

November 22, 2015

TREASURE IN HEAVEN

Matthew 6:19-21

Joke: a very wealthy man who had been the head of a major corporation dies and goes to heaven! Yes, I guess it's possible. He's getting a tour on his way to his new home, and as they pass one beautiful mansion, he asks Peter, "Who lives there?" When he finds out that it is the eternal home of his landscaper, he is amazed, and wonders what sort of splendor will be waiting for him. A few mansions down, they see another glorious dwelling. Peter tells him it belongs to one of the secretaries of his company. "Great!" he thinks. What will *his* place be like? It must be quite impressive. This goes on and on, each estate more wonderful than the next. Finally, around the corner, down an alley, they come to a worn out shack. "This is for you," says Peter. "What!? I did a billion times better than this on earth. Why don't I have a mansion like the rest?" Peter tells him, "This is the best we could do with what you sent on ahead of you."

"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven!"

Sometimes our lifestyles seem to necessitate having possessions which, to much of the world, would be considered luxuries. I believe that every one of us, myself included, could simplify our lives considerably and still consider ourselves tremendously blessed by our abundance. If we have secure shelter, a change of clothes, and enough food for both today and tomorrow, we have more than 75% of the people in this world! (Fact from Methodist Scouter's website, 2001)

I don't really want to talk about the wonderful lifestyles we all have, though. Jesus elsewhere teaches us that *"Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."* (Luke 12:15) I don't really want to talk about the quest of people in our culture for security. Jesus will soon teach us that God provides, just as He provides for the birds of the air and the lilies of the fields. (Matthew 6:25-34) Those subjects will come up soon enough. The point I want to make is that most of us have things we do not need, and therefore, very easily, we could *"sell your possessions and give alms."* (Luke 12:33)

Jesus is advocating simplicity in this life, because He knows, and He wants us to know, that the greater treasure is heavenly. The more important question to answer is, "How can I live so as to have treasure in heaven?" The answer comes in knowing where we set our hearts. *"For where your treasure is there will your heart be also."* (Matthew 6:21)

But...what is it to have treasure in heaven? First of all, it means that the stuff in our lives should not have that strong a grasp on us. We need to let go of the things that hold us. If you've ever seen the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, you will know a little bit about what I mean. Sean Connery plays Henry Jones, Sr. and Harrison Ford plays Junior, or, Indiana. There is a scene in a flying zeppelin, where the two of them are talking. Indiana recalls that the last time they had a quiet drink together, he had a milkshake. He is expressing how he wished they had talked more as he was growing up. Henry says that the way he raised Junior after his mother died taught him self-reliance. Indiana's response is, "What you taught me was that I was less important to you than people who had been dead for 500 years in another country..." Henry Jones was so wrapped up in his earthly research and study that he didn't invest himself in his son very well. Later, when he thinks Indiana is dead, Henry expresses regret by saying, "I never told him anything."

Our treasure in heaven is determined, at least in part, by the blessings we bring into the lives of others. The more we focus on things, the less we will focus on people. Our romance with our possessions is not as important as our relationships with people, and especially with our mutual relationship with Christ. It is important to know one another's hearts, because Christ is in the hearts of all believers, and we should all want to know Christ. Jesus Christ should be our greatest treasure. He should reign over our thoughts and visions, over our hopes and dreams, and, ...over our possessions.

Jesus should reign. *"Fear not, little flock. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."* (Luke 12:32) There is one word there that gets a little lost in its translation into English. The

you in that sentence is plural. We lose sight of that fact sometimes, and when we hear that “*it is God’s pleasure to give you the Kingdom,*” we take it too personally. And intellectually, we translate it as God wants to give *me* the Kingdom, meaning that God wants to have *me* in heaven. And though this is true, Jesus is not being particular here. It is the same when He says, “*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*”

The Kingdom of Heaven is not just a personal, isolated experience. It is for the whole flock. It is a corporate experience. We should never think of heaven as a personal reward. Yes, we may have to accept Christ *personally* rather than just in the abstract. We have to make our faith personal and heartfelt, rather than just a matter of intellectual ascent to some abstract idea. But, because we will not have our own personal heaven, we should see the promises of Christ as corporate, something we will receive and know *together*. And because we will not be in heaven alone, we should consider our treasure in heaven as something we will know as *our* treasure. I won’t lay up *my* treasure, and you won’t lay up *your* treasure, but we will lay up *our* treasure!

The *your* in that passage is plural. What should it mean then, to say *your* (plural), and *heart*, (singular)? Should we, as Christians, think of ourselves as having a common heart? Were not the first disciples “*of one heart and soul?*” (Acts 4:32)

If the treasure is something we will have in common, perhaps our relationships are more important than we think! Couldn’t that explain why love is the first and foremost commandment of Christ?

Fear not little flock, ...where your treasure is there will your (one)heart be also. We are treasure for one another. We are, each of us, a gift that God is giving to every other. No thief can steal us away from each other! No moth can destroy love! Our loyalty to Christ and to one another (as Christ is in each believer’s heart), reveals our treasure, and thereby, reveals our heart.

The greatest treasure we have, my friends, is not our intellectual ascent, or, agreement with regards to the truths of faith, though our beliefs are wonderful treasures that *can* bind us together. Remember that *faith without love is nothing!* (1 Corinthians 13:2) Jesus wants us to love one another, to treasure one another. You are my treasure. I want to see you in heaven. Yes.... All of you!

Are there others we should want to see in heaven? Make them your treasure. Make them our treasure! The Church!!!