

I don't know if you're aware of it or not, but ... One of the greatest temptations for a preacher, is to be inoffensive... If I offend you today, will you come back and listen to me again next week? If I honestly tell you, what I believe Jesus is saying to His church, (and if that's a hard word) will you feel I'm judging you personally?....

If you leave here, feeling rotten today, because values that you hold dear, are challenged to the core, are you going to thank God for opening the eyes of your heart to things that you need to change in your life...., or will you curse the preacher for his narrow minded and impossible expectations, and find somebody more accommodating for next week????

There's the temptation, you see.....

It's easy to be the preacher, who's willing to make you feel good about yourself. It's easy to be the preacher, who affirms exactly how you live, agrees with the decisions that you make and who teaches what is appealing to the flesh. It's easy to be the preacher who encourages you to make God the king of **your** chosen lifestyle. – it's easy to be **that** preacher, because it's just as appealing to me, as it is to you...

What it's **not** easy to be, is the preacher who reads the word of God, is challenged deeply and personally about his **own** life style, and then has the task, to share what he knows, is going to be a very difficult word to receive.... Because it is totally counter to culture...

In the Christian church of affluent, modern western culture, all too often, the offence is all but totally removed from the Gospel.

- There is a lie, being preached in churches today, that is against Christ, His teaching and His example, and it leads to spiritual poverty, for those who receive it... and it is not antichrist.
- There is a current of false teaching, lulling congregations into acceptance of all kinds of fleshly desires, and it has nothing to do with sex.
- There is a sin, which is being affirmed, and even promoted, under the guise of “a blessing of God”... And that sin, is a love of money, and a selfishness of possessions and wealth.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor”. Jesus said, ^{Matthew 19:23....} **“I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”**

Jesus said, ¹⁹ **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

The absolutely confronting teaching of Jesus, is “It matters how you spend your money”.

- It matters what you buy.

- It matters how you **use** what you buy.
- It matters what you spend on yourself,
- and it matters what you give to the poor.
- It matters what you invest into **your** business and it matters what you invest into **God's** business.

Every one of these things are a **Spiritual** decision:

- Every time you take your credit card out of your wallet,
- a leaf out of your cheque book,
- cash out of your purse,
- direct debit or Bpay out of your Bank account,
- PayPal over the internet....
- Or even if you decide for your money to stay where it is... Every time you **spend** money, or choose **not** to spend money, you are making an investment.

And there are 2 kinds of investments. Temporary, earthly investments; and permanent, heavenly investments...

We all store treasure. The question is, "Where am I storing mine???"

OK, so:

What **is** treasure? – What do we count as treasure?

Well, Biblically, the concept of treasure, is what you're storing up – what are you accumulating? It might be money. It might be land. It might be houses. It could be machinery, or livestock or shares. It could be superannuation or life assurance. It might be electronic gadgets or tools or sheds, or guns or cars... It could be ornaments, or flowers. Or maybe household items, electrical goods or furnishings. It could be paintings or stamps or coins... Maybe your treasures are books or DVD's or musical instruments or boats...

or maybe **your** treasures might be less quantifiable. Maybe you've invested heavily into an expensive education for your kids, holidays, restaurants, wines, cigarettes, counteries, flat white latte's... You've invested into what you can no longer see or touch – it's been consumed....

No treasures – or rather, no earthly treasures, are lasting...

So,
What is the **fate** of treasure?

Consumables are consumed, and **stuff** does not last.

A rich person in California was buried propped up in her sports car with sunglasses on and a scarf around her neck. The crane operator who was lowering the car into its concrete vault was heard to exclaim, "Man, that's living!"ⁱ

No it's not. You can't take anything with you when you go. *The Pharaohs used to have their treasure buried with them, so they'd have it in their next life. And grave robbers dig it up later.*

Every earthly treasure you accumulate, whether it be money or farms or toys or houses, you might enjoy it for a while – it might give you satisfaction, passing it on to your kids, but it won't last.

The only treasure that lasts, is treasures we store up in heaven. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are drawn into a radical transformation of our values: *What is treasured by men is of*

*no enduring worth in God's sight, and real treasure involves earthly poverty.*ⁱⁱ

So,
How **do** we store treasures in heaven?

I'll tell you how: You begin to value what God values. You begin to desire what God desires. **And** you put it into action.

Jesus said – (a quite mysterious saying), “²² **The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!**”

What a mysterious thing to say.... (does that bamboozle you?)

Jesus is teaching us about treasures, and he plonks this right into the middle of it... He's teaching us about money. He's teaching us about “stuff”.... And in the Greek, the word for “good” literally meant “single”, and it also applied in the financial sense. It meant “to be generous”ⁱⁱⁱ... It also meant to be whole hearted^{iv}...

OK, so the simplest explanation I can give you, of this mysterious saying, is in the context of Jesus' teaching on “possessions”, it's about being whole-hearted for God, in generosity. And it starts with your eyes. Generosity or miserliness, begins with the eyes...

*I'm **not** too often tempted by a radio advertisement, but the eyes are a different matter. Last year, every time I drove past Halpins, and saw that beautiful white HSV Maloo ute, I wanted it.... What we desire, begins by seeing it with the eyes. And as Disciples of Jesus, we should look – not at Maloo utes (shame on me) – but toward heavenly riches (desire heavenly riches) and be generous See what God sees, and awaken within you, the desires that are God's desires.*

See the hungry, and feed the hungry. See the sick and the poor, and pay the medical expenses **of** the poor. If you see a brother or sister, struggling under the weight of debt, and you have the means, help them – do it!

Pour your money into Christian ministries – support Christian workers, who have given up careers, to preach the gospel.

Sponsor a child... Or sponsor a dozen children.... Do what you can afford... And **free** up your wealth, so you **can** afford to give....

When I was in primary school, I used to have a sticker on my school port, which read, "Live simply so all may simply live"...

*John Wesley felt that the Christian should not merely tithe but give away all extra income once the family and creditors were taken care of. He believed that with increasing income, what should rise is not the Christian's standard of **living** but the standard of **GIVING**. This practice, begun at Oxford, continued throughout his life. Even when his income rose into*

the thousands of pounds (in the 1700's – a fortune), he lived simply, and he quickly gave away his surplus money.^v

Raise, not your standard of living, but your standard of giving.

*We live in a world where wealthy Christians (like you and I) often voice the mantra “I’m blessed to be a blessing”, but I haven’t seen the fruit of that. Constantly, those who have less, give more, and those who “are blessed to be a blessing”, bless **themselves** with more and more, as their standard of living increases....*

Isaiah said,

5:8 Woe to those who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is no more room,
and you are made to dwell alone
in the midst of the land.

If I’m rich, my standard of living, should remain simple, so I can give more... Accumulating treasures in heaven...

Where you store your treasure, reveals a lot about your heart.... When your heart is set on God – when God and His Kingdom, is your whole-hearted desire, you **won’t** be spending money on standard of living – you **won’t** be spending money on more shares or more houses, expensive holidays or the latest gadgets.... If your whole-hearted desire is for His Kingdom, you’ll be **investing in** His Kingdom...

You see, if Jesus Christ is our Lord, He already **owns** our treasure. *He has entrusted **some** of His assets to us -*

*everything we have is from Him. And He expects that we will be investing **His** assets in the interests of **His** kingdom^{vi}.*

But you know what? We **deny** God, by tying it up. We buy more than we need. Bigger houses than we need. Bigger farms than we need. Flasher cars than we need. More lavish life-styles than we need.

We deny God, by convincing ourselves, that we're **not** rich. Let me tell you, if you are able to have at least 2 meals a day; if you have a mattress and a blanket and a roof over your head; if you have access to education; if you can go to the doctor when you're seriously ill... - you are wealthy. By world standards and by historic standards, you are wealthy.

And, in an age of credit, we deny God again, by tying our treasure up for years to come.

In this age of credit, there's 3 classes of people:

- *The have's*
- *The have-not's*
- *And the have-not-paid-for-what-they-have's^{vii}*

And increasingly, we are becoming the have-not-paid-for-what-we-have's...

And we commit ourselves to interest and capital payments for years and years, and then we tell God, "I've got commitments... I can't afford to give right now...." ... We make a loss on paper, and then we tell God we've made nothing, but all the time, we're paying off more and more stuff... Who are we cheating????

And I haven't even started on super. We accumulate enormous superannuation nest-eggs under the principle of being financially responsible.. Some people put away millions

of dollars, taking advantage of tax concessions and salary packaging... – all so we can enjoy a “comfortable” retirement.... Who’s money are we tying up?

I hope you don’t think I’m picking on any one person, or segment of society...

All of this stuff, I’m preaching at me. And you get to listen to what God’s been telling me, and challenging me about, in my life... – And it might just happen to apply to you too...

My prayer is, “God, change my heart so I value what you value.”

I am deeply, deeply challenged by this whole message. I know I have to make some major changes over the next few months and years... And I’ve got a lot of questions to answer. Like is it right for me to spend the next 20 years paying off a house, or should I sell it and find something cheaper? Robyn feels God’s telling me to work less and spend more time in ministry...

And as I begin to wonder how I might put these changes into action, anxiety starts to surface, “How will I provide for my family? What if we go short?”... And you might have those same worries – if you don’t store treasure on earth...

And Jesus says, don’t worry about it. Trust me. Don’t worry about what you’ll eat, or what you’ll wear... I’ll look after that. ³³ **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

So, what's the message here? "Should we sell everything we have and give it to the poor?"

Well, if you love what you've got, then the answer is "Yes. That's exactly what you've got to do." Jesus knew the heart of the rich young man, and He told **him** to do that... But Jesus didn't tell **everyone** to do that.

So, what should **you** do?

- Firstly, agree with God, that everything you have, is already His
- Secondly, live simply and give greatly
- Thirdly, give thankfully, because you are grateful for what Christ has given you
- Fourthly, you can ask a question that John Wesley used to ask, "*Will God reward me for this expenditure at the resurrection of the just?*"^{viii}

Aaron & Rosie share about simple living...

ⁱ Tony Campolo in www.holwick.com

ⁱⁱ Brown, C. 1986. *New international dictionary of New Testament theology*. Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, MI

-
- ⁱⁱⁱ Green, M. The message of Matthew – The Bible Speaks today
- ^{iv} France, R. T. 1985. *Vol. 1: Matthew: An introduction and commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL
- ^v www.holwick.com #2995
- ^{vi} Copyright © Ron Hutchcraft Ministries, Inc., PO Box 400, Harrison, AR 72602. Used by permission. Written by Ron Hutchcraft. "Practical Answers to Real Life Issues" in www.holwick.com
- ^{vii} Green, M. 1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching
- ^{viii} www.holwick.com #2995