

*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. – Matt 6:19-21*

Our main business in life is to understand the words Jesus spoke. When we understand his words, we will be on the way to understanding Jesus himself. And to receive Jesus is to receive the Father, and to have true life within us. And true life, abundant life, the life God intended for us, is our main business in life.

Our lives are lived through Jesus, and his words represent himself. Anything we say which is true, is nevertheless human truth. But the Word of truth is Jesus. How much more does Jesus present to God a life lived with the whole heart, with strength, rejoicing, beauty and light. Jesus came to earth to show us exactly what he made us for, so that we might see the truth in him and cry out for God. In the highest sense of all, God is The Truth. He understands, lives, does and creates The Truth. Jesus said “I am the truth”, and the Word of truth can be understood by those who are like him. Let us try to understand him.

There is no doubt that Jesus would sometimes have spoken differently if he had come to Englishmen instead of to Jews. But the lessons he gave would have been the same. Even when people questioned him about what he said, his reply contained the main principle of what he said, and that principle doesn't change. Now that we have centuries of Christian experience, it should be easier for us to understand what he said than it was for those who heard him.

So now I ask this: In the statement “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”, what exactly is the power of the word “For”? At first glance, the reason it's there isn't at all obvious. It must be searched for, both because of its depth and also because of its simplicity. But once we understand why the “for” has been added, there's nothing more to be said, but everything to be done. This is because it is so complete and operates on the conscience so well.

“Why shouldn't we lay up treasures for ourselves on earth?”

“Because they'll wear out or get stolen.”

“And so we'll lose them!”

“Yes. You'll lose them one way or another.”

“Does Jesus mean that the reason we shouldn't lay up treasures on earth is because we'll lose them?”

“No. He adds a 'For'. 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'”

“Well, it makes sense that the heart will be where the treasure is; but what does that have to do with your argument?”

This is the point: anything that's in the same place as the treasure will suffer the same consequence as the treasure. If the treasure is moth-eaten and rusted, then the heart will also be moth-eaten and rusted. Many men and women, who look good externally, are going through life with their hearts rusty and moth-eaten.

“But surely this is only a figure of speech?!”

True. It is a figure of speech. But ask yourself this: is the reality intended by the figure of speech, more or less than the figure of speech? Don't the words “rust and moth” imply more than disease only? And don't the words “the heart” imply more than merely the physical heart? Don't they imply a deeper heart, the true self, your true self? Don't they imply the real you, who suffers not just pain, but misery? Don't they imply the real you, whose ultimate destiny is not merely comfort nor enjoyment, but blessedness, and even ecstasy? This is the heart that God sees, even if you never knew it existed.

And when this true heart is ravaged by metaphorical moth and figurative rust, it sends pain to your physical heart. This true heart is the heart that God sees. And if God sees a heart eaten away by worry, with holes from ambition and greed, then that is what your heart is; for God sees everything exactly as it really is. There will come a day when you will be made to see, and even feel your heart exactly as God sees it. Then you will realise that your true heart, that heart riddled with disease and so easily corrupted, is indeed, the very epicentre of your being.

I should make clear that this truth about the true heart doesn't apply just to those people who live their lives in the pursuit and worship of money. It applies just the same to any people who in any way whatsoever, worship what will not last. These are the people who are more interested in the praise of men than the praise of God; who want the world to see how rich, how cultural, how smart, how powerful, how artistic and clever they are. In so doing, they store up for themselves the treasured opinions of others in an earthly storehouse.

And it's not only to people such as this that these words speak great warning. It applies to any people who seek pleasure as an end in itself from what their senses provide, whether these things are legal or not. The pain is not because these pleasures are false pleasures, like the sleight-of-hand used in magic; on the contrary, they are really and truly pleasures. Neither is the pain because these pleasures pass away and leave behind only growing disappointment; that in itself is a good thing.

No, the pain lies in this: that person who is immortal, infinite, and created in the image of the everlasting God is clothed with something which is wearing out and corrupting. Even worse, the person clings to these things as if they were good; and keeps clinging until he is infected and penetrated through with their diseases. And the effect these diseases have on the person is far more terrible, because the diseases are of a different kind. That which is simply decay in the physical becomes utterly vile and disgusting in the spiritual. That which would cause the physical to be thrown on the rubbish pile, causes the spiritual to be thrown into outer darkness. In the physical, this decay would cause the person to crawl into some underground hiding place. But in the spiritual, without decay, the person is clothed with

clothing which enables him to run through the fields, roam the earth, even fly high into the air. And all of this running and roaming and flying would give the person more and more strength, enabling him to fly higher and farther. Eventually, this person would be clothed so well that he would be able, as one born of God, to stand in the very presence of his Father in Heaven. And that's where the pain lies: the person chooses these fleeting pleasures instead of communion with God.

The person whose heart is sound because it's in the same place as heaven's treasures may well be tempted by the devil. But that person will first be led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

THE END

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