

Values, Vision and Service
Matt. 6:19-24

Intro. Our text for the AM is **Matt. 6:19-24** – Let's read these verses... **"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.**

When we approach command sections of the NT, I think most people react the way we do when a superior hands down orders to the underlings beneath him. Like school and the workplace, we either fall in line or suffer consequences. Commands trigger the resistance and rebellion latent in all of us. Am I right about that? Because Christ is Lord of Heaven and Earth, submission and obedience are entirely appropriate and expected. But there's another sense to Christ's commands...a sense we may overlook. Jesus took on flesh and became one of us. He lived on earth for 33 years. During those years He experienced what we experience and was tempted in all points as we are yet without sin. By trusting Christ to save us, we are privileged to become God's children. In the new family relationship faith in Christ establishes, Jesus becomes our brother! So as we approach and process the message of these verses, we need to listen to the advice and admonitions of a wise brother. But this awesome brother of ours has a perspective that is entirely unique. Though Jesus came to earth, His home is heaven. He lives in the place the human heart longs for but knows so little about.

Do you remember why my aunt went to prison? I'm talking about Martha Stewart. (but she really isn't my aunt). Martha was convicted of insider trading. She sold stock in a biopharmaceutical company after receiving an unlawful tip from her stock broker. Insider trading is the illegal practice of trading stock to one's own advantage through access to confidential information. According to the Securities and Exchange Commission, insider trading is illegal. But...insider trading is perfectly legal with God. If ever there was insider information, it's the message of Christ. His Word gives those who listen and believe a distinct advantage over those who don't. Wisdom is hearing God's word and acting on it. In the passage this AM, Jesus explains what we ought to trade for the greatest eternal return.

The writer of Hebrews understood the "inside" advantage of the Lord Jesus. He wrote this... **See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they (the people of the OT) did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? - Heb. 12:25** In Christ's counsel we should hear Him say, *"I've been to earth and I've lived in heaven. If I was in your shoes, this is what I would do."* And His commands aren't just theoretical...they're entirely consistent with the life He lived when He was here. So hear these words from Jesus, not just as commands from a superior, but as the advice of a wise brother who's been here and done that.

This morning I want to consider six verses that concisely address 3 issues...values / vision / and service. Rather than 3 stand alone topics, these 3 issues are interrelated. Our values expose the truth about our hearts. They demonstrate who and what we love. Yet our values are affected and determined by our vision or how we perceive and determine what is real and valuable. Then as this section ends, we see that our values and our vision find concrete expression in who or what we serve. So as we'll see, the 3 issues in these verses are linked in an inseparable way.

1. **Values – (Where are your treasures?) - vs. 19-21 - "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.** The greek words translated **store up** and **treasures** come from the same root word. When literally translated the idea is this...*do not treasure your earthly treasures*. In other words, don't love them / don't be devoted to them / don't serve them or let them control you / don't allow them to become gods in your life. Don't consider them as treasures to live and die for. Hold them loosely.

Why does Jesus say that?...because He knows something about earthly things. He knows something we often fail to think about. He knows the stuff of earth has no future. He knows everything down here is perishable and will be reduced to ashes someday. Notice **v.19** again, **Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal**. In the ancient world, people often spent their wealth on wool clothing. Fine clothing was a status symbol. (so what else is new?) They filled their closets with the latest fashions and hottest labels. They even had gold thread woven into the fabric of their outerwear.

But Jesus knows something. He knows about the moth...that little flying insect that loves to feed on wool. He knows what a little moth can do to clothing stored in a trunk or closet. He knows how an expensive garment can be turned into a worthless rag in a matter of days. In heaven Jesus never saw the sort of destruction He saw on earth. Nothing there is moth-eaten!

In **v.19** Jesus also mentions the damaging effect of **rust**. The original Greek word, *brosis*, has the idea of *that which corrodes or eats up*. Right now I'm debating what to do with my 2003 Chevy S-10. The drive train seems strong but the body has begun to rust away. What to do? It's the only new vehicle I've ever owned. The day I drove it off the lot it lost more than 25% of its value. But it was so shiny and had that pleasant new car smell. I pampered vehicle truck Marian Hastings called a baby truck. (The wounds are healing slowly.) I changed the oil every 3,000 miles and washed it regularly. I never thought it would come to this! But it's going the way of all metal. Earth's environment causes everything to be eaten up one way or another. In the broader sense of that Greek term, normal wear and tear consumes the value of material things. Inflation and financial decline gobbles up the value of a portfolio. Remember Enron? But Jesus never experienced any form of corrosion in heaven...He had to visit earth to see such things.

Finally, in **v.19** He mentioned **thieves** who **break in and steal**. Ask Sadie Ferrier about this. Before they were finally caught, thieves broke into her house 3 times in the span of a week! They took her car, her cash, and anything else of value they could find. Her family and friends are so thankful that God protected her from harm, but she couldn't remain in that neighborhood and had to move. Today thieves are typically more sophisticated than those characters. They don't wear hoodies or break into our homes. They hack into our computers and charge accounts instead.

I'll never forget the Christmas when a clerk at Black and Decker told me my Discover card was maxed out. I immediately shot a glance at Peggy. The limit on our card was \$9,000! How could this be?...we knew our charges were nowhere near the limit. Talk about mixed emotions...maybe Peggy bought me a really big present and I just spoiled her big surprise. But a \$9,000 gift...we can't afford that! As it turned out, some brainiac used the numbers on my card to pay legal fees. He was caught the same day. I think he was in the same graduating class as the guy who chained the ATM machine at Citizen's Bank to the bumper of his pickup. As the would be thief made his getaway, the ATM remained in place...so did his rear bumper and license plate. (Case closed) Today thieves use mail, our telephones and the internet to solicit and deceive.

Slick salesmen show up at our doors with deals too good to refuse. I'm sure each of us has a story of how we were ripped off. We used to say, "If it isn't nailed down, somebody will steal it." Well, that's not true anymore. Today thieves will make off with siding nailed to your house / plumbing hanging from your floor joists / the catalytic converter in line with exhaust system of your car / and the air conditioners bolted to your roof. Yet Jesus never witnessed anything like this in heaven. He had to come to earth to meet thieves like Judas Iscariot. Remember how Judas protested when Mary anointed Jesus with expensive perfume? He snarled, "**Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.**" Then John added this...**He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. (Jn. 12:5, 6)** Judas proves thieves are usually liars and hypocrites too!

So our wise brother from heaven offers this advice, "*Don't treasure your earthly treasures. Don't love them / don't be devoted to them / don't serve them or let them control you / don't allow them to become gods in your life.*" Every earthly treasure is subject to devaluation and loss. So here's some valuable insider information. It's a lousy investment to amass treasures down here. Yet the lure of earthly treasure is strong. It's strong because material things are visible and tangible. Possessing things makes us feel significant and secure. But things will always let us down. They can't deliver what they advertize, they wear out and they can be lost in a heartbeat.

At this point we need to clarify something. Nowhere does the Bible condemn money or material possessions. What God condemns is the love of wealth. He warns those who treasure their earthly treasures. That's the negative side. The positive comes in **v.20 - But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.** Once again, rather than speculate, we ought to listen to the One who's been there. "At the end of life, we can't take it with us!" You've never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul trailer. Life is like the game of Monopoly. In Monopoly we use play money to buy land / houses / and hotels. We earn more money by the rent we collect. But at the end of the game, all the plastic pieces go back in the box. That's how it is with earthly treasure. It isn't a good investment. But treasure stored or laid up in heaven is permanent. It isn't subject to destruction by moth or rust. It isn't subject to loss by theft. It's as though Jesus said, "*You really ought to listen to me because I live there and know this to be true.*" The Apostle Peter echoed what he learned from Jesus in **I Pet. 1:3, 4 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you...**

The next obvious question is...how do we store up treasure in heaven? A narrow view says we lay up treasure in heaven by the money we contribute to Kingdom work. Giving is certainly one way to stockpile treasure in heaven, but it's only one way among many others. In **I Tim. 6:17-19** Paul wrote, **Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.** Not everyone has the gift or the ability to give money the way they'd like to. But this matter of sending treasure on ahead is given as a challenge to every believer. We store up treasures in heaven by following Christ and living the way God asks us to live. When we love our neighbor / when we honor God in our marriage / when we raise our children to know the Lord / when we guard our minds against wrong thoughts / when we do our work as to the Lord / when we share the Good News of Christ with the unsaved...in all of these ways we store up treasure in heaven.

According to **I Tim. 6:18**, every good deed we do in the name of Christ and for the glory of God counts as a deposit in heaven's treasury. Years ago, I was given a little card that reads "*Do as much good as you can for as many people as you can for as long as you can.*" That insider information is based on **I Tim. 6**.

But the deeper question in **vs.19-21** is this... **Where are your treasures?** This question is vital because **v.21** says, **where your treasure is, there your heart will be also**. More than anything else, God wants our hearts. The first and greatest command is to **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."** Jesus put His finger on the root problem that affected the religious people of that day when he said, **"their hearts are far from me."** The true barometer of our love for God is the value we place on earthly things. **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also**. So where are your treasures? How does what you've amassed down here compare with what you've amassed up there? Jesus then raised a 2nd issue that has to do with...

2. Vision - vs. 22, 23 – How is your vision? - "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

On the surface, values and vision may seem unrelated. What do values have to do with eyesight / lamps / light / and darkness? But think this through with me. Our vision or the way we perceive life's issues, has a tremendous impact on who we are and what we do. Jesus said Israel had a sensory problem. In **Matt. 13:15** He said, **For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'** Here Jesus was talking about spiritual deafness and blindness...a blindness that wasn't congenital or the result of disease or an accident. Their blindness was deliberate. The nation had stopped their ears and closed their eyes to God and His truth. They put God out of their government, classrooms and workplaces. Sound familiar? Like a callous, their hearts had grown insensitive to spiritual truth. Like a cataract, their vision of eternal reality was clouded.

Have you ever been so enamored with an item that it blinded you to everything else..even common sense? A guy who is deeply in love may say, "*Honey, I have eyes only for you.*" (by the way men...if you say that and mean it...you'll like the results) "For you only eyes" can happen in an automobile showroom or at a parade of homes. If you fix your gaze on a Maserati, you'll lose all respect for whatever you're driving. If you study the features of a luxury home, you'll hate your ranch. Am I right about that? What happened? Your eyesight was affected. Like a cataract or colored lens, every car you see is forced to pass through the image of a Maserati. Every inch of your 60's built home will be compared to the spaciousness of that palatial mansion. Or suppose you're a sports fanatic. We can be so absorbed with a game that we never think about the masses in the stadium who are lost and in need of our Savior. This sensory impairment and tendency to become infatuated with the wrong things is why Jesus urges us to open our eyes to see the lost around us. He said, **I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. - Jn. 4:35**

In these verses, Jesus spoke of **good eyes** and **bad eyes**. Good eyes let the light of God's truth shine in unhindered. Good eyes see things as God sees them. As a result, God's truth **fills their whole body with light**. In other words, God's truth affects everything about them. It affects their attitudes and their behavior because it shapes their values and affections. It determines where their treasures must be. **Bad eyes** obscure and block the light of God's truth. Like trying to see through smudged glasses, the light is filtered and diminished.

God's truth doesn't have that sharp edge that brings conviction that moves us to repentance and change. Important things are relegated to a lower shelf while unimportant things are given prominence.

Several years ago I visited Mary, the 96 year old mother of Dick Lucius. Mary was a devout Catholic believer. After some small talk I tried to read the tenth chapter of John's Gospel. For some reason, the text was blurry and difficult for me to see. Because I had memorized much of the chapter, I ad-libbed a little. I faked it. That afternoon Mary heard a Bible version no one had ever heard before. It was brand new. After I prayed, I apologized and said, "Mary, I'm so sorry, but I had a hard time seeing the verses I read a few moments ago." To that she calmly responded, "Of course you did, a lens in your glasses is missing." Sure enough, there it was in my shirt pocket.

So how does that story relate? I'm still working that out. But the question asked in these verses is simply this...**How is your vision?** How well do you see the things of God? Is your vision clouded by the things of this world or is it clear and unobstructed. Are there floaters that grab your attention when you ought to be concentrating in prayer or Bible Study? Is it hard to see lost souls around you because your vision is occupied with so many other things? Is the information pathway between your eyes and heart open and unhindered or is it crowded and closed? There's a verse in **Prov. 23:5** that urges us to be careful and discerning about things that can captivate our vision. **Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.**

One of the most fundamental problems in our society is the prevalence of a faulty world view. It's what Jesus meant by having **bad eyes**. Evolutionary theory has replaced the truth of Creation. People look at a night sky or beautiful flower with no thought of God. The random processes of time plus chance have replaced the glory of our Creator. Apart from the warm knowledge of the invisible God we're abandoned to cold materialism. Though eternity is written on the heart of every human being, most people live for the thrill of the moment. They proceed through life like the Hindu who is described as a "blind man in a dark room searching for a black cat that isn't there." Their eyes are faulty. Their vision is so blurred they can't see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So how is it with your vision? Your vision of what is true and real will shape your values and the things you treasure in life. And Jesus said, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The last point in this section has to do with devotion and service.

3. Service – vs. 24 – Whom do you serve? - "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Dr. Martin Loyd Jones tells the story of a farmer and his wife. They were delighted when their cow gave birth to twin calves. One calf was red and the other was white. Overjoyed at this double blessing, the farmer announced, *"We'll raise them both! Then when the calves are grown, we'll sell one, give the money to the Lord and keep the other."* That was his plan. But as time passed, it happened that the red cow died. The farmer came in from the barn and told his wife the sad news. He said, *"I'm sorry to break the news, but the Lord's cow died."* She asked, *"Which of the two died?"* He told her it was the red one. She said, *"I didn't know you planned to give the Lord the red calf."* To that he replied, *"Oh yes...It has always been in my mind to give the red one to the Lord."*

Here's a fact of life...the Lord's cow always seems to be the one that dies. Are you with me? The Lord always gets left-over's and the short end of the stick. Though God has given us everything, we debate whether our giving should be based on our net or gross earnings.

In light of all God has given, the more appropriate question should be, “How much should I keep for myself?”

Brian was a young man who grew up in our former church. He played the organ and was very intelligent. Before he left for college, we had a nice conversation over lunch. I asked him about his plans...what he intended to study and what he planned to do after college. He said he planned to study business and accounting. After college he said he hoped to land a good job in an accounting department where he could make lots of money. He told me, *“I want to become independently wealthy so I can serve in the church and give large sums of money to the Lord’s work.”* I was impressed. Well, Brian did earn an MBA and he did land a good job in the accounting department of major manufacturing company. After a few years, he was promoted to a position where he earned lots of money. With his earnings he bought a brand new Pontiac Trans Am and got a nice apartment. He met a lady at work and married her. She was very attractive but she wasn’t a believer. They bought a house and furnished it nicely. But attending church alone soon lost appeal for Brian. As time passed, we saw less and less of him.

After we left that church in 1983 and came here, we heard he had divorced. Brian is still a great guy and God may be using him today...I don’t know. But what happened? What sidelined his game plan? As a young man, his love for Christ was evident. His ambitions were noble...even biblical. What caused his values to change? God knows the truth but I think it can be explained this way...his eyesight became clouded with money and the things money can buy. It was further clouded by the lure of an attractive woman. Like a cataract, his inability to see things clearly as he once had, didn’t happen overnight. He went off to college with a plan to serve the Lord. But somehow his vision and values and changed along the way. The Lord’s calf died. In the parable of the soils, Jesus put it this way in **Mk.10:18, 19 - Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.** The Lord’s calf dies.

In **v.21** Jesus minced no words. He speaks to us in rigid, unmistakable terms. **“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”** There’s nothing confusing or difficult to understand in this verse. You don’t have to be smarter than a 5th grader to get it. Jesus said the devotion we have for God must have no competition or rivals. He must be first and foremost in our lives. He must be the Master we submit to and His voice the voice we obey. Jesus must be the one who fills our vision, determines our values, captures our affection of our hearts and directs our treasures. Our lives must be governed by the insider information He provides.

From 1965 to 1968 NBC ran a series called Run for Your Life. I wonder if any of us remember it. It came on after Rawhide and just before Flipper. The star of the show was Ben Gazzara who played Paul Bryan, a wealthy lawyer. His life changed dramatically the day his doctor told him he was sick and had not less than 9 months but not more than 18 months to live. (The network miraculously kept him going for 3 years!) Like George Bailey, in It’s a Wonderful Life and Ebenezer Scrooge in A Christmas Carol...Paul Bryan had an epiphany that changed his vision and completely re-shaped his values. He got a new attitude! Though God speaks many ways, what happened to him came as tough prognosis. Instead of loving money and using people, the wealthy attorney began to love people and use money. He determined to make each moment count. Though the screen writers and story line was more humanistic than Christian, the series caused us to think about the careless way we spend our lives. If the message to the unsaved was whispered...it should have been amplified to believers because this is exactly what Jesus taught us to do.

It's what Paul meant in **Eph. 5:15, 16** where he wrote, **Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.**

Mickey Holiday, was saved in my home church. Though raised in a Christian home, so much of his life had been wasted with alcohol, drugs, sex, and acid rock. Yet as the application of God's truth caused his vision to become clear and unclouded, he wrote these lines... *"Everywhere and always will be just enough to serve Jesus. Since He bought redemption for me, I will give Him my all. He was crucified...for my sins He died...Everywhere and always will be just enough to serve Him."* Mickey had an epiphany. The Lord opened his eyes to see things as He sees them. His values were completely overhauled and he traded masters. As the pastor of my home church patiently disciplined Mickey, he shared insider information with Him. His life was changed by the truth of God's Word and the invisible work of God's Spirit. That's what God wants to do for each of us. He wants to uncloud our vision / reorder our values / and gain our undivided devotion and service. Will you ask Him to do that for you?

On the back of this morning's sermon notes, I've provided some questions to help us apply this passage to our lives. Take some time to read them and see where you are in relation to the values, vision, and service.

Prayer

In our closing hymn, the songwriter recognized what Jesus meant by **good eyes**. Let's sing it together as Tom leads us. May this be the desire and prayer of our hearts.

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best thought by day or by night
Waking or sleeping Thy presence my light

Be thou my wisdom and Thou my true word
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, I, Thy true son
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one

Riches I heed not nor man's empty praise
Thou mine inheritance now and always
Thou and thou only first in my heart
High King of heaven my treasure Thou are

High King of heaven my victory won
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun
Heart of my own heart whatever befall
Still be my vision O Ruler of all