

“Where Is Your Treasure?”

October 7, 2019

Treasure series

SHOW MEDIA: *Treasure Week 1*

\$1.4 million – that’s how much Bansky’s canvas called “Girl with Balloon” brought at auction this week. And right after the gavel fell, the painting began to move through the bottom of the frame where it was shredded in a prank by the artist. Some say the work of art is worth even more now, but I can only imagine what onlookers thoughts as they watched this pricey work of art be destroyed. It reminded me of Jesus’ words: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...

Treasure. The video asks important questions: what do you treasure? What will you value at the end of your life? What are you investing in? As we consider those today, I invite you to keep Jesus’ words at the forefront: *where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

I decided to do some crowdsourcing for this series, so I asked the Facebook universe “what do you truly treasure?” Treasure isn’t a word we use a lot, but when we use it, we know what it means. What’s important to us? What do we value?

Some of the answers weren’t so surprising: my relationship with God, family, friends, freedom, church family, the beauty of God’s creation, unconditional love. But some answers weren’t what I expected: mental health, time, the uniqueness of my kids, solitude, silence, a special guitar, a good dark chocolate bar, the opportunity to make a difference, every breath.

SHOW SLIDES:

- The greatest treasures are those invisible to the eye but felt by the heart.
- We can only be said to be alive in those moment when our hearts are conscious of our treasures. – Thornton Wilder
- Who finds a faithful friend, find a treasure. – Jewish saying

We’ve been looking at the foundational stuff of our faith – what it means to say that we believe in God – Father, Jesus – Son, the Holy Spirit, and the church. Another basic of our faith is seeing ourselves as stewards of God’s gifts in our lives. This series is about how we invest our whole lives, and a part of that is looking at the relationship between faith and money. Yes, here we go again – bringing up the truth that Jesus spoke about money and the Kingdom of God more than anything else. That must mean it’s important.

It is important, but I want to clear that it's not ultimately about money. It's about the state of our hearts. Jesus makes a clear connection between our hearts and our treasure. Money is a wonderful tool to accomplish God's purposes. Money can cause stress in relationships, division in families, and pursuing it can consume us. If you've ever struggled with finances, you know it's not just a financial issue. It's emotional and spiritual. Jesus talked about money because he cared about our hearts.

We want to think that our treasure follows our hearts – that we lead with our hearts. But if we're honest, many times it's the other way around – our hearts follow our treasure. We lead with our treasure, and our hearts follow where we've invested. Jesus is clear that our investments of time, energy, and money show what's important to us, even if we want it to be different. Our financial commitments require time and energy. Where we put our treasure, our heart follows.

It's about where we invest our time, energy, and resources. Two things tell us a lot: our calendar and our bank account (your checkbook, credit card statement, etc.). It's get real when we look at the reality of where we spend time and money. Where are we investing?

Certainly we have obligations and responsibilities. I'm not suggesting that we quit doing what we need to do to pay bills and have what we need, but how often do we really evaluate what we're investing in? I don't mean meeting with your financial advisor; I mean taking time to examine how we spend time, energy, and resources. What would you see if you looked at your calendar and your checkbook?

Rev. Billy Graham was asked late in his life, "If you could, would you go back and do anything differently?" His answer surprised some people. "Yes, of course. I'd spend more time at home with my family, and I'd study more and preach less. I wouldn't have taken so many speaking engagements." That's quite an insight from someone who spent his life sharing the Gospel.

Jesus offers this bit on treasure in what we call the Sermon on the Mount – a collection of his teachings. This won't be the last time he addresses issues of money. We know that continues with the New Testament letters as the early church comes together. Remember it's not money that's the root of all evil, but the love of money.

Money itself is not the problem. It's how we use it and relate to it. Jesus isn't saying money is bad in and of itself; he's specifically talking about greed and hoarding money. It's also not an indictment of stuff, though the statistics are staggering – 2.3 billion square feet of self-storage in the U.S. alone! All of us are challenged by Jesus' words.

Jesus is talking about where we find meaning and purpose in life. He's challenging us to think about where we really find lasting hope and blessing. Is it in the

stuff we accumulate here and now, or is it in the power of resurrection and hope of eternal life? Is it in what we can get for ourselves, or is it in what we can give for the sake of Jesus Christ?

It's still as counter-cultural now as it was when Jesus preached it. As much as we value stuff, as important as it can be, it's nothing compared to the treasure of heaven and investing in God's Kingdom. He's calling us to trust in God's promises.

Jesus is calling us to search our hearts and understand where our true motivation is. Here these verses from *The Message*:

19-21 "Don't hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or—worse!—stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it's safe from moth and rust and burglars. It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.

We're cleaning out our basement in preparation for the rummage sale here at church. There's a lot of asking, "Do we really need this? Are we going to use this? Where did this come from?"

Do you know how much treasure you find when you clean out and clean up? I found a box that my grandma made back in 1983 and some of her handwritten notes to me. I discovered a bag of letters and cards from Ivan back from our dating years and into our married life. It's not so much the stuff that's important; it's the memory tied to it. And yet, the reality of how much stuff we have is clear.

SHOW SLIDES:

- When it is a question of money, everybody is of the same religion. – Voltaire
- Without a rich heart, wealth is an ugly beggar. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Where do we feel a disconnect between what we truly treasure and how we invest our time, energy, and money? Sometimes it's those things that we value the most that receive the least time, attention, and resources from us. We struggle to want to do more for God, but we get bogged down in other things. When we're over-obligated, over-extended, and indebted by things we don't truly treasure, we don't feel a sense of joy or peace. We feel discontent. It's a struggle. It's draining. It's life-sapping.

The challenge is to look at what we invest in versus what we want to invest in. Is there a tension between the two, and is there a way to work toward getting our treasure and our hearts more in line?

The truth is that what we value at the end our earthly lives isn't stuff. I've had the privilege of having conversations with people who in their last days, and what they talk about isn't stuff; it's relationships and memories, time spent with family, the ways

that God has been faithful. I've shared the story before of hearing my grandma call her dear friend and give thanks for their friendship just a few weeks before she died. It's a memory that blesses me still and reminds me of the things that matter and are our true treasure.

So where is your treasure? What do you celebrate right now? Where has God brought you great joy and purpose?

What do you want to invest in? If you didn't have your current obligations, where would you want to invest? And if your heart feels divided, what steps can you take to grow closer to God in offering your time, energy, and resources for God's Kingdom? God calls us all to consider where our hearts are because of where our treasure is, and God will guide us to bring them into unity with God's purposes for us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

As we prepare to come to the table that Jesus sets, as we remember that we gather together here and that this table is extended and includes brothers and sisters in Christ around the world, I invite us to pray together...

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God, thank you for caring about what we do and who we are. We hear the truth from Jesus that our hearts follow our treasure, and we want to invest in your kingdom. We are thankful for special memories and things in our lives, but we confess that our love for "stuff" can get in the way of truly serving you. The treasures of this life easily overwhelm us, and we ignore your call to seek treasure in heaven. Forgive us, and help us to remember that your love and grace are the greatest gift we have and the greatest gift we can share. Give us courage and confidence to live for you. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE