



RELIGION RESTORED - Restored Security - Matthew 13 - March 13-19

Main Idea: Our text this week is a study of contrasts for followers of Christ. Jesus calls us to select the right treasure, choose the right path, serve the right master, and focus on the right priorities.

Look Back

Last week you were challenged to incorporate one missing element from your prayer life based on The Lord's Prayer. What did you come up with? How did this affect your prayer life?

Look Up (Wrestle with the passage itself)

Read Matthew 6:19-34 together.

Choices are important in life. Jesus certainly makes that clear in his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. In the passage today we read of several important choices we at some point need to make in our Christian walk. We find such choices throughout Scripture and treatments of Scripture. In the Old Testament, Psalm 1 opens the book of Psalms with a stark contrast between the righteous and the wicked, describing their choices and desires along with their ultimate fates. In an early Christian document known as *The Didache* ("The Instruction") we find a section entitled "The Two Ways," a reminder of the various biblical admonitions demanding the active choices involved in serving God.

It has been said that the greatest “-ism” threatening the church today is materialism, and Jesus’ warnings here certainly correspond with that overall conclusion. The forms of “treasures on earth” have evolved over the years, but the nature of the temptation persists. The ancient concerns about “moth and rust” applied to a way of life in which cloths and metals were among the most precious things available.

Discussion Question: In your mind, where does materialism rank as one of the threats to spirituality and Christian conviction? What would be some examples of “laying up treasure in heaven”? What would be some creative ways to accomplish that? How would that answer depend upon our individual circumstances?

Regarding the challenge of sorting out priorities in our lives, Jesus said that our heart will follow our treasure. He also said that not all treasures will endure. We must direct our hearts to the pursuit of treasure that cannot be stolen or destroyed.

The reference to “good eyes” probably refers to clear focus or what some have called “single-minded devotion.” What our eyes are drawn to determines the course of our actions. Remember the children’s church jingle: “O be careful little eyes what you see....”

Jesus’ use of the term “Masters” can refer both to persons and property. Paul repeatedly refers to himself as a servant (“slave/bondservant”) of Christ and reminds the church that we all serve one Master in heaven (Colossians 4:1). The words “you cannot serve God and money” translate the Aramaic word *Mammon* as “money.” The term literally means “worldly possessions” or our “stuff.”

The key word for verses 25-34 is “anxiety” or “worry.” Without a faith in our Heavenly Father, the cares of this life would seem overwhelming. As Christians we also struggle with the cares and challenges of living. At times wisdom and worry are necessary companions as challenges come our way. There may be no reasonable place for a flippant “God will just take care of it.” The key verse from this passage for us is verse 33: “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness....” God will provide.

Discussion Question: Inflation is at its highest in 40 years, gas prices have “blown up,” our way of life seems threatened from several vantage points, and the world seems to be becoming a more and more dangerous place. Thinking through Jesus’ words here from the Sermon on the Mount, how should we react to the challenges of our day and how should we communicate our concerns and convictions to others? Which of the choices or decisions that Jesus outlines here speak most to you in your current circumstances?

Look Forward (Challenge to do something with it)

Discussion Question: In your estimation, which of Jesus's teachings in this portion of Scripture is the most difficult for you to embrace? Why is that? Is there a conscious choice that can be made to enable you to better cope with your circumstances or concerns?

Challenge: Real-life choices often challenge our convictions about our beliefs and priorities. Jesus uses powerful imagery in his teaching here to highlight important choices God's people need to make. Who is our master? What are our priorities? For this week's challenge, take a self inventory and revisit it each day working through potential problems and solutions that current circumstances may pose and offer. If possible, focus on a key word or two from this text that has a particular impact upon your spiritual journey. Pray for conviction in difficult decisions that may come your way.