

Introduction

We just finished 2 Thessalonians, and in the final chapter, Paul, Silas, and Timothy were setting things in order. There were some in the church who were not working, and were not following the example that Paul and his team had set for them to follow. While with them, Paul had commanded, “If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.”

(2 Th 3:10) “For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.”

The example Paul, Silas, and Timothy had set was to work hard. In fact, they worked hard day and night so that they would not be a burden to anyone, and they ate their own bread.

(2 Th 3:7–8) “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, {8} nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;”

In setting things in order, they commanded the church not to associate with those who were living an unruly (out of order) life and not according to the tradition and example that they had set for the Thessalonians.

(2 Th 3:6) “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.”

We are looking at Matthew 6:33, which is an exhortation to seek first the kingdom of God. This is a great thing to reflect on in the beginning of a year. It comes out of Matthew 6:19-34, which is part of Jesus’ sermon on the mount. Since this verse is taken from a passage, I wanted to take time this morning to put this verse in proper context.

This passage is a good follow-up and balance to 2 Thessalonians 3. Jesus deals with four keys to having a proper view of wealth. The first key is to store up treasures in heaven, not here on earth. Second, He taught that we must have clear eyes. Our focus must be on God, not on wealth. Third, Jesus taught that we cannot serve two masters. We cannot serve both God and wealth. Fourth, we must trust God, rather than being anxious about our provisions. That does not mean that we do not work, as Paul commanded the Thessalonians to work and eat their own bread. But we are not to be anxious about our provisions. Jesus concluded that we are to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all of our necessary provisions will be added. Next week, we will take a close look at what it means to seek first the kingdom of God.

Seek First the Kingdom of God – Part 1

1. Our Treasures
2. Our Eyes
3. Our Master
4. Our Trust

(Mat 6:19-34) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. {20} "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; {21} for where your

treasure is, there will your heart be also. {22} "The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. {23} "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! {24} "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. {25} "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? {26} "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? {27} "And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span? {28} "And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, {29} yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. {30} "But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith? {31} "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' {32} "For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. {33} "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. {34} "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

1. Our Treasures

Jesus began by saying, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal." The treasures on earth are temporal, and they are also vulnerable to destruction or loss. Jesus gave three different vulnerabilities of earthly treasures. First, He said that moths can destroy them. Moths primarily feed on plants. Some moths feed on fungi and lichens, and other organic matter. Only two species feed on fabric, the common clothes moth and the case-bearing clothes moth. These clothes moths feed on natural fibers like cotton, velvet, silk, wool, fur, leather, and linen. Later on in the passage, Jesus speaks about clothing, so I believe that He is talking about the clothes moth. Some people have enormous amounts of money tied up in their wardrobes. It is one of their treasures on earth. The exhortation here is that we are not to store up treasures on earth that moths can destroy.

(Mt 6:19) "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal."

The second vulnerability to earthly treasures that Jesus mentioned is where rust can destroy. Obviously, this is speaking about things made of metal. Not all metals are subject to rust, but Jesus' point is that our treasures on earth are temporal and subject to destruction. The Greek word that is translated as rust is brosis (Strong's G1035). It comes from bibrosko (Strong's G977), which means eating or food. They were living in an agricultural economy, and their wealth was often stored up in barns. One scholar suggested that their stored crops were susceptible to being eaten by rats. This is probably a more accurate understanding than thinking in terms of rust. The main point is that the things that we treasure here on earth are subject to loss, while the things that we store in heaven are safe and will not be eaten or destroyed.

The third vulnerability that treasures on earth have is that they can be stolen by thieves. One year, when my parents lived in Ahwaz, Iran, they had some out-of-town guests visit and stay with them. Even with extra people in the house, thieves broke in that night and stole things. Many of their Persian carpets were stolen. It does not matter if it is jewelry, silver, gold, clothing,

carpets, cars, or some other earthly treasure, they are vulnerable to being stolen. I believe the three vulnerabilities are just examples. If our treasure is in the stock market, it is vulnerable to market corrections, crashes, or downgrades. If our treasure is in real estate, they are also vulnerable to many things, such as tenant damage, which the insurance companies do not always pay. If our treasure is in old cars, a fire could wipe out all the treasures in a hurry. Jesus' point is that the treasures on earth are temporal and vulnerable to being destroyed or stolen.

Jesus continued by telling us where we are to store up treasures, "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal." The treasures we store up in heaven are safe and secure. They are not vulnerable to destruction or loss.

(Mt 6:20) "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;"

Sometimes we think of putting earthly treasures and investing them into heavenly treasures. If that were so, then only the wealthy on earth could store up treasures in heaven. But it does not work that way; there are many ways to store up treasures in heaven. Prior to this Jesus has been talking about rewards. In Matthew 6:1, he spoke about practicing our righteousness. If we practice righteousness to be noticed by men, like the Pharisees, we have no reward, but if we live righteous lives to be noticed by God, we have a reward from the Father who is in heaven. All of us, from the poorest to the wealthiest, are called to live righteous lives, and we can all earn rewards in heavens.

(Mt 6:1) "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven."

In Matthew 6:2-4, Jesus spoke about giving to the poor. We are not to give to the poor to be noticed by men, but we are to give to the poor without the left hand knowing what the right hand is doing. Our Father sees what is done in secret and will reward us. Anyone can give to the poor. Sometimes it might be as simple as giving a water bottle on a hot summer day. We are storing up treasures in heaven.

(Mt 6:3-4) "But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, {4} so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you."

In Matthew 5-6, Jesus spoke about praying. We are not to pray to be noticed by men, but we are to go into our inner room, close our door, and pray to the Father who is in secret, and He will reward us. We could get rewards on earth, but I believe many of these rewards will be in heaven. We can all store up treasures in heaven simply by lifting up others in our private prayers.

(Mt 6:6) "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you."

In Matthew 6:16-18, Jesus spoke about fasting. Again, our fasting should not be done to be noticed by men, but should be done in such a way that does not draw attention to ourselves. We should anoint our head and wash our face so that people do not know that we are fasting. Our Father who is in secret sees what is done in secret and will reward us. All of us can earn rewards in heaven by fasting. Living uprightly, giving to the poor, praying, and fasting, all done unto the Lord, who sees in secret, are ways we can store up treasures in heaven.

(Mt 6:17–18) “But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face {18} so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.”

Then, Jesus makes a very important point, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Aside from the vulnerability of losing it, the most significant thing is that our heart is going to be where our treasure is. If we treasure things on earth, our heart will be focused on earthly things. Jesus wants our hearts to be focused on the kingdom of heaven. If we are going to seek first the kingdom of God, our hearts cannot be set on storing up treasures on earth.

(Mt 6:21) “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The first question we must ask ourselves is, "where are my treasures?" Am I laying up treasures on earth, or am I laying up eternal treasures? If we want to seek God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, God must be our treasure. Our treasure has to be in heaven. If our treasure is here on earth, we will not be able to seek Him with all our heart. How do we know where our treasure is? Many have said that you can tell where a man's heart is by looking at his checkbook and his Day-Timer. Where does he spend his money and time? That is where his treasure is.

2. Our Eyes

The second key that Jesus taught is that we must have clear eyes. He said “the eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.” On the other hand, “If your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great the darkness.”

(Mt 6:22–23) “The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. {23} “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

Jesus is speaking about our spiritual vision. If our eyes are set on the kingdom of God, we will see clearly; our lives will be full of light. The eyes that are set on godly things will have spiritual sight. If our eyes are bad, or evil, and are set on earthly treasures and things, we will not see clearly, and there will be spiritual darkness. In order to see clearly, our eyes must be set on the right things.

In 1983, I traveled to the Greater Hartford Open by myself, and I chose to stay with private housing. There are a number of people that sign up to house golfers, and I was very blessed by who I was able to stay with. A man named John lived on the 18th hole at Wethersfield Golf Club, where the tour event used to be held. He had three sons, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. I played well that week and was in contention to win with just a few holes to play. While I was there that week, I was meditating on Proverbs 7:1-2, “Keep my commandments and live, and my teaching as the apple of your eye.” As I reflected on that, I realized that the apple of your eye is your pupil. I researched the function of the pupil, and discovered that it opens and closes to allow the proper amount of light into our eyes so that we can see. In the same way that our pupil works, God’s word is what brings light into our lives. If we do not treasure and keep God’s commands, our lives will be full of darkness. Jesus said our eyes are the lamp of the body, and if our eyes are clear, our whole body will be full of light. If our eye is bad your whole body will be full of darkness. We must have clear eyes so that we walk in light, not darkness.

(Pr 7:1–2) “My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments within you. {2} Keep my commandments and live, and my teaching as the apple of your eye.”

If you want to see a nation in darkness, take away God’s word from the courts, schools, and other places. It is His commands that bring light to a nation. If you want to see a person walk in darkness, stop reading and studying God’s word; darkness will come into your life. We need our eyes to allow light into our lives, and that light is God’s word.

Jesus said if our eye is clear. The Greek word that is translated as clear is haplous, which means folded together into one. The KJV correctly translates this, "if therefore thine eye be single." We cannot have an eye set on the world and an eye set on God's kingdom. Our vision must be single. We must be singularly focused on the kingdom of God. There are many people who are trying to have it both ways. They are on the fence with one leg in the world and one leg in the church. They are storing up treasures on earth, but they also going to church and trying to live as good people. It does not work that way; we have to have single vision, and it needs to be on the kingdom of God. This is a perfect tie-in to the third point that Jesus shares; we can only have one master.

3. Our Master

Jesus’ third key is that we cannot serve two masters. We cannot serve both God and wealth. He said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” In the same way that we have to have single vision, focused on the kingdom of God, we must have only one master, the Lord Jesus Christ. There are those that think they can handle both wealth and God, but Jesus said that you cannot serve two masters. We must decide if we are going to serve God or money, for we cannot do both.

(Mt 6:24) “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

When I prayed to receive Christ at the beginning of my sophomore year in college, and confessed Jesus as Lord, I did not realize at that time that I had another master. For many years I had been working hard at my golf; my goal was to play on the PGA Tour. I worked out physically, and I practiced all the time. My decisions about everything were based on how this would impact my goal of playing golf. When we become a Christian, old things pass away and new things come. We are new creations, but it takes some time for God to deal with all the things in our lives. He justifies us and declares us righteous, but it takes time for us to grow, mature, and become complete in Christ. In my second year as a believer, God dealt with me about golf. He said I could not have two masters. Was I going to have golf as my master or have Him as my master? That was the choice He gave me that day. I battled over the decision, and finally gave my golf over to Him. I told Him that I would serve Him and only Him from that day forward. If He took away my golf, I would be okay with it. God did not take away my golf, and He allowed me to qualify for the PGA Tour at the age of twenty-one, becoming the youngest player on the tour at that time. In 1995, God did tell me that 1996 would be my last year playing golf. I had won in 1995, and we thought we would be playing golf on the tour and then the senior. But God had other plans for me. He told me that He wanted me to plant a church, and He gave me the vision for the church. It was not a difficult decision for me to make, because that decision had been made in college many years ago when I took golf off the throne of my life and made Jesus Lord and master of every area of my life.

A few years ago, when we were the Connection Church of Albuquerque, we had Danny Daniels come and minister to our congregation. After the service, he and I were fellowshiping in the parking lot, and he told me his testimony. Before being saved, he was a well-known guitarist in the rock music world. Shortly after receiving Christ, the Lord met with him and told him to give Him his guitar. His guitar was his life, his passion, his world, and his identity. Danny asked the Lord why, and He was told that you cannot have two masters; it is your guitar or Me. Danny gave the guitar to the Lord and said that he wanted to serve Christ. After he did that, the Lord handed him back his guitar and told him that he was to use his music to serve God. And God did allow Danny to use his musical gifts to build God's kingdom. He became John Wimber's worship leader and led at all John's conferences around the world. God's presence was ushered into these meetings and thousands of people were healed, delivered, and saved. Danny became an internationally known as songwriter, worship leader, and educator. He published over a hundred songs, and five albums. We sometimes sing, "You are the Vine," which is one of his songs. Danny's life changed when he gave his guitar to the Lord, and made Jesus his Master.

One of the things that can be difficult for Christians is to work for an unbeliever, whose god is wealth. I spent seven years working as the manager of a business, where the owner was only concerned about making money. He asked our staff to lie to customers, and would overbook reservations, so that when people came out, their reservation was not honored. We had a lot of unhappy customers. I wanted to provide an excellent experience for our customers, which leads to repeat business. It tore me up on the inside to have my name attached to this business. I was serving one master, and the owner was serving another master. Since he was the owner of the business, those that worked there had to follow his rules, and that was difficult for me. In the same way, none of us can serve two masters; we will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other.

Do you love serving God? Are you enthusiastic about serving God? Are you devoted to serving God? Is it a priority in your life? Or, are you devoted to business and give God your left-overs? Is your identity in Christ or in what you do? Are you torn between decisions about what to do, or is it easy to follow Christ's instructions to you? We must submit our lives, and everything in our lives to the Lordship of Christ.

I love what Joshua said to the people of Israel. "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." That is something that all of us must choose, because we can't serve two masters. Who are we going to serve?

(Jos 24:15) "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

4. Our Trust

The fourth key that Jesus taught is that we must trust Him. He uses the word worry five times. He tells us not to worry or be anxious over our life. Next, He tells us not to worry about our clothing. Finally, He tells us not to worry over our food and drink.

In 1990, we were traveling from Springfield, Missouri to Texarkana, Arkansas. Somewhere in Oklahoma I had a revelation about this passage. I had been anxious about our finances. God showed me that anxiety was an indication that my trust was in my bank account instead of being in God. I mentioned to Karen, who was driving our fifteen passenger van, that in the Old Testament, when God showed them something like this, they would build an altar and worship the Lord. We did not pull off the highway and do that, but in my heart, I was repenting for not trusting in God's provision, and looking only at my own resources. I finished in the top ten that week and made a decent paycheck, and I thanked God for His provision for our family.

Jesus gives several examples to help us trust God. The first illustration is the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap, but God feeds them. He then adds a question, "Are you not worth much more than they?" Man has a responsibility to work; we saw that very clearly in 2 Thessalonians 3. The birds do not sit in their nests waiting for God to drop worms and crickets into their mouths. The mother and father birds work from sun-up to sun-down gathering God's provision for them. Jesus' point is that God feeds them. The birds have responsibility, but God cares for them and feeds them.

(Mt 6:26) "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"

The second illustration Jesus uses is about our life span. He said that worry cannot add a single hour to our life span. Both the ESV and NASB translate it that way. The Greek word that is translated as an hour is *pechys* (Strong's G4083), which means a cubit. The KJV translates it as cubit, but it says, "which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" I believe the ESV and NASB have the right understanding, even though it is not an exact translation. A cubit is about eighteen inches. Worry and anxiety will not increase our timeline. In fact, Charles Mayo, one of the founders of the Mayo Clinic said this about worry and anxiety. "It effects circulation, the heart rate, the glands, the nervous system." He said, "I have never known of a man to die of overwork, but many die of worry." That's right. You can worry yourself to death but you'll never worry yourself into longer life." That is what Jesus said; you cannot add eighteen inches to your life span by being anxious.

(Mt 6:27) "And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life?"

The next illustration that Jesus uses is about our clothing. He tells about how the beauty of the lilies of the field. Even though they did not toil and spin, King Solomon in his prime, could not match the lilies of the field. The encouragement for us is to trust God for our food, clothing, and all of our needs. Again, the point of the illustration is not that we do not need to toil, but that we should trust God to provide for our clothing and other needs. We should not be worried, anxious, or stressed over our clothing and other needs.

(Mt 6:28–29) "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, {29} yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these."

The fourth illustration is about the grass of the field. He says it is alive today and thrown into the furnace the next day. He makes it clear that God is in charge of arraying the grass, which is very temporal. He encourages them again that He will do far more than this for them. "If God so clothes the grass of the field, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!" There is a contrast between anxiety and faith. When we are worried and anxious, we are not walking in

faith. When we walk in faith, we will not be full of anxiety. Again, anxiety and worry are indicators of whether we are trusting God or not.

(Mt 6:30) “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith!”

Jesus then exhorts us not to worry about what we will eat, drink, or wear. God does not want you and I to be worriers; He wants us to be full of faith and to trust Him for our needs. He goes on to say that the Gentiles eagerly seek these material possessions. The use of the word Gentiles implies those without a relationship with God the Father. At that time, they were excluded from the kingdom. God’s plan was that all nations would be blessed through Abraham. God’s plan was to include the Gentiles, but at this time, they were those without God. We would probably use the word unbelievers or world to convey the same thought.

(Mt 6:31–32) “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ {32} “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”

Once we have come into a relationship with God the Father, we are not to be anxious about these things. We are not to seek after these things. We are to trust our Heavenly Father, because He knows that we need all these things. Sometimes, I am reluctant to spend time asking God for the things that I am needing, because He already knows that I need them. However, in the Lord’s prayer, He taught the disciples to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” So, even though He already knows the things that you and I need, we should ask Him to provide those things. It honors Him for us to trust Him for all our needs.

(Mt 6:11) “Give us this day our daily bread.”

I have told of how I asked the Lord for an oak tree, and a cocktail tree, and how God provided these things. They were not big things, and they were not even needs that our family had; they were just some desires of my heart. God knows our thoughts, and He knows our hearts, and He is honored that we would come to Him with all of our needs and desires.

Jesus then says, “but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.” This is a promise. This is a promise that God will provide for His children. But, it is a conditional promise. When we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, all these things will be added to us. Our food, clothing, and shelter will be provided. He did not say that He would give us jet planes, and make us millionaires if we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. None of the apostles died with lots of treasures on earth. Their treasures were in heaven where moths and rust would not destroy, and where thieves could not break in and steal. However, all their needs were met, and this is what God promises to all of us.

Conclusion and Applications

In conclusion, we must first have the right treasury. Our treasure must be in heaven, because our hearts are going to be where our treasure is. We can all store up treasures in heaven, and there are many ways to store up treasures in heaven, not just in giving to the Lord. Living a righteous life before the Lord, giving to the poor, praying and fasting in secret, are just some of the ways that Jesus said we could earn rewards.

Second, we must have proper vision. We must have single vision. We cannot have an eye on the world and an eye on God. If our eyes are set on evil, or on the things of earth, we will be spiritually blind and full of darkness. If our eyes are set on the kingdom of God, we will be full of light and will be able to see clearly.

Third, we must have only one master. We cannot serve God and mammon. Like Joshua, we must choose to serve the Lord.

Fourth, we cannot be anxious about our provision. Anxiety reveals a lack of trust. We must trust God for our provision. The final exhortation that Jesus gives is that we are to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these other things will be added.

Now that we have the context for the passage, we will be taking a closer look at what it means to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Closing Prayer

Father God, we want to seek first your kingdom and your righteousness. I pray that we will store up our treasures in heaven, because we want our hearts to be set on the kingdom of God. I pray that our eyes will be clear, and that we will set our eyes on things above, not on the things of the earth. We want to see clearly and we want our lives to be full of light. I pray that we will set You on the throne of our hearts, and that You will be our only Lord and Master. I pray that we will trust You for all of our provision. Help us to learn from the birds, grass, and flowers that You will always provide for us. Help us not to be anxious, but to be full of faith for Your provision. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Seek First the Kingdom of God – Part 1

Introduction (2 Th 3:6-10, Mt 6:19-34)

1. Our Treasures (Mt 6:19-21, 6:1-18)

- Moths
- Rust (eaten)
- Thieves

2. Our Eyes (Mt 6:22–23, Pr 7:1–2)

3. Our Master (Mt 6:24, Jos 24:15)

4. Our Trust (Mt 6:26-34, 6:11)

- Birds
- Lifespan
- Clothing
- Grass

Conclusion and Applications