

**CONTEXT FOR YOU**

Over the next several weeks, we will continue to go over the Sermon on the Mount, where we see Jesus calling his followers to deeper transformation when it comes to following Him. Last week, we heard Jesus teach about sin beginning in the heart. This week, we will go a step further and talk about the object of a lot of our heart issue: money/possessions.

It’s estimated that Americans hear or see about 5000 ads per day. When your parents were your age, the number was maybe 500 at most. The message encouraging us to buy more, want more, only be content with more… is absolutely everywhere. It’s in the streaming services we use, on the backs of receipts, all over social media feeds, signs, billboards, stadiums, marketing that targets our eyes and attention, and even in the way news and captions are worded. Think of the most creative ad you’ve seen recently. Our brains are clogged with input that demands our attention—our service. All this input shapes the way we think and builds a picture of what we “should” be in our minds.

**Most of us would say we serve Christ rather than money or what the world wants us to have, but in a world of social media, influencers, and constant attention-seeking, it’s easy to get caught up in the result of money: consumerism. Thinking this way can change our hearts for the worse, and Jesus says it is impossible to serve Him and money at the same time.**

Jesus challenges His followers (then and now) in this passage to take stock of where their attention is, and to pay attention to what is driving their decisions.

**OPEN THE CONVERSATION / intro questions**

**What is the most annoying ad you see often? It could be on TV, Social Media, YouTube, etc. What makes it annoying? What are they trying to show you? –** Our culture constantly tells us we need more, aren’t good enough, or need to change to be accepted. This is how ads work – they make us want something we don’t need! Jesus’ teaching today will show us that true life is much different than this.

**What is the silliest or most random thing you’ve ever spent money on? Did you regret it?** – As Jesus teaches today, how we view our money/wealth/status indicates where our heart is.

***READ Matthew 6:19-24***

1. **Is it easy or hard to avoid an attitude of “always needing more” in today’s world? Why or why not?**
2. **The world tells us we always need more worldly treasure – popularity, new clothes, money, influence. Why should our priorities be different as believers? How might someone do this?**
3. **What does it mean to store up treasure in heaven? What kind of treasure is it?**
4. **How do the things we value (money, status, new things) reveal the state of our hearts? (vs. 22-23) How can we tell what we value the most? (This is different from what we believe—we DO the things we value.)**
5. **How have you experienced the truth that we can’t serve both God and money? What do you think Jesus meant by saying, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”?**
6. **What things does money falsely promise to give people (think security, peace, being “cool” etc)? How is what Jesus teaches better than that?**

**WRAP UP**

**What is one thing in this lesson that really stood out to you, and how can you apply it to your life? What is one “I Will” Statement for everyone in the group?**

*Write Down “I Will” Statements and then ask for any prayer requests and pray for one another.*

**EXTENDED CUT**

The teaching of Jesus we will look at today is on money. Jesus taught that we shouldn’t be worried about accumulating money (or the things money can buy), and status (what people think of us). These things may make our own lives easier temporarily, but in the long run, it doesn’t matter. This life and the things we accumulate in it are temporary, but treasures in heaven are eternal (like ways we love and spend time with God, the quality of our relationship with Him, and people we disciple, etc.) Jesus gave a strong challenge to the people then and to us now by pointing out clearly that we can’t prioritize both money and God One will be our ultimate master, and what we choose to prioritize shines a light on the state of our hearts.

In Middle Eastern culture, generous hospitality was and still is highly valued. A person who has a “good eye” is generous, but someone with a “bad eye” is stingy. Jesus teaching presents an important question: Where are we training our eyes? When our eyes are trained on Jesus, we are generous, but when our eyes are trained on earthly prizes, we often adopt stingy attitudes and get ourselves into situations where we are unable to be as generous.

Notice Jesus didn’t say money is bad. He didn’t say that we shouldn’t make money. Money is a tool that can be used for good or evil. The stewarding of money is an important spiritual discipline and the way God primarily used to fund the work of taking care of His people and spreading the gospel around the world. But this first takes surrender and a prioritization of Christlike living. Beware—the enemy likes to takes God’s good gifts or even morally neutral things like money and present them as worthy of worship. Only God is worthy of our worship.