on earth. But that's the whole point, in Jesus' mind. It's foolish attachment.

Imagine a young adult child ready to spend a lot of money on a car. My children mostly past this. This young person has a particular vehicle that they've picked out, and are in love with, but it is junk. The parent says “don't buy *that*, it is garbage.” My Dad spoke like that to me and to my brothers, and I have spoken like that to my children.

That young person does not want to hear that the car is junk. But the parent will say it, and has to say it. That's what Jesus is doing for us, for his followers. Earthly collections are all junk, for one reason alone, according to Jesus: they don't last.

“Storing up treasure in heaven” means do things that will please your Father in heaven. Earlier in Matthew 6 Jesus taught us about praying so our Father in heaven would hear, not so that people would be impressed; and giving money so our Father in heaven would see it, not so people would see it.

Three times earlier in Matt 6, Jesus said, “*and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*” The Father's reward is the treasure in heaven. But here Jesus speaks about moths and rust and stealing, so he's shifting the topic from righteous actions to our possessions and money. But he is still talking about reward with our Father in heaven.

Where is My Heart? – 6:21

The first question was, “where’s my treasure?” Now Jesus talks about our heart.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. We sometimes take this to mean we have to get our heart right, and then we’ll have the right treasure. No! Jesus is saying the exact opposite of that. Jesus is saying: get your treasure in the right place, because your heart will follow your treasure.

Here's what Ed Neufeld wants. I want to have my treasure on earth, and my heart with my heavenly Father. Get it? I will have treasure on earth, and I will love my heavenly Father with all my heart. Perfect. “Jesus, could I not do that?”

Jesus says, “Edmund, that won’t work.” Two masters will not work, either. And treasure on earth and heart in heaven will not work. Our heart follows our treasure. Don’t waste time trying to get your heart in the right place, says Jesus. Where’s my heart? Right beside my treasure. I need to get my treasure in the right place, with my Father.

This is not much easier than actually leaving our boats and nets, homes and possessions, and following Jesus down the road. The good news is that God wants to equip us with everything good for doing his will, and he wants to work in us what pleases him. Father in heaven we ask for that, lead us that way.

What is My Eye on? – 6:22-23

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”

These are hard verses for everyone to understand, mostly because Jesus talks about "eyes" in ways that don't make sense to us. In the ancient world, some thought that light came into the body through the eyes, since it is eyes that can sense light.

Just before Jesus talks about our eye, he spoke about treasure with the Father, not on earth, and after he talks about our eye he tells us we cannot serve God and Money.

So think of our eyes as watching and longing for something. What do we long for, what do we look at, and wish we had? What have we got our hearts set on? Do we long for the reward people can give us, or the reward that Father can give us? Do we long for the blessing of God or the blessing of things? Where is our eye aimed?

V21 said, *for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* Let's take our eyes as wishing eyes, longing eyes. That is itself is not good or bad, in these verses, depending on what we long for, and what we want.

Jesus has already said, “blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, good news from God for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” We can answer that glibly. “Oh yes, I want to be righteous, for sure I’d like to be more righteous.”

But not so fast. Do we want righteousness more than we want treasure on earth? Do we want righteousness more than we want our money problems to all go away? “Lord Jesus, could I not have both? Surely Lord, in my case, I could have both?” No.

He's already said, live so that Father will reward you and not people. He's already said, store up treasures in heaven. In this line about the eyes, he's speaking about the same thing, and telling us that what we want and long for makes a great difference.

How many Masters do I Serve? – 6:24

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Jesus here talks to people who’ve decided to follow, people who would leave all to go with Jesus, like the four fishermen.

The person who simply wants to lay up treasures on earth, and does not care much about God, does not need to hear that we can't serve God and Money, because that person is not trying to serve God and Money. They just serve Money.

It is the followers who will try to serve both. So he's talking to people like us who do not want to stop serving God, but will be tempted to find a way to serve God and also serve Money. Jesus has one brief point: it won't work.

Jesus keeps taking us to a fork in the road, his way and the other way. On the one hand, it is a basic choice that we make once; and on the other hand, we need to make this choice again every day.

That's what we do with the Lord's prayer: Father, may your name be honoured today, by our lives, may your will be done today, by us. By the time we've prayed that much and meant it, we have chosen the narrow gate and the steep path.

What does it mean to *serve Money*? When we make treasures on earth a big part of our lives, we don't see ourselves as *servicing* those treasures. We think those treasures serve us. Wrong. We serve it. Think about how hard we work for our treasure. Let's not kid ourselves, we serve our treasures, first to get them, then to protect them, store them, insure them, repair and upkeep. We faithfully serve our possessions.

When our four children were toddlers, I was horrified at how much parenting went into teaching our children how to take care of things, not to be careless with things, not to touch this or play with that, not to drop this or get mud on that. Take better care of our treasures, don't be hard on our treasures, you need to learn that, essential upbringing.

My children did nothing wrong that the Lord cared about. They got mud on their clothes, and brought it into the house. Does the Lord think, “what evil little children?” No. But we get angry at our children, because mud is bad for our treasures. Our damned treasures. Jesus is not shaking his head at the kids, they’re doing in his mud what he made them to do. But he shaking his head at the parents, and the poor kids getting corrupted like that.

In the Scripture, everybody serves something greater than themselves. Everybody has in their mind *something* that brings life, *something* that brings good and takes care of us, *something* that fills us, *something* that will protect us if we serve it faithfully.

Our society is telling in every possible way that serving money and possessions will bring us great reward. Look at the people in the commercials. They have the blessing, the reward, the life, the joy, the happiness that we are after.

It is a huge bald lie, a deception from the pit, and it drives our whole economy. In North America in these days, it is very hard not to serve Money. It is very hard to believe that I don't need my share of that STUFF out there to be content.

You cannot serve God and Money. Jesus saw money, treasures on earth, possessions, as his strongest competition for people's loyalty. He spoke about it often, and he goes after it hard here in the Discipleship Sermon. Money promises so much, but it takes us away from God, and leave us with nothing at the end, neither God nor money. Bad investment.

Am I Worried about Having Enough? – 6:25

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about having enough, because your Father in heaven takes care of you.

Jesus did not say these things to people who were greedy or covetous. Jesus was speaking to people who were worried about having enough. They were worried that they will not have enough to survive here on earth. We surely worry about this.

Worrying in itself is not the problem. God is not offended that we are frightened. The problem with fear is that it changes how we think and live. This kind of worry tells us to serve whatever makes the fear go away.

If worrying steers us, then we live just like the pagans, who don't know our Father. In the parable of the sower and the seed, Mt 13, the thorns and thistles are the cares of life and the attraction of wealth. The cares of life and the attraction of wealth work together, and between them they choke the new life God gave us. That's what the Lord said.

Our Lord's answer is real simple. Your Father in heaven will take care of you. We'll cover this in the next sermon, but that's were it goes. My brothers and sisters, let's not allow worry to steer our lives. May the Lord steer our lives.

Your life and mine show our choices. You and I stored up treasures somewhere last month. Where did we store up? Jesus is not asking us to get our heart right. He's asking us to put treasure in the right place. We can do this. To win our Father's approval, and to receive his reward, is in our grasp. If we seek for that we will find it, if we ask for that we'll receive it, if we knock at that gate, it will open for us.

Imagine the Father's joy at things *you* did last week, when *you* obeyed him, and imagine *him* planning *your* reward. Jesus sees what people get from their treasures on earth. Jesus also sees the Father's joy, and the reward he has for those who serve him.

And Jesus, who sees *both* kinds of treasure, and knows how *both* work, tells us, "Trust me on this. Serve your Father, not wealth. And don't worry about having enough, he's providing for you." Amen.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you called us, now lead us. We know that people in our part of the world are much corrupted by all this, Lord. I mean me, and people like me. Complete in us what you began. Take us by the hand and show us the way. We want to be yours, we also love our treasure on earth. Have mercy on us worried sinners. We love you. We know you tell the truth. We want the Father's reward. Increase our hunger and thirst for righteousness. Amen.

BENEDICTION: May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace. Amen. Go in God's peace to love and serve the Lord.