

# Finer Grounds Mini-Series

## Matthew 6

### Lesson 4: Matthew 6:19-34

As we finish up the last section of Matthew 6 don't forget the main theme of Jesus' sermon (cf. Matthew 5:20). It is important to remember the main point as we get into the next passage because Jesus is going to switch gears a little. Think back to Lesson 1 when I asked "What areas of righteousness Jesus contrasts in chapter 6?" We have already discussed 3 of them; doing charity (vv. 1-4), praying (vv. 5-15) and fasting (vv. 16-18). Also, remember what the point of chapter 6 is about. Jesus is demonstrating what a God-centered righteousness looks like compared to a self-centered righteousness. In this larger passage we are going to look at the last area of righteousness that Jesus contrasts: how we view our wealth and material resources.

#### Read Matthew 6:19-34

This is a larger passage, so as you read through it try to look for any natural divisions in the text. By breaking the text up into smaller points first, it will make this longer passage more manageable. I see a natural division at verse 25. In verses 19-24 Jesus seems to be addressing the subject of storing treasure on earth in general, but in verses 25-31 He takes it a step further by discussing even how we view our physical necessities. For the sake of space, we will only be tackling verses 19-24 in this lesson. Let's start by focusing on vv. 19-21. Just like the rest of the chapter, Jesus is giving us instruction of what NOT to do first.

*In verse 19 what does Jesus tell us not to do?*

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Jesus tells us not to store up treasures on earth. He says treasures on this earth can be destroyed by rust and moths, be broken into or even be stolen. This indicates the temporary and fragile nature of any treasure we might store up on earth. How many "treasures" can you think of that are susceptible to these kinds of actions.

*Now in your list of earthly treasures, money most likely came up. So we need to ask the question "is Jesus saying it is a sin to invest or plan financially for things like retirement?"*

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Read Proverbs 6:6-11

**The godly wisdom that King Solomon wrote illustrates the sense in preparing for the future. So is Jesus contradicting Solomon's advice to prepare? No! So if Jesus isn't saying it's a sin to plan ahead, what does He seem to be saying in Matthew 6:19-21?**

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Jesus is talking about priorities regarding what we treasure. It's useless to make temporary, physical goods our primary focus because they are so temporary in nature and no matter how much we accumulate we're not going to have it forever anyways. Instead, there is a certain treasure that Jesus does want us to prioritize. In verse 20 Jesus says we should store up treasures in heaven. Now let's take a step back and look at the big picture as we ask ourselves "What are heavenly treasures?" Think about it this way. A treasure is something of great value.

**What else has Jesus talked about in this chapter (you could even back up earlier to chapter 5) that has great value and would be considered a treasure in heaven?**

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So far in chapter 6 we've seen that:

- God will reward the righteous giver (6:4)
- God will reward the righteous prayer (6:6)
- God will reward the righteous faster (6:18)

Now, is Jesus explaining that we can earn our salvation by how much we give, pray, fast and those kinds of things? NO! Salvation can't be earned (cf. Ephesians 2:8). Remember, Jesus is talking about what our main focus in life should be. If our main focus in life is entirely about earthly things we are behaving foolishly because all our treasures here can be destroyed or taken away, not to mention that we can't take them with us when we die. However, if our main focus in life is God-centered and preparing for eternity we are wise in that those treasures can never be taken from us.

Now that we know where Jesus wants us to focus on storing our treasures up, He follows up by saying "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (v. 21). Ask yourself this question, "What do I consider to be the most valuable thing my life?" If your answer is a relationship, a hobby, money (financial security), a vehicle, or home, then your treasure is on earth. If you answered something along the lines God's approval, blessings or bring glory to God then your treasure is in heaven. But Jesus wants to help us understand how this works by bring our "heart" into the discussion.

**When Jesus talk's about our heart, do you think He's referring to the four-chambered muscle beating in our chest? What does Jesus mean by "your heart?"**

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Think about it this way. If a detective was trying to find out what my passions in life were, where would he look? He could look at my bank statements, interview my family and co-workers, follow me on my time off and see how I use my vacations. He could also look at my Facebook wall to see what I "like", "post" and "share." All of these areas would reflect on my

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person and who I am inwardly...that's my spiritual heart. Jesus proves in this verse that our actions really do reflect who we are on the inside, they reveal the contents and priorities of our heart. As we study Jesus' words, have to be honest with ourselves. If our main focus is to store up physical treasures on earth, then we are no more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus continues in verses 22-23 by saying the "eye is the lamp of the body." Now at first this may not make a lot of sense but don't forget the context. If Jesus is talking about wealth and money in verses 19-21, and He is also talking about wealth and money in verse 24, what do you think he is talking about in this verse? He's still addressing wealth and money!

**Verses 22-23 offer some challenges, so let's break it down and ask some questions. What does a lamp do?**

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Jesus is giving us a new picture to illustrate the same concept. Also, it seems as though Jesus is using the "body" in verse 22 in the same way He talked about our "heart" in verse 21.

**If that's the case then what does our body represent?**

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Jesus is saying that in some way our eye shines light into our inner being. What in the world does that mean? Well remember the context of wealth and money in the verses before and after. How can the way we see our money affect our inner being? Jesus explains. He says if our "eye is clear" our "whole body will be full of

light." So what does it mean for our eye to be clear? The word "clear" (ἀπλοῦς) in the original language means to be "motivated by singleness in purpose" (Arndt 103). Let's put this all together.

**If our eye is singly-focused (or undivided) on God, what does that do for our inner being (i.e. how does it get full of light)? Also, where will we be storing treasure if we have a "clear" or singly-focused eye?**

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Jump down and read verse 24. How does Jesus' teaching about having a singly-focused eye relate to His next illustration of serving two masters? Of course Jesus says our eye may not be clear but "bad" (v. 23). Some translations say "evil." So if a clear eye is single-minded or undivided, we can infer that the evil eye is one that is divided in its focus. The bad or evil eye causes our body to be filled with darkness.

**In context, what do you think He means by that? Also, where will we be storing our treasure up if we have a "bad" or divided eye?**

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The scribes and Pharisees had "evil eyes." They were divided in their focus, and loved storing up treasures on earth (cf. Luke 16:14). Outwardly they wanted to be seen by others as righteous, but inwardly they were self-centered. They thought their focus was on God, but in reality their focus was on the accolades of men and advancing themselves materially. Their "bad eye" brought only darkness to their inner being.

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*Their actions were not God-centered. They engaged in the righteous actions of prayer, giving and fasting, but with entirely wrong motives. Jesus is warning us about what happens if our focus is on accruing treasures here, rather than in heaven. We can deceive ourselves just like the scribes and Pharisees did, because they thought they could serve two masters.*

*This is exactly what Jesus warns us about in verse 24. He says no one is able to serve two masters. If our boss tells us to do one thing, but then another supervisor gives us a different directive, then what can we do? We can't make both of them happy. We can't even choose a middle ground to appease them. Jesus says we "hate the one and love the other," or "be devoted to one and despise the other." That's pretty strong language! Would Jesus use words like "hate" and "despise" if a median could be achieved by serving two masters simultaneously? Probably not! Jesus uses these extremely strong words to make a point. His point is "You cannot serve God and wealth." In addition to earthly wealth, list some examples of things that can become our "master."*

*This all comes back to a God-centered righteousness. Can we honestly say that God is our one true master? If He is, then His rule will be clearly seen as taking priority over any other earthly master (such as our wealth).*

*At this time I'd like to make a disclaimer. Throughout this entire section Jesus is not saying it's wrong to have money. Jesus is not even saying it's wrong to have LOT'S of money. Being rich is never condemned in Scripture, and in fact I believe that a strong scriptural argument can be made that God is very pleased with some people having a great deal of wealth. We understand that our material blessings come to us from God, and Scripture actually assures us that the more we use our wealth for His glory, the more money He will give us so that we can do even more for*

*Him (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:10-11; 1 Timothy 6:18-19). There are very wealthy people who are not serving their wealth, and God is doing amazing things through them. On the flipside, there are many very poor people who are in love with wealth and it keeps them from serving God (cf. 1 Timothy 6:9-10). What Jesus is addressing in this section is materialism and where our focus and priorities are regarding our treasures. Rich or poor, we can fall prey to the allures of materialism.*

*In the second part of this chapter Jesus is helping us see how we need to view earthly treasures (and even our physical necessities in verses 25-31) in order to have a God-centered righteousness. We must always remind ourselves that any treasure we can gain on this earth is so temporary and frail that it can never satisfy us for long. If that's the case how could we ever allow something so temporary to become the master of our lives? When pleasing our Father takes absolute precedence in our lives we are guaranteed treasure that can never be harmed, treasure that will satisfy us for eternal life. When we think about it that way the demands of our wonderful God surely wins out over the voice of wealth any day. We don't need to be so concerned about storing up treasures on this earth if we're truly serving God. After all, our Father owns the entire world, so surely He'll take care of His faithful children with what we need physically. That leads us into our discussion of verses 25-31 in our next study when we will conclude this great chapter.*

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### Works Cited

Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature 2000 : n. pag. Print.

Note: The author uses the New American Standard Update for all quotations and references