Matthew 6: 19 to 24 Preached on 7th June 2026

Theme: - Stewardship.

The opening verse of Matthew's gospel reads, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth or rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal."

We build up for ourselves treasures on earth by buying things we could quite easily do without. Whatever we buy, no matter what it is, it has a finite life and will either wear out or go out of fashion and be thrown away and when we die, we will leave everything behind. As St Timothy wrote, "We brought nothing into the world and we take nothing out." Those things we leave behind will now be used by others because in reality they were always just on loan to us from God.

That does not mean that we shouldn't have things in this life, yes of course we should, and many new things, which when they first came out may have been thought of as luxuries, but which because we now can't live without them, such as mobile phones, computers and cars, have now become a part of modern day life. And they are here to make life easier, and for many people, to make life safer. And when we own material things of course, we should look after them, that after all is a sensible thing to do.

But these three verses are also a command, God said, "**Do not** store up for yourselves treasures on earth." In Exodus chapter 16 verse 16 when the Israelites were fed with manna from heaven Moses told them what the Lord had commanded, which was. "Gather as much of it as each of you needs for each person in your household." And the inference of verse 16 is not to take more than you need. In that way God ensured that everyone had a fair share of the manna from heaven. I'm sure that we ae all aware that we have proportionately more in this country of God's manna from heaven, than other people in many other parts of the world. As individuals we are powerless to alter that situation except through Christian stewardship where we have the ability to hand back some of our excesses to people who have very little and certainly not their fair share of God's manna from heaven.

We are then told in verse 20, "But store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth or rust do consume and where thieves do not break in and steal." So, what is the treasure we are to store up for ourselves in heaven?

St Paul listed in his letter to the Galatians at chapter 5 verse 22 these treasures which he called, the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Exercising the fruit of the Spirit that St Paul lists with everyone we meet would be a brilliant place to start in building up treasure for ourself in heaven. The fruit of the spirit is particularly relevant to the theme today because the foundation of Christian stewardship is the fruit of the spirit. We express our Christian values through the fruit of the spirit.

As an example, the fruit of the spirit leads to generosity the sort we heard about in our reading this morning from St Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. In chapter 8 verses 2 and 3 we heard that the people of the Macedonian church voluntarily gave according to

their means, and even beyond their means for the privilege and joy of sharing their wealth with those who were in need.

St Paul wrote to the Corinthians in the same letter at chapter 9 verse 6 these words, “The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” “Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Our lives and our families and all our possessions are all gifts from God, given to us with love and joy by God, which is why we should also give where there is need, also with love and joy. We do not exercise Christian stewardship because we have to, but because of our love for the Lord, and of our joy in helping others.

In Verse 21 we have, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This emphasizes the importance of prioritizing spiritual values over material wealth, and we should try and avoid getting that the wrong way round.

This statement is also relevant to stewardship in support of our church here at St Michael’s. Although I am aiming this sermon at the broader issues of Christian stewardship nevertheless if we treasure our church and all that it does in bringing us and our community closer to God then we should cheerfully support it.

At verses 22 and 23 St Matthew changes emphasis here we read, “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.”

Our eyes are like windows by which the light gets into the whole body. The state of a house window determines how much light gets into a house, if the windows are clean the light will come flooding in, but if they are dirty, they can keep a house in darkness.

Jesus is saying that the light that gets into everyone’s heart and soul, indeed into our very being depends on the spiritual state of the eye through which it has to pass.

The view we take of people depends on the kind of eye we have. There are certain obvious things which can blind our eyes and distort our vision.

Prejudice or discrimination distorts our vision; there is nothing which so destroys a person’s judgement as prejudice or discrimination.

It prevents a person from forming a clear, reasonable, logical and Christian assessment of a situation which is the duty of every Christian to form.

And let us be clear about prejudice, or discrimination both are taught, and as Christians we have a duty not to practice prejudice or discrimination against anybody, and we must all try to overcome our prejudices.

It is prejudice or discrimination which is the root cause of abuse towards women and children which we hear so much about.

It is prejudice and discrimination which has caused so many wars in the past, and unless we mend our ways will cause many more in the future.

Jealousy is also a disease that can distort our judgement and lead us to make bad decisions especially about relationships, and Christian stewardship is mainly about relationships.

We now come to verse 24, which again is a change of emphasis verse 24 reads, “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

Jesus doesn’t state this as a warning, but as a fact. He doesn’t say that we shouldn’t serve two masters, but that it isn’t possible, nor is it possible to devote yourself to God and to wealth.

The attempt to serve two masters will just frustrate us and waste our time. It isn’t possible for us to balance two loves for any length of time, because one will bubble to the top and squash the other.

When we really love someone, we will resent the claims the other tries to make on our lives and will begin to hate the other one. That’s simply how God made us.

Nor is it possible to serve no master. Like it or not, we will follow some guiding principle.

If it is true that we can truly serve only one master, and Jesus and experience tell us that it is, then it matters greatly which master we choose to serve. Our choice will dictate the direction that our lives will take.

In the king James Bible, they call wealth Mammon today we call it Affluence or Success or Promotion or Prosperity or the Good Life.

Jesus calls us to be humble, and wealth calls us to be proud, Jesus sets our minds on things that are above and wealth sets our minds on things below.

Jesus calls us to love light, the other to love darkness. Jesus tells us to look toward things unseen and eternal whereas those who do not obey Jesus look at things seen and temporal.

How we think about wealth, how we treat wealth, where we put our priorities in life determines who we are and what we are.

Jesus calls us to be generous to the poor and widow, and indeed to each other, which is summed up in John’s gospel chapter 13 verse 34 where we read,

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”

Christian stewardship is rooted in the belief that everything belongs to God, Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 reads, “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis highlights God’s ownership of all creation.

Psalm 24 verse 1 reads, The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”

The Bible presents stewardship as a way of life, emphasizing accountability, faithfulness, and service to God and to other people. It is also a proven fact that our love for God depends more on what we give to him than what we receive from him.

This includes not only financial resources but also time, talents, and our relationship with other people.

Indeed, these days with global warming and plastic pollution of our oceans it also includes our environment; we are called to be faithful managers or stewards of all his gifts, and the oceans sustains all life on earth which is a good reason why we should look after it.

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