Building an Indestructible Life

*Treasure in Heaven, Perspective on Earth*

Matthew 6:19-34

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Introduction: Our attitudes toward material things can, and will, determine our eternal destinies.

An inscription on a tombstone reads, “What I gave I have, what I spent I had, what I left behind I lost by not giving it.” ―Thomas Ravenscroft. Looking back on life from the perspective of eternity, this epitaph may describe a surprising realization that many never had while living. If there is an eternity, then like everything else in life, even the way you handle your finances has eternal implications.

ILLUS: Money from foreign countries (like my rand, pesos, shekels and quetzals) is worthless for buying anything of value in the United States. Those currencies must be changed to be worth anything here. Even so, my earthly wealth will have no value in heaven; I change currencies by using my wealth on earth for heavenly purposes, and ***the exchange rate is excellent!***

1. Storing up treasure in heaven – **Matthew 6:19-20** "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.
   1. We are to use our money to make friends in heaven! **Luke 16:9**  "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.
   2. When we share what God has given us, we are storing it in heaven!
      1. **1 Timothy 6:17-19**  Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.  18  Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,  19  storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.
      2. Jesus says in Luke’s nearly parallel account, **Luke 12:31-34**  But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.  32  Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.  33  Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.  34  For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
   3. Willingness to give freely is especially difficult for the wealthy.
      1. Consider the rich young ruler (**Matthew 19:16-26**)
      2. The rich young ruler had kept the commandments, but one thing prevented him from becoming a disciple – his treasure was on earth
         1. **Matthew 19:21**  Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."
         2. **Mark 10:21**  Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."
      3. In contrast, giving freely was doable for the poor Macedonians **(2 Corinthians 8:1-5)**
      4. For the wealthy, willingness to give is the main obstacle to becoming a disciple. Yet, it is the very thing required for the wealthy to become disciples! (**Matthew 19:23-26**)
      5. And this is why it is hard for YOU and ME. We are rich!
         1. Did you know that 1/4 of all humans live without electricity — approximately 1.6 billion people?
         2. Roughly 90% of households in the U.S. have at least one vehicle. But in a survey of 44 countries “around one-third (35%) say they have a working car in their home.” (Pew Research, 2015)
         3. The average household income worldwide is about $10,000 per year.
         4. “84% of world population lives at or below U.S. poverty line” *Washington Examiner*, Barbara Boland | July 09, 2015 09:33 AM. Another way to say this is that ***if you are at the poverty line in the United States, you are wealthier than 84% of the people on earth.***
         5. Most of your parents are currently in the top 1% of income worldwide, and the vast majority of you will almost certainly be in that category in just a few short years.
            1. “According to the *Global Rich List*, a website that brings awareness to worldwide income disparities, an income of $32,400 a year will allow you to make the cut.”
            2. “So if you’re an accountant, a registered nurse or even an elementary school teacher, congratulations. The average wage for any of these careers falls well within the top 1% worldwide.” (“Are You in the Top One Percent of the World?” *Investopedia* Daniel Kurt | Updated February 2, 2018)
         6. All of this is true, yet Americans donate 1.9% of their income to charitable causes (NCCS/IRS).
      6. To paraphrase Luther, for a man to become a Christian, three conversions are necessary: *The conversion of the heart, the conversion of the mind, and the conversion of the purse.*
      7. ILLUS: The Baptism of Sam Houston at the age of 61 occurred on November 19, 1854: *As Houston walked down to the water’s edge, the preacher noted that Houston still had his watch on his hip. He pointed it out to Houston, and the politician handed it to a friend. “You’d better hand him your wallet, too,” remarked the well-intentioned preacher. “No, I believe not. I’m afraid it needs baptizing, too,” responded Houston. After he was baptized in the freezing cold conditions, he was congratulated by his friends. “Well, General, all your sins have been washed away.” “If that be the case,” replied Houston, “God help the fish down below.”*
2. What’s the location of your treasure? (understanding the reason for charity) (**Matthew 6:21**)
   1. Our hearts and our treasures are always in the same place (ILLUS: Jack Sparrow’s compass).
      1. Whatever is valuable to us has our heart.
      2. Whatever or whomever we love the most has our heart.
   2. We are to love God the most. **Mark 12:29-30**  Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'HEAR, O ISRAEL, THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE.  30  AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' This is the first commandment.
   3. Where is God? To this point in the sermon on the mount, Jesus has referred to the location of the *Father in heaven* 5 times:
      1. Matt. 5:16  “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”
      2. Matt. 5:45  “that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”
      3. Matt. 5:48  “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”
      4. Matt. 6:1  “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.”
      5. Matt. 6:9  “In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.”
   4. When we seek God first and love Him the most, our treasure is in heaven…where He is!
3. Perspective on earth
   1. Your eye must be good to have proper perspective. **Matthew 6:22-23**  "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.  23  But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!
   2. What does having a good eye have to do with treasure in heaven?
      1. A good eye allows us to see well and find our way. It is sound. It enables us to focus on what we need to focus on – which is heaven.
      2. But a good eye can also mean generosity. The opposite of a good eye might be called an evil eye, which is a metaphor among the Hebrews for greediness or a grudging spirit.
         1. **Deuteronomy 15:7-9**  "If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother,  8  but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs.  9  Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,' and **your eye be evil** against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you.
         2. **Proverbs 28:22**  A man with an **evil eye** hastens after riches, And does not consider that poverty will come upon him.
         3. Some folk religions believe that the envy over the fortunes of others may ultimately bring them harm when an envious person casts the evil eye upon the object of their desire. The one with the evil eye is a person who is envious, greedy, and covetous – even if it isn’t intentional. In this context, a good eye would be the opposite – a generous one, not given over to envy.
         4. When our eyes see something and we desire to use it for God’s glory, to provide for our family or help the needy, we treasure the right things, and our body is full of light. When our eyes lead us to envy and a grudging spirit, we are full of darkness, for our treasure is laid up on earth. It isn’t necessarily wrong to desire things, but we have to constantly examine our reasons for doing so. And if we find that we are not about God’s glory, then maybe our loyalty needs a makeover. (Blader)
4. Freed from mammon
   1. We have choice of masters, but we cannot choose both God & mammon (**Matthew 6:24**)
   2. **The Christian and the Precious Stone.** Long ago, there was a Christian who found a precious stone. He put it in his bag and carried it around with him. One day he was sharing his provisions with a traveler, and the man saw the jewel in his bag. On impulse, he asked if he could have it, and the Christian gladly gave it to him. The traveler quickly left, overjoyed at his great fortune. A few days later, however, the man came back seeking the Christian. He returned the stone and said, “I don’t really want the stone. I want something much more valuable. I want whatever it was that enabled you to give it to me so freely.”
      1. What enabled this Christian to give the stone away?
      2. The answer is simple: He was not possessed by it! Too many are possessed by their possessions! (e.g., the rich young ruler, **Matthew 19:22**)
   3. The Christian understands the value of the riches God provides!
      1. Remember **1 Timothy 6:17-19** Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives ***us richly all things to enjoy.***
      2. Remember **Luke 16:11**  Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the ***true riches***?
      3. **Ephesians 3:8**  To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the ***unsearchable riches of Christ***,
      4. **Philippians 3:8**  Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and ***count them as rubbish***, that I may ***gain Christ***
5. My first concern is not my gain, but heaven’s glory! (**Matthew 6:25-34**)
   1. It all gets back to building a life on Jesus.
      1. To freely lose ourselves for heaven’s gain is to know the meaning of Christlikeness.
      2. The Macedonians had learned this secret! (**2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 9**)
   2. When you build your life in this way, no one can take your treasure from you, for it is in **heaven**, and no one can destroy your life, for it is **hidden** with Christ in God. **Colossians 3:1-2** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Conclusion: This kind of life is indestructible because the forces of evil cannot touch it!