

Where Your Treasure Is

Speaker: Jeff Cinquemani

So where's your Treasure?

I was coming out of a restaurant and walking my friend back to her van. She gets around now in a wheel chair, and even though she can do the whole car thing by herself, she gladly accepted my assistance. After we said good-bye and I was making my way back to my car, I heard a groan from a man parked one car over from mine. He had his take-out meal sitting on the roof of his car and, by the time I glanced over to him, he was already bent down and almost out of my view. I had no idea what had happened, so I rushed over to see if there was anything I could do. I was concerned that he might be suffering a heart attack. Before I had even made it around my car, the groaning had turned to angered obscenities. As I got in full view of him, he was standing up and inspecting his sunglasses.

"Oh great, just great!" he said to himself, and then hurled a few more expletives into the air.

I interrupted, "Are you ok"? He looked up at me startled and visibly embarrassed that his little rant had been observed. "Yes, yes I'm fine," he replied as he retreated into his car. And just before he closed the door he said, "I just ruined a \$400 pair of sunglasses, that's all!" As I walked back to my car, I could still hear his muffled tirade, and as he pulled out of the parking lot, I could see him throwing those prized sunglasses to the floor of his car.

In those situations, I guess you just leave. I mean it's hardly the time to console him by saying, "Well, at least you're not having a heart attack." As I got back to my car and started it up, I'm not sure why, but my mind went back to a time when I was about 8 years old and I road my bike to the corner drive-in. For a whole dime I got a 5-curl soft serve ice cream cone. As I got on my bike and started riding back home, I took a lick off the top curl, confident in my one handed driving abilities. But as I made the turn down my road I had to go to two hands. I can still remember the crust of that cone hitting the grip of my handlebars and jolting every one of those neatly formed white curls of ice cream right out of my cone and onto the ground.

I had barely tasted it, and now my 10-cent ice cream cone was gone, I can remember feeling so mad; what a loss that was to me. Of course, this guy with the sunglasses would have been insulted had I empathized with him using this story as a comparison. But what about my friend in the wheelchair? Would the sunglasses guy have been able to put his loss in perspective after seeing her loss? Maybe, Maybe not.

You see, no matter how valuable the treasure, when we lose it, it matters. Why? Because it is our treasure.

Jesus said. In Matthew 6:21:

"It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place where your heart is."

So why wouldn't we be angry if a great deal of our energy and time went into something and then, with just one slipup, it is ruined. Shouldn't we be distraught and angered?

This way of thinking was not only the prevailing thought of the day, it had been the paradigm in which every Jewish child had been born into.

Listen to the words of Moses – words which were echoed in the temple on a weekly basis:

Deuteronomy 26

18-19 And today GOD has reaffirmed that you are dearly held treasure just as he promised, a people entrusted with keeping his commandments, a people set high above all other nations that he's made, high in praise, fame, and honor: you're a people holy to GOD, your God. That's what he has promised.

The idea was that, years ago, Israel had had this wonderful treasure, this unique and exclusive relationship with God. It was their claim to the top of the world. They and they alone claimed to be the only ones who were privileged enough to be identified with and protected by the only true God. In their glory years, they were powerful, highly esteemed and envied. However, because of the unholy acts of those evil kings and prophets who profaned God, Israel had lost God's favor and they were now paying the price for those years of disobedience.

The rulers of Israel now taught strict rules and oppressed the people with heavy laws intent on keeping anyone from ruining what "treasure" was left.

Jesus grew up in this mindset of anger and loss. He understood that people were unhappy about the Roman Dominance. But the one thing He could never buy into was the idea that God was with them before but had now left them. As He studied the scriptures, and the more he rubbed shoulders with the Jewish leaders, He began to realize that their anger was not in losing God's glory but in losing THEIR glory.

They had put their treasure in the wrong thing from the beginning.

Ever wonder what a 2rd millennium BC citizen treasured most?

Food? Land? Life?

If you read through most of the stories passed on in the Bible and look closely at almost any of the historical accounts, there you will find that in almost every culture or civilization, the prevailing treasure generation to generation was always considered to be their children. Not bad, right? However – more specifically, it was about their lineage.

1 Samuel 1:9

So **Hannah** ate. Then she pulled herself together, slipped away quietly, and entered the sanctuary. The priest Eli was on duty at the entrance to God's Temple in the customary seat. Crushed in soul, **Hannah** prayed to God and cried and cried—inconsolably. Then she made a vow: Oh, God-of-the-Angel-Armies, If you'll take a good, hard look at my pain, If you'll quit neglecting me and go into action for me By giving me a son, I'll give him completely, unreservedly to you. I'll set him apart for a life of holy discipline.

All down through history, parents did not ask just for children. Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Rebecca Hannah – they didn't want children, they wanted a son.

You see, the treasure was hardly in the children themselves but much more so in the lineage they carried.

And we have treasured those things that carry out lineage ever since; everything from monuments and tombstones to family crests and coat of arms.

Today we do it simply by investing in those things that make us stand out or identify us as exclusive and one-of-a-kind.

We put value in those things that we think, in some way, add value to our lives.

Watches, cars, icons to ourselves.

Or we invest in education, portfolios, and careers.

It's not much different than what Jesus was speaking to all along when he said:

Matthew 6

¹⁹ “Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

So now we've come full circle. Jesus is just being up front with us. He's saying:

Look, for years the world has been putting their time, energy and their attention into things that really don't last. Think about it; would you rather be concerned about something that will be lost and all but forgotten tomorrow, or would you like to invest in something that will last forever?

Now what does a 2nd Millennium AD civilization treasure most? Not much difference. It's still about us.

So what do we do? How do Christ's words impact us today? How do we change the treasure from temporal to eternal?

Well, maybe we have been close all along. Maybe we have been on the right track but for all the wrong reasons. What if we looked at our children? What if that truly was our treasure – not just the boys but the girls as well. The wealth of potential, and not just potential for tomorrow, but for an eternity of tomorrows. That’s a really powerful thought.

Today we as a church have pledged to make our children the highest priority, not only in our ministries here at the church but also in our training of leaders, teachers, and the investment in our schools. Over two thirds of our budget is going to our children in one way or another.

But this is not just to keep our children happy or occupied until they get older. No, this is discipleship in its purest form. Listen how Christ put it to the Disciples:

Matthew 18

¹ At about the same time, the disciples came to Jesus asking, "Who gets the highest rank in God's kingdom?"

²⁻⁵ For an answer Jesus called over a child, whom he stood in the middle of the room, and said, "I'm telling you, once and for all, that unless you return to square one and start over like children, you're not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom. What's more, when you receive the childlike on my account, it's the same as receiving me. ⁶⁻⁷" But if you give them a hard time, bullying or taking advantage of their simple trust, you'll soon wish you hadn't. You'd be better off dropped in the middle of the lake with a millstone around your neck.

As Christians who believe that Christ’s Kingdom is right here, right now, we should be doing everything we can to further the principles of His kingdom into all those who would be receptive to knowing His precepts. It is why Christ was so insistent on us sharing the good news, starting with our own children.

This is one of the reasons why we, as a church, believe so strongly in Christian Education. It is not so we can set our kids apart from others, nor is it so we can pump out an elite society of indoctrinated robots all thinking alike. Christian Education is the equipping of our children both young and old, to become lifelong seekers and disciples of Jesus Christ. Hoping that Christ’s love would continue on and on through our lives and into other’s lives.

When Christianity is part of our Education some great things happen.

1st Our Values Change

It’s beautiful to see this. No longer do we place a high degree of value on things that used to gratify our own selfish desires. Our focus now turns to others, and our values become far more meaningful and eternal.

2nd Our Relationships Change

We now become much more intent on service to others. We create time for meaningful engagements and collaborative efforts. No longer are we using people to meet our needs, but now we are using our gifts to meet the needs of others.

3rd Our Self Awareness Changes

With our motivation no longer focused on being number one, we start to see ourselves as God had intended for us to be. We are content to bloom and flourish where we are planted. Peace of mind and confidence enables us to accomplish more and create the being God had planned all along.

This is Christian Education – Learning life and all its wonders in the context of God’s Love, Acceptance and Forgiveness.

So where’s your treasure?

Is it in your career as you send your child off to school hoping that “they” will take care of things?

Is it in your identity as you become more concerned about what others think than what’s really going on inside of yourself?

Christ pays us a wonderful tribute. He treasures us; He calls us His children, and we are all invited to learn at His feet. If you’re wondering where your real treasure is, you might start right there.