

February 18, 2007

“Buried Treasure” [based on *The Treasure Principle* by Randy Alcorn]

Matt 6:19-21 (NLT)

[Click here for the notes that were in the bulletin](#)

"Don't store up treasures here on earth, where they can be eaten by moths and get rusty, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where they will never become moth-eaten or rusty and where they will be safe from thieves. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be.

Today I want to talk to you about a buried treasure. Buried treasure makes me think of pirates...have you ever heard my pirate joke?

A seaman meets a pirate, and they take turns to tell their adventures on the seas. The seaman notes that the pirate has a peg leg, hook, and an eye patch. Curious, the seaman asks "So, how did you end up with the peg-leg?"

The pirate replies "I was swept overboard into a school of sharks. Just as my men were pulling me out, a shark bit my leg off".

"Wow!" said the seaman. "What about the hook"?

"Well...", replied the pirate, "We were boarding an enemy ship and were battling the other sailors with swords. One of the enemy cut my hand clean off."

"Incredible!" remarked the seaman. "How did you get the eye patch"?

"A seagull dropping fell into my eye", replied the pirate.

"You lost your eye to a seagull dropping?" the sailor asked.

"Well..." said the pirate, "That was my first day with the hook."

I want to share a treasure principle with you today from our text, but first I want to tell a story based on Matt 13:44 (NLT), where Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field--and to get the treasure, too!"

Imagine if you will a man in the first century walking alone on a hot afternoon with his staff in hand. He takes a short-cut through another person's property. In those days owners didn't mind people doing that. It is a big field and the land is uneven. He uses his staff to help him keep his balance in the uneven field. Suddenly, as he puts his staff into the ground, he hears a "thunk!" His staff hits something below the ground and it is not a rock. His curiosity gets to him and he begins digging. A few minutes later he discovers a box. He pulls it out of the ground, opens it, and to his amazement it is filled with gold coins and jewelry of precious metals. The treasure is more valuable than he can even imagine. He can tell by the age of the box and the dates on the coins that the box had been hidden there for many years. Either a thief or a wealthy man must have buried the treasure, perhaps died suddenly, leaving the secret of the treasure and its location to die with him. Surely the current property owner had no clue that the treasure

was there, he would not have left it in a field that he knew many travelers used as a short cut.

The traveler closes the box, buries it once again, and marks the spot so he can find it again. Though he had been on his way to the city on business, now he turns around and heads back home. His whole attitude has changed, rather than dragging himself along in the hot sun, he is now joyfully smiling and skipping like a little boy. He is thinking, “This is incredible, it’s unbelievable.” He begins planning as he thinks, “I’ve got to have that treasure.” But he doesn’t want to just take it – that would be stealing. He thinks, “whoever owns the field, would own what’s in the field.” He has to buy the field. How will he ever afford to buy it? He thinks, “I will sell everything I own, my house, my property, my business, my tools, my oxen,” “yes”, he reasons, “If I sell everything, I should just have enough to buy that field.”

From the moment he discovered the buried treasure his life has changed. All he can think about is that treasure. It is a dream come true!

Many believe that this story (which Jesus told in a single verse) is about finding the “treasure” of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. It is about the joy of finding a great and eternal treasure that far surpasses the cost of obtaining it. The principle I want to share with you today is *the joy of surrendering a lesser treasure in order to obtain a greater one*.

Why was the traveler so willing to give up everything he owned to get that field? Because he knew what he had to gain by doing it! We don’t feel sorry for him because he lost everything he had. The sacrifice he makes is nothing compared to the reward he will get. He made a short-term sacrifice to obtain a long-term reward.

When Jesus tells the story He says the traveler, “In his excitement ... sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field--and to get the treasure, too!” The traveler was not sacrificing a lesser treasure for a great one out of duty, or with a “oh poor me” attitude, he was “excited” about doing it. He did it with joy. He would have been a fool not to do it.

This parable of the hidden treasure is one of many times that Jesus makes a point using money and possessions as a reference or illustration. Why did Jesus use money and possessions so frequently in making His points? Because there is a connection between our spiritual lives and how we think about and handle money.

Now let’s move to our text for today, where Jesus gives a lesson concerning heavenly treasure. How many of you know that, no matter how great the value of earthly treasures, they are worthless in heaven. Yet, so many people will waste their lives pursuing treasures here on earth that they can’t take with them when they die. Jesus is making a comparison between the temporary earthly treasures that many people value most, with what we should value – eternal, heavenly treasures.

In Matt 6:19 Jesus says, "Don't store up treasures here on earth..." Why? Not because they are necessarily bad, but *because they won't last*. In Prov 23:4-5 (NIV) a very wise man wrote:

*Do not wear yourself out to get rich;
have the wisdom to show restraint.
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.*

Remember that the next time you make a purchase, imagine it sprouting wings and flying off, because sooner or later that is what is going to happen to it. Either it will leave you while you are alive, or you will leave it when you die. That's how it is, wealth and possessions will always be lost eventually, one way or another. According to Jesus storing up earthly possessions isn't simply wrong, it's just plain stupid.

When I was in the Army I was stationed for awhile in Korea. The US did not want green back dollars getting into the hands of the black market, so everyone was to convert their money to Korean money ("won") to use in the villages of Korea, and into Military Payment Certificates (MPC's) to use on the Army Base. MPC looked like Monopoly money, each bill was a different, bright color, yellow, pink, blue etc. MPC's also were not suppose to be used off the base, but they often were. So, every now and then the Army would change the colors. We could turn in our old MPC for the new issue. By changing the color, the MPC's that got into the black market were made worthless.

Now if someone in the Korean village had inside information that an MPC color change was going to be made the next day, would they accept MPC the day before? No! As a matter of fact, they would try to get rid of the ones they had and convert them to Korean money.

Well, I am giving you some inside information today. When Christ returns or when you die (and either event could happen at any time), your earthly currency will become worthless, but what you spent or gave away according to God's will while you were alive will make you richer. Therefore, it would be wise for you to transfer your investment from earth to heaven (which is dependable, and insured by God.). There was nothing wrong with MPC's as long as we understood its limits, and that its value was temporary.

Jesus not only tells us where not to put our treasures, He also gives us the best investment advice you will ever hear (v20), "Store your treasures in heaven..." Jesus does not stay He is against our storing up treasures, He commands us to store up treasures. He just warns us to stop storing them in the wrong place and start storing them in the right place.

God wants us to live for Him, and living for Him is always for our good. The man who found the treasure in the field pays a high price now by giving up what he has – but soon he will gain so much more. And as long as his eyes are on that fabulous treasure he will soon have, he makes short-term sacrifices with joy. (now, again, of course, the parable is

about turning from our old way of life, and from the things of this world, for the greater reward of knowing Jesus and receiving eternal life. But the principle is the same. Sacrificing a lesser treasure for a great one. Now, apply that to your finances and material possessions. The principle is the same. Don't store up treasures on earth, sacrifice that for the greater reward and the joy of storing up treasures in heaven.). What are the joys of heaven or the treasure of heaven? First, of course, the ultimate treasure is a Person, Jesus. Nothing compares to knowing Him and being with Him forever. Then the treasure is a place, heaven, and third it is possessions, eternal rewards. Nothing on earth can compare to what God has prepared for us. The question is What person are you living for? What place are you living for? What possessions are you living for?

"Store your treasures in heaven..." because it's right, because Jesus said so, and because it is smart. They are the only treasures that will last. Someone once said, "You'll never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul. Why? *Because you can't take it with you.*"

John D. Rockefeller was one of the wealthiest men who ever lived. After he died someone asked his accountant, "How much money did John D. leave?" The reply was: "He left...*all* of it."

So here is a buried treasure I want to share with you today: *You can't take it with you – but you can send it on ahead.*

Anything we put in God's hands will be ours for eternity. If we give instead of keep we store treasures in heaven. Whatever we store up on earth will be left behind. Whatever we store in heaven will be waiting for us when we get there. (In another parable we read of a wealthy man who instead of giving to others as God would have wanted, he built bigger barns to hold his wealth. Then what happened? He died and left it all behind. Again Jesus uses material wealth to teach a spiritual truth. He closes that parable with this (Luke 12:21 NLT): "... a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."

Everything we have is God's. We are meant to manage *God's* money and possessions. What we have is not ours, it's His and we are to be good stewards of all He gives us. How does He want you to spend and manage His money? Certainly He wants you to provide for your family's basic needs. But beyond that are you making the right investment, buying more shares in His Kingdom?

You can't take it with you – but you can send it on ahead. If you can get that and embrace that, it will change your life and it will be exciting to spend according to God's will, because you are storing up treasures in heaven.