

Living And Giving At A Higher Level

As Christians we have no need to worry about our lives, food, personal items, clothing or anything else, but we do need to focus on the Lord and accept His provision for us. He is Jehovah-jirah, our provider. (Genesis 22:14; The Lord will provide)

We read in Matthew 6:19 to 21, 'Do not gather and store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth, rust and worm consume and destroy and where thieves break through and steal; but gather up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth nor rust nor worm can destroy and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is; there will your heart be also'. Verses 24 & 25: 'No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon (that means deceitful riches, money, possessions or whatever else is trusted in). Therefore I tell you, stop being anxious about your life'. Verse 31a: 'Therefore do not worry'. Verses 32b & 33: 'Your heavenly Father knows well that you need them all, but seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all these things will be given to you'.

In some countries, success is measured by what we have in the way of material possessions, but if you travel to a poor nation you would get a very different perspective on things. Those people survive without a refrigerator or television, and in some cases, without sufficient food or water. We, in the western nations are extremely wealthy in comparison.

The above words of Jesus speak to us and search our hearts. How focused on 'things' are we? Jesus said, 'Don't store up treasure on earth'. To store up really means to accumulate, amass or to hoard. We must not hoard nor have material things just for the purpose of having them, or possessing 'things'. People hoard for no other reason than just to have them, whether they want to use them or not. Look at so called 'collectors'. That is nothing but greed. Don't cling to things you don't need and don't hoard; don't stockpile. Don't keep things you don't use, but give them to someone who can use them. Jesus brought it to our attention when He said, 'Where your treasure is; there will your heart be also'.

Jesus was saying, 'Don't set your heart on accumulating things or treasures'. If your heart is set on an abundance of possessions, your whole life will be dominated by these things. That in turn will take the focus off the Lord and onto your possessions, and will dominate your thinking, interest and priority. If these possessions are your priority, then necessarily other things will come in at second place. That may include the Lord or those closest to you. The sad truth is, accumulated things will take over your life and control you; enslave you. The possessions become the first priority. Jesus said no one can serve two masters. Don't set your heart on accumulated treasures or you will be dominated by that desire. The things that you value most in life will determine what you will do in life.

We may ask; why not? Why shouldn't we accumulate things? Because earthly treasures can enslave you, that's why. Many people are controlled by the accumulation of wealth. You can't be free, if all you are doing is worrying about 'things'. What you would be focusing on, is earthly treasures which are temporary. Those things are not permanent and can be moth eaten, become rusty or stolen. They are insecure, perishable and temporary, and if your life is focused on the accumulation of possessions then your whole life is based on insecurity, because none of those things are secure in themselves. Eventually, they will all end up rotting away, being stolen or lost in some way.

If you are focused on possessions, you can't be focused on the things of God which really matter. Earthly treasures can deprive you of spiritual treasure; of things that are best, and can actually take you away from God if you are not careful. Earthly prosperity can deprive you of spiritual life. See in Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25 and Luke 18:25, where Jesus said it is easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. For this to be recorded three times, it must be important.

In Proverbs 30:8 & 9 we see the answer. 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny You'.

In the New Testament we see how Judas - who became angry when Mary anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume because he perceived it to be a waste of money – then in spite, sold Jesus out for thirty pieces of silver. (See Matthew 26:15, Mark 14:3 and John 12:3).

Acts 5:1 to 10 tells us about Ananias and his wife Sapphira, who were reluctant to give up some of their possessions and lied, not only to the apostles, but also to God, and as a result they fell down dead. They loved their possessions too much.

To set your heart on mere possessions, is to live your life at a lower level than God intended us to live. Money is not the root of evil; it is the love of money that is. Riches can not only stop a person entering into the Kingdom of God as we have just read, (in the text about the camel etc) but it can cause people to lose their salvation. We can see this in 1 Timothy 6:7 to 10; 'For we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world. If we have food and clothing we shall be content, but those who crave to be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin. For the love of money is a root of all evils. It is through this craving that some have been led astray and have wandered from the faith'.

What should we do? Should we turn away from life and give up working and somehow survive; not paying our way in life? No, we should not. Does God want us to be anxious about things? No, He does not. We are not to be anxious about attaining 'things' nor about some items we want but may not have. That is not what Jesus meant in Matthew 6. He said, 'Do not worry'. Possessions should never be our primary concern. We all need some things and it is nice to have them, but do not hoard them. They are not to dominate your life.

There is a positive to all this. Jesus said 'do' store up for yourselves, treasures in heaven. Set your heart on accumulating heavenly treasures. Why is Jesus saying this? Firstly; because he wants you to be free from the anxiety of chasing earthly things. Heavenly treasures don't tie you down. It's the way of liberty. Jesus wants us to have Spiritual treasure. We must have our hearts set on God and the things of God and eternal treasures. Secondly; heavenly treasure is permanent. It can't be taken from us. It will last forever. It is imperishable. Spiritual treasure will enhance life. It will enrich you as a person and it will enrich the lives of other people; and most importantly, it will bring pleasure to God. God wants us to live at a higher level. The scriptures we have read are about gain; positiveness. See the contrast; gain or loss; temporary or permanent; freedom or slavery. What Jesus was suggesting, was to accumulate heavenly treasures as much as we can. Set your heart on the things that are real, the things that will last, that will bless, things of the Kingdom; spiritual treasures.

What are these spiritual treasures? They are non material and permanent. They are deeds of kindness. (See the story about the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30 to 35). Later in the book of Luke 12:33 it says, 'Sell what you possess and give to the poor'.

Mark 10:21 says, 'Go sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven'.

In 1 Timothy 6:17 to 19 we read, 'As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be proud, arrogant and contemptuous of others - nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches, but on God - Who richly provides us with everything. Charge them to do good; to be rich in good works; to be liberal and generous of heart. In this way, laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may grasp that which is life indeed'.

What is greedily hoarded will be lost, and what is shared will be gained as heavenly treasures. Proverbs 14:21b says, 'Happy (blessed and fortunate) is he who is kind and merciful to the poor'.

To give to the poor is giving at a higher level. The early church was extremely good at acts of kindness and sharing. The best antidote for materialism is giving. When you depart from this life it will not be possible to take anything with you, so you must have the treasures sent before you. The only thing that will go with you to heaven is your character. The more you give on earth, the more treasures you will have in heaven. Jesus said we must do for others as He did for us. In Matthew 11:29, Jesus said, 'Learn of Me' ... and you will find rest for your souls,' which means to learn to be like Him and He will give you peace.

Living at a higher level enhances life. Let your actions bring joy and wellbeing through deeds of kindness. Earthly treasures can indeed be used to produce heavenly treasures. Use your money to bless others; buy new clothes for a poor family; buy food for widows; use your car to give someone a lift to church, to a doctor or shopping; put your money into Godly ministries. See the example of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:2 to 10. He had a complete change of heart and honoured God by giving half of his goods to the poor. Let God be honoured by you, sharing what you have.

If you want the best financial advice that is available, read the Bible. Don't hoard; share. Don't be afraid to share. Remember; everything you own comes from God in the first place, so share what God has blessed you with. He is the owner of everything. God owns your possessions, your money and even you. He owns you; you have been bought with a price. Read 1 Corinthians 6:20; 'You were bought with a price – purchased with Jesus blood, paid for and made His own - so then honour God and bring glory to Him in your body'.

Your possessions have simply been entrusted to you and you need to manage them well. God is the provider of everything. He gave us the ability to work and earn money and we need to share in the abundance of His provision. Deuteronomy 8:17 & 18 says, 'And beware lest you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth. But earnestly remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to gain wealth'.

We are merely stewards of God's provision. Provisions are not really ours, but gifts from God. He gives us what we need and He expects us to be good stewards. You need to ask God how to spend the money He has given you. In truth, the real question is not what to spend the money on, but how is your heart before God? What is your heart set on? Are you living and giving at a higher plain? Set your heart on accumulating heavenly treasures. We need live to please God.

Amen and God bless you.

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