

“Where Is Your Treasure?”

October 9, 2022

Treasure series

Treasure. Maybe you think of pirates and treasure maps, but 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 questions today, I invite you to keep Jesus’ words at the forefront: *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

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? What really matters?

Though we sometimes try to separate our resources from our faith, we really can’t. Our faith calls us to see ourselves as stewards of God’s gifts in our lives - time, energy, money - all that we have are gifts. This series is about how we invest our whole lives for God’s Kingdom work, and a part of that is looking at the relationship between faith and treasure. For as much as we may want to focus on other things, Jesus spoke about money and the Kingdom of God more than anything else in the Gospels. That must mean they’re important.

And it’s not ultimately about money. It’s about the state of our hearts. Stewardship - seeing ourselves as stewards of God’s gifts - really is **heart** work because we have to realize some difficult truths. What we have is a gift from God, and we’re called to care for it in light of that reality. It might be something we’ve worked for, but it’s all from God. Having more, doing more, and being more are not from Jesus, but the call of a culture where “more is always better.”

Bigger sizes and more stuff are always a temptation, so Jesus really challenges us to be counter-cultural, especially when it comes to money and possessions. It’s not a matter of having nothing, but treasuring the right things and knowing that loving God and loving neighbor are the most important work we do.

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 more money 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 cares about our hearts.

We want to think that our treasure follows our hearts – that we always lead with our hearts and hearts are in the right place. But if we’re honest, many times it’s

the other way around; our hearts follow our treasure. We lead with our treasure; we invest our time, energy, and resources, and our hearts follow where we've invested. *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

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 really about where we invest our time, energy, and resources. Two things tell us a lot: our calendar and our bank account. A calendar shows how we spend time. A bank account shows where we spend our money. Both show where we spend energy. It gets real when we look at the reality of where we spend time and money. Where are we investing? Where do we want to be invested?

Elizabeth Krogh writes, "One lesson from *Mary Poppins* is knowing the difference between the value of money and its worth. We don't often stop to think about "value," but it is explained brilliantly to Michael Banks by Mr. Northbrook who, during a chance encounter at the bank, gives Jane and Michael, the Banks children, each a coin. Michael says, *I know the value of this: sixpence.* Mr. Northbrook says, *No, that's its worth. Its value's in how you spend it. Do good, and may you have good luck.*

It's easy to forget that we're sending daily messages about what we value based on where and how we spend our money, time, and energy. If no one valued that morning cup of coffee, there'd be no Starbucks or Tim Horton's. If no one valued entertainment, there'd be no movie theaters, no studios making shows, no streaming services. But consider how much we spend on that alone! I'm not sure I've ever seen a Starbucks without a long line, and I know I'm not alone in having a lot of options for what I want to watch!

Think about your last bank statement (whether you get a paper copy or view it online). **SLIDE:** *What messages are you sending based on how and where you spend your money? Are those the messages you intended to send?* Those are challenging questions for all of us.

Certainly, we have obligations and responsibilities. We don't 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 our time, money, and energy? I don't mean meeting with your financial advisor; I mean taking time to examine how we spend time, energy, and resources. If you looked at your calendar and your accounts, what would

does it show about where you're invested? Are there places in your life where you're giving time, energy, and money to things that you don't treasure?

Sadio Mané is one of the greatest soccer players to come from Senegal in Africa. The story goes that Mané was walking around with a cell phone that had a cracked screen, which surprised a lot of people. Mané is more than able to afford to replace it, but his investments and motivations are different.

In an interview in 2019, Mane shared that his major goal after becoming a top soccer player was to help people. He said, "Why would I want ten Ferraris, 20 diamond watches and two jet planes? What would that do for the world? I starved, I worked in the fields, I played barefoot, and I didn't go to school. Now I can help people. I prefer to build schools and give poor people food or clothing. I have built schools [and] a stadium; we provide clothes, shoes, and food for people in extreme poverty. In addition, I give [monthly] to all people from a very poor Senegalese region in order to contribute to their family economy. I do not need to display luxury cars, luxury homes, trips, and even planes. I prefer that my people receive a little of what life has given me."

Mané has, in fact, showed where his treasure is - and where his heart is. In Bambali, Senegal, his home village, he donated money to build a hospital. Mané's father died when he was a child, and responding to the lack of health services in his home region was important to him. The hospital includes a maternity department as well, which isn't always available.

Mané donated funds for a secondary school to be constructed in his village because education is an important investment. He also donated funds to the government in Senegal when the pandemic hit to aid in fighting Covid. Mané doesn't do it to get attention, but when someone asked, he was quick to respond. *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Jesus offers this bit on treasure in 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* that is the root of every kind of evil.

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 and stuff. It's also not an indictment of having what we need, but his words challenge every one of us.

However, thinking about how much stuff there is, I looked up the latest statistics on self-storage units in the U.S. We win every time. It's still staggering – 2.8 billion square feet of rentable self-storage in the U.S. alone! It's a \$39.5 billion industry, and it's grown and growing all the time. That's just the U.S.!

All of us are challenged by Jesus' words. We may not have rented storage space, but how many of us have storage in our homes? Who has boxes that you haven't looked at in years? Do you even know what's in the boxes you have? There's so much stuff!

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 God's Kingdom? Is it in what we can accomplish, or is it in the blessed assurance of God's love and grace?

It's still as counter-cultural now as it was when Jesus first preached it. As much as we value stuff, as important as it can be as a tool, 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. Whenever we do that which honors God first, when we remember our role as stewards of all of God's gifts, we're storing up heavenly treasure.

Cleaning up and cleaning out is always needed - literally and figuratively, and it's always challenging. We go through different rooms in our home, and find way too much. Recently we found loads of paper. How much paper does one person need? I hear myself asking, "Do we really need this? Are we going to use this? Where did this come from?"

It's almost too much to consider the amount of stuff we have. But I feel the pull to hold on. Maybe we should keep this. Maybe we'll need it someday!

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. We 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 aligned?

The truth is that what we value at the end of our earthly lives isn't stuff. I've had the privilege of having those conversations with people who are in their last days, and what they talk about isn't ever stuff; it's relationships and memories, time spent with people they love, being a part of a community, the ways that God has been faithful - that's the witness.

So, the challenge and encouragement I offer this week is for each of us to invest in a relationship somehow - send a note to someone, have a conversation with a neighbor, bless someone in their workplace (a cashier, a server, or medical office staff), take a friend to coffee, or be really intentional about smiling at people or opening the door for them. I'm amazed at the small things people do that make me feel good. Those small actions are a part of investing our treasure right where we are. **SLIDE:** Heavenly treasure doesn't decline in value. Maybe that's ultimate test and question. Does this decline in value?

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 and misaligned with where your treasure is, what steps can you take to grow closer to God in offering your time, energy, and resources for God's Kingdom?

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven... God calls us all to consider where our hearts are because of where our treasure is, and I pray that God will guide us to bring them into closer alignment with God's purposes for us - to love God, to love each other, and seek the Kingdom of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.