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Where Your Treasure Is

985-A

Series: Let God Be God

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Little Rodney had good intentions for a five-year old. He had worked hard in his grandmother's yard for nearly two days, pulling weeds, picking up rocks, watering the flowers. The result was a kind of affluence he had not experienced before. "Granny Smith", as he lovingly called her, had given him a ten dollar bill. The most he had ever had in his clutches before was a one. It was more than he could understand, but gradually, he began to get the picture when Granny took back the ten and gave him ten "ones" instead. Then he understood.

What he didn't understand was how to wisely save part of the money, or use it to help somebody else, or even to spend it in such a way that he could enjoy it for a long time. And Granny was too busy to talk to him about what to do with the money; she considered it a pleasure just to give it to him.

Now Rodney, like most little boys and girls, had a weakness for candy, for jelly beans, in fact. (Maybe he had seen President Reagan eat them on television; we don't know.) But Rodney lived and breathed for jelly beans. So it only stood to reason that if his favorite thing in the world was jelly beans, and he now had ten whole dollars (whatever that was), he was about to become the proud owner of more jelly beans than he had ever had in his life.

It only took him a few minutes to convince the somewhat greedy young man at the "Sweet Tooth Candy Counter" on Main Street to sell the little lad ten dollars worth of jelly beans. Taking them home was more complicated, however. It took Rodney's "Red Arrow" wagon and all the muscle he had to lug his treasure home. What a treasure it was, indeed. Once home, Rodney made three decisions. It turned out that all three of them were wrong. But how else is a five-year old going to learn life's deepest truths?

Rod's first decision was to eat as many jelly beans as he could at one sitting. That resulted in a long night and an eventual trip to Doctor Smalley's office to be treated for what the good Doc called a "mild stomach upset caused by an excessive intake of

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unnecessarily sweet items.” Lesson Number One is history. A five-year old doesn’t eat fifty-six jelly beans at one sitting.

Lesson number two took a little longer, but not much longer. For while Rodney was taking his aching tummy to the tummy specialist, his woeful looking Basset hound, “Boscoe”, was discovering, much to his amazement, a bounty of booty that made him strangely suspicious that he had died and gone to dog heaven. For while he rummaged through the maze of marvels under Rodney’s bed, there surfaced a plastic sack containing no less than half of what remained of Rodney’s great expenditure. Thus, when Rodney and his harried mother returned from their unnecessary \$45 trip to the Doctor’s office, they got the wonderful opportunity to take an even more woebegone-than-usual Boscoe, load him into the family station wagon, and take him, moaning and shaking, to Dr. Fidofriend at the neighborhood pet hospital. There, a stomach pump and a twenty dollar bill put Roscoe back in reasonable condition. In case you’re not mathematically inclined, those ten dollars worth of jelly beans now have a net worth of about \$75.00.

There was, however, still about three dollars worth of multi-colored candies left. And needless to say, Rod’s stomach was churning, but it wasn’t yearning for more sweets. So Rodney did what any bewildered five-year old would do; he buried the rest of his treasure in the back yard. His assignment (should he choose to accept it) would be to go back at a later time, perhaps after a week or so of a more balanced diet of Big Macs and popsicles, and then return to the jelly bean scene for round two.

Poor Rodney. He didn’t know that candy doesn’t keep too well sixteen inches from an ant bed. And so, much to his dismay, one week to the day from his valiant attempt to store up his valued treasure, Rodney unearthed what remained; and much to his chagrin, there were more ants than candies, and none of the latter was edible.

Rodney learned a valuable series of lessons early. The first one was that it doesn’t pay to invest all you have in something that doesn’t last. The second was that even your most valued treasures can be stolen, and you can be left with nothing at all. The third lesson is, that sometimes the very things you think you have laid up in safekeeping are decaying and vanishing without your even realizing it, until what you had so looked forward to

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enjoying, turns out to be worth nothing at all.

Rodney learned those lessons early. And though it cost him \$10.00, and it cost his parents \$65.00, it probably turned out to be the least expensive, most productive of all his education. Rodney had learned the secret of vanishing treasure. Most of us never do.

It is that secret that we will endeavor to unlock in this lesson, as we continue our journey in the footsteps of Jesus, watching the Living God as he discloses on planet earth the Master's Master Plan for letting God be God in us.

We left off as Jesus, having taken his disciples up to the side of a mountain, took the time to teach them about a kingdom that was about to be ushered into the heart of man, as man received the literal breath of God Himself. And once there, that breath of God, known as the Holy Spirit, would, if allowed to be Himself, take the very fabric out of which human existence is built and restructure it into a whole new way of life.

Having expounded on the basics of that life, Jesus paused to teach his disciples to pray. Tenderly, yet clearly, he taught them to pray. He taught us to pray. And He concluded by teaching us how to praise, once we've prayed. Then the Master, without so much as taking a breath, moved from the priority of prayer to perhaps the single most important issue in the minds of those who followed Him. He began to teach them how to lay up treasures that would last. And strangely enough, He attempted to teach them, in a few simple words, the same three lessons little Rodney learned so painfully in his bout with the decaying jelly beans. Listen to what the King of Kings had to say about treasures.

Store not up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and corrosion destroy, and where thieves dig through and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor corrosion destroys and where thieves do not dig through and steal. *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

(Matthew 6:19-22 TLOCIS)¹

Few statements Jesus made had a greater impact than this one. Here the Master took the very foundations upon which man had built his reason for existence and smashed them into

¹ The Life of Christ in Stereo: The Four Gospels Speak in Harmony; by Johnston M. Cheney; © 1969 Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, Oregon

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thousands of pieces, rebuilding a mansion of Glory using the building blocks of the Spirit instead. We must examine that statement closely.

Our title for this lesson is: Where Your Treasure Is...

Our outline:

I- What Treasures Are

II- Where Treasures Are

III- What Treasures Say

I- WHAT TREASURES ARE

The dictionary says a treasure is “something precious or of great value that has been laid in store.” If that is true, a man’s treasures, then, are what he gives his life for now, believing they will make his life meaningful later. That being true, anything we invest in is a potential treasure. If we invest in stocks and bonds, they become potential treasures. If we invest in real estate, it becomes a potential treasure. If we invest in gold or silver, they become potential treasures. And if we invest in people, they become potential treasures as well. *Whatever we invest in, hoping for future returns is, in essence, a treasure.*

And Jesus was deeply concerned about what our treasures were, where they were to be kept, and just how safe they were. Because if they were what we were giving our lives for, and the possibility existed that we could come to the end of our lives and all we had invested in had vanished, then He felt perhaps we ought to stop right where we were and examine if we were giving ourselves away for the right things.

So He followed His discourse on prayer with that memorable mini-sermon on treasures. It may have been brief; but it wasn’t inconclusive. It may have been to the point, but the point was, it was of eternal consequence.

II- WHERE TREASURES ARE

Jesus began with this incredibly simple statement: He said,

Lay not up for yourselves treasures on the earth,
(Matthew 6:19a TLOCIS)

And He gave two distinctively clear reasons. (He always gives clear reasons.) Those two reasons were these:

1- On earth, things get stolen. In this world, you have no

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assurance that what you possess today will be yours tomorrow. They get stolen by thieves illegally. They get stolen by competitors legally. Or thousands of other things can happen as well. A law can be passed, a government can be toppled, a bank can default, or a company can be wrestled from your control; and what was once your security becomes your nightmare. There is simply no guarantee that what you have on this earth will remain yours.

2- Secondly, Jesus reminded us, on earth, things decay. They lose their value. That elaborate car that is such a source of joy as it rolls off the showroom floor soon becomes worth a fraction of its purchase price. That beautiful mink coat may lose its value overnight. That expensive computer that was your pride and joy a year or so ago, may be virtually worthless on the market today. And not only do things lose their value, they decay in efficiency as well. Cars stop running; machines stop working; precious metals tarnish. Even with constant care, beautiful homes begin to run down and look old. People decay as well. The body ceases to be what it once was, and to function as it once did; and if your treasure was your athletic ability or your musical ability or your mechanical ability or your stunning appearance, it too will fade with time. Treasures can be stolen and treasures decay.

So the Master makes it clear... there is simply no use trusting your future to things that someone can steal, or that time can steal by letting them lose their value or their appeal. The interesting thing, however, is that Jesus categorizes those things that can be stolen or can decay by their location. He implies that treasures laid up *on the earth* are the ones subject to premature failure, while treasures laid up *in heaven* are the ones destined for safekeeping. So He goes on. He gives us an alternative. He says *instead of laying up treasures on earth, subject to loss and decay, why not lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust cannot corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through and steal.*

Jesus, in effect, said, “why not reinvest in things that are sure to increase in value, rather than things which are sure to decrease to nothing?” Good question. He went on: “Instead, invest in things which will be stored in heaven. Everything stored in heaven is subject to perfect environment. It cannot decay. Everything stored in heaven is subject to perfect security. It cannot be stolen. The Master guarantees its safekeeping, just as He guarantees the safekeeping of your soul.

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Where your treasure is, then, becomes the determining factor of how valuable that treasure is. If your treasure is on this earth, at some point in time, be it two years, five years, ten years, or fifty years, that thing you have rested your future on will either be of no value to anyone, or at least of no value to you, because you will be where you cannot touch it. Men have amassed great fortunes, sold their souls to keep those fortunes, and in a split second of time, gone into the reality of eternity and left every single penny behind. So treasures left on this earth fall into the category of being eventually worthless.

Treasures in heaven, on the other hand, fall into the category of being eternally valuable. Their worth never decreases. So the question must naturally be asked, "When does something become an earthly treasure? At what point does something on this earth become destined for decay?" We know that God does not consider money to be evil, nor does He consider the making of money to be a sin. But at some time, it would appear that the lust for money or the trust of money becomes the deciding factor in turning that which is corruptible into a treasure. I believe the Scriptures have some keys for us that help us know the difference.

1- Trusting in money offends God and sets us up to fall.

There comes a point at which things turn from tools to treasures. One of those points is determined by the attitude of our hearts. Listen to Job 31:

If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold,
Thou art my confidence;

If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because
mine hand had gotten much;

This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for
I should have denied the God that is above.

(Job 31:24,25,28)

The issue here is not making money. *The issue here is making money your confidence, or having money a source of pride.* It is making gold your hope. And that attitude is not only deadly, it is subtle, which makes it even more deadly. It is not reserved for the rich, but for anyone who, in the process of obtaining wealth, becomes either confident or proud because of it.

The issue is if you were to lose every cent you own today, would your basic attitude toward God change? If He gave you

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what you have, and if “the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away”, then what have we to complain about, if God simply takes back some or all of what was His in the first place? Most of us take prosperity for granted, and consider any financial setback either divine punishment or a cruel victory of the enemy. Who gave us a credit card that is redeemable on the streets of this earth for this world’s goods in Jesus’ name? And if so, why didn’t He give Jesus one? Or Paul? Or the great saints of days gone by whose lives have literally changed the world? And how many of them *through their poverty have made many to be rich*? No, money is not evil, but trusting money is. Idolizing money and what it can buy is evil.

2- Lusting for money is likewise a source of destruction for the Christian. Not only trusting in what God gives us, but lusting for what we want Him to give us destroys our spiritual lives. I Timothy 6 says it all:

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But thou, O man of God, flee these things;

(I Timothy 6:7-11a)

The problem is wanting to be rich. The problem is setting an objective that for you to accomplish what you want on this earth, you must accumulate treasures on this earth. It is a presumptuous, predetermined standard of what it will take to make you happy. Paul says it is a temptation, because it draws you magnetically to all of the things of this world that will cause you to fall; and it is a snare, because once you get there, you become blinded to where you are and fall hopelessly into a temporal pit, devoid of the kind of spiritual power necessary for you to be the man or woman God wants you to be. It will cause you to err from the faith, and pierce yourself through with many sorrows.

And, Beloved, go easy on the success stories of this world.

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They aren't the big problem. We are. We, as individuals, begin coveting what our neighbors have, or what our parents have, or what our friends have. And it's not restricted to the secular realm. Churches covet what other churches have. Pastors covet what other pastors have. Paul says, "I'll tell you what you ought to expect from this life. You ought to expect God to provide you food to eat and clothes to wear. And if you have that, be content. After all, what did you have when you came into this world? And what will you take with you when you go? The answers = 0 and 0! Then what right do we have to demand of God any more than that in between? None. And I don't care what you hear today about how God owes His children all the treasures they ask for; that is Scripturally not true. He owes us spiritual treasures because He has willed them to us at the death of His Son. We have become joint heirs with Christ. If you think you own a share of what Christ owned on this earth, Beloved, you're welcome to try to find it. He didn't have a place to lay His head. Spiritual treasures! Those are yours. Those who make physical application to spiritual promises are cheapening the Gospel and leading men and women astray by telling them to ask "by faith" for something God doesn't plan to give them.

3- Not knowing how to handle riches when you get them is the final snare. The problem with this world's treasures is that they are like potato chips. You just never get enough. And we say, "Lord, if you'll just bless my business, I'll give it all away." But somehow, when He begins to *bless* us (we always interpret more to be a blessing, never less), it requires just about that much more for us to be comfortable, and after all, *we earned it*. And somehow, we forget how comfortable in Jesus we were when we were poor. Solomon understood. Listen to Ecclesiastes 5:

He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.

When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?

The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a

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son, there is nothing in his hand. (Ecclesiastes 5:10-14)

Psalm 62:10b adds,

if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.

A sore evil under the sun are riches which are not considered a gift from God to be given away, but a bonus from God to be clutched at and admired. They perish, and a generation later, nothing is left; and an eternity later, nothing exists.

But our God has a better way. He calls it “treasures laid up in heaven”. You ask how do we do that? Once again, the Word of God has an answer. Listen:

Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me.

(Matthew 19:21)

Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

(Luke 12:33)

Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

(Luke 18:22)

There are many ways to lay up treasures in heaven. But the one we talk about the least that Jesus talks about the most is giving what we have to those who have less than what we have, especially those of the household of faith.

In our generation, a dollar given to the guy who comes to the door for the March of Dimes is charity. In our generation, giving \$10 to the needy fund once a month is charity. In our generation, putting your extra pennies in a bowl at the checkout counter is charity. I don't think that's what Jesus was talking about. And what He was talking about to the rich man was doubly important. He said, in effect, “If you have a problem in this area, a problem of trusting in riches, or lusting for riches, or greedily holding on to riches, you need surgery on your possessions. You with the problem, go sell what you have and give it to the poor before your possessions begin to possess you. Otherwise you will perish in your greed.”

Jesus didn't condemn this world's treasures. But He did

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say that they were less than worthless if not invested correctly. They were dangerous. So He said, unless you learn to give what you have away, considering it to be but God's money on loan to you, for you to invest in eternity, you're likely to fall into many temptations and be ensnared by the sheer subtlety of riches, which, if not guarded against, will cause you to err from the faith and pierce you through with many sorrows.

III- WHAT TREASURES SAY

The final chapter in this episode on treasures was tucked carefully in the Master's discourse. Before He concluded, He lovingly looked at his audience and said these immortal words:

For where your treasure is; there will your heart be also.

(Luke 12:34)

In other words, where you lay up your treasures is not only important because of what it says about your treasures; it is important because of what it says about your heart. Where your heart is, your treasures will be; and where your treasures are, your heart will be. If you want to know where your heart is, let someone give you an unexpected gift, a gift you could live without, but can use. Then follow yourself around and see what you do with that gift. See if you try to find those in the Body of Christ who need it worse than you do, or if you will try to find the latest catalog or the latest newspaper, to try to find the best buy on something you can live without, but are dying to have. It will tell you more than you really care to know about yourself. It will tell you where your heart is. Because you see,

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