

# The Nature of Treasure

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*“Then one from the crowd said to Him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to **divide the inheritance with me.**’ But He said to him, ‘Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?’ And He said to them, **‘Take heed and beware of covetousness,** for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’ **Then He spoke a parable to them,** saying: ‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, “What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?” So he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’” But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” So is he who lays up treasure for himself, **and is not rich toward God.**” - Luke 12:13-21*

## 1. Introduction

- a. This parable has been stuck in my mind for almost six months now. I can’t shake it. Specifically the ending phrase about being *“rich toward God”*. What does it mean to be rich in God?
- b. Surely this isn’t referring to your material possessions in the sense that the more possessions you have the more spiritual you are. In fact the Bible calls physical riches a danger that can ensnare someone and lead them away from Christ (1 Timothy 6:18-19).
- c. So what does it mean to be rich towards God? And equally important is how do we become rich in God? How can we pursue such a life?
- d. First, we need to examine and understand what Jesus is referring to when He uses the word *“riches”*. If we can understand the nature of riches we can then move on to answer what it means to be rich towards God and how we go about pursuing that.
- e. So in our first session here we are going to look at the nature of riches or treasure.

## 2. Desire as the Driving Force of Life

- a. Let’s examine the parable above a little closer. The story actually starts with a man approaching Jesus and asking Him to get involved in a family dispute over an inheritance.
- b. Jesus then gives the command that acts as the context for the parable that follows: *“Take heed and beware of covetousness”*. This statement is the basis for everything that Jesus says in the subsequent verses.
  - i. The word *“covetousness”* simply means to covet or to earnestly desire more of something. It describes an overwhelming desire for something.
  - ii. This is the strongest of all desires. When you covet something it means that you are willing to do anything to get it. It is the passion of your life. The thing that you are preoccupied with and think about all the time.

- iii. But it is at its very core a deep emotion, an intense yearning, passion, and desire that lives in the heart and emotions.
- c. Jesus is warning us to examine and be careful of what the overarching passion of our life is. He is pleading with this man and with us to look at our own emotions and the desires that drive us.
- d. Why? Why does Jesus take this one command to examine our desires and elaborate on it so much. In fact He addresses this issue of desire and passion all the way to verse 34.
- e. Because whatever your heart desires most will be the driving force of your life. You will always follow what you desire most. Saint Augustine famously said, *“What makes a man is not what he does or even believes but what he loves most.”*
- f. This is exactly what Jesus is getting at. And we can all easily examine our own lives to know that this is true. We all do things we know are wrong. We all say things we know we shouldn't. We all partake in things that go against our morals, ethics, and spiritual beliefs.
- g. Why? Why do we regularly do things we know are wrong and harmful to us and others? The answer is simply because we want to.

*“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own **desires and enticed**. Then, **when desire has conceived**, it give birth to sin...” - James 1:14-15*

*“...among whom also we all once **conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind**, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” - Ephesians 2:3*

- i. It is true that we do things we don't want to like go to work, go to school, or do chores around the house. However when we do these things we either do them half-hearted or we eventually cease to do them all together.
- ii. But when you are doing what you are passionate about no one has to motivate you to give your all and no one has to encourage you to keep going. Why? Because it is your passion. You want to do it. You desire to do/experience it.
- h. Thus we should see that desire, or what some call affections, are the driving force of every human whether Christian or not.

### 3. Identifying Desire

- a. We have seen that the driving force of life is desire, not ethics, or morals, or any sense of right and wrong. Affections are the rudder that directs our path in life.
- b. So then how do we identify our deepest desires? What test can we put our own heart up against to see truthfully what our heart covets?
- c. There are three tests listed in Luke 12 that will truthfully point out the deepest affections of our heart.

- i. What brings you most joy - The first is seen in verse 19, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and **be merry.**”
  - 1. This is even more clearly seen in Matthew 13:44.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven **is like treasure** hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and **for joy over it** he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”- Matthew 13:44

- 2. It seems obvious but your heart loves and desires whatever brings you most joy. Whatever your affections are most satisfied in is your true treasure.
- 3. What brings you most joy? In what are your affections most satisfied?
- ii. What you worry about - In the very next verse after Jesus finishes His parable we read this:

“Then He said to His disciples, ‘Therefore I say to you, **do not worry** about your life...’ - Luke 12:22

- 1. We see the issue of worry and anxiety brought up again in verses 25, 26, 29, and 32. What’s the point? You only worry when something you love is threatened.
- 2. So if you want to know what your heart loves and desires the most simply ask yourself what makes you the most anxious?
- iii. What you seek - Lastly, Jesus restates the idea of desire and affection in terms of action. From verses 29-31 He uses the word “seek” or “seeking” three different times.

“**And do not seek** what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the **world seek after**, and your Father knows that you need these things. But **seek the kingdom of God**, and all these things shall be added to you.” - Luke 12:29-31

- 1. Love will always lead to action. By nature desire always produces some type of movement. This is why sin originates in desire. So whether good or bad, righteous or evil, you will put time, money, and effort into whatever you find most joy in.
  - a. These actions will always be aimed at achieving the first two tests listed above: Either to satisfy your joy or to protect it.

#### 4. You Worship What You Love

- a. If this is true, that our deepest desire and strongest affection drives our life, than that means that we ultimately serve the object of that affection. Put another way, your affections point to what you worship.
- b. Everyone worships something, even those who don’t claim to worship anything at all. Some worship material things, sex, attention, another person, a sport, a hobby, or a

career. But deep down everyone worships whatever it is that pulls on desires of their heart.

- c. But each of these are rooted in something deeper. The person that loves material good is really deeply in love with what those goods do or gain for them. And those who crave some type of romantic or sexual relationship in reality crave the seeming pleasure and satisfaction it gives them.
- d. All of these desires and affections, the things we covet, are primarily rooted in a love of self. Most people do what they do because it benefits themselves and they love themselves more than anything else.

*“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and **changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the an image made like corruptible man** - and birds and four footed animals. **Therefore** God also gave them up to uncleanness, **in the lust of their hearts**, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and **worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator**, who is blessed forever. Amen.” - Romans 1:22-25*

*“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, **passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.**” - Colossians 3:5*

- e. The core sin every person commits is idolatry, the worship of something, namely ourselves, other than God. Meaning our core issue in life is an over desire for our own glory, our own comfort, and own joy in things outside of God.

*“For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.” - Jeremiah 2:13*

- i. It is important to realize that most idols are innocent. By innocent I mean they are good things like family and friends and the various blessings of God upon the earth not murder and adultery and witchcraft. But any time we turn a good thing into a god we are full blown into sin and darkness.
- f. Do you see what this means? It means that our greatest sin is not an action, a moral failure, or an ethical shortcoming. Our greatest sin is a feeling. Or to be more accurate a lack of one.
  - i. Humanities greatest sin that gives birth to all other sin is that we desire, we love, we covet, ourselves and other things more than we do God.
  - ii. But more precisely our gravest sin is not that we love other things it is that we do not desire God. It is not necessarily our over desire for others things that is the problem it is our lack of desire for God.

*“If you asked twenty good men today what they thought the highest of the virtues, nineteen of them would reply, Unselfishness. But if you asked almost any of the great Christians of old he would have replied, Love. You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive, and*

*this is of more than philological importance. The negative ideal of Unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others, but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point. I do not think this is the Christian virtue of Love. The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, **but not about self-denial as an end in itself.** We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses **in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire.** If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, **it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.**” - C.S. Lewis*

- g. Let me summarize what Lewis just said - Our issue is not that our desires are out of control and overbearing and need to be denied, it's that they are too weak and that we are too easily pleased with shallow and fleeting pleasures.

## 5. Conclusion

- a. Let's attempt to put all the pieces of this argument together. We have said that the driving force of human life are desire and affection; that which brings us most joy.
- b. Therefore we can say that whatever we find most joy and pleasure in is what we truly serve and worship.
- c. Thus our chief sin against God is not that we have overbearing desires in wicked things but our chief sin is that we have to weak of a desire and do not find our ultimate joy in God but rather settle for lesser pleasures.
- d. So if desire is rooted in joy and our joy is directly tied to our worship then we must ask ourselves a question in regards to our worship of God.

*How then is God most glorified in my life? Or, as a Christian how is it that I bring most glory to Christ?*

## Discussion Questions

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1. *Try to identify your chief desire by asking yourself what brings you most joy? What worries you the most? And where/how/what do you spend your time, money, energy seeking? Is there a common thread or correlation between your three answers?*

2. *What are you allowing yourself to be satisfied with? Why do you think that is?*

# God's Glory and Our Satisfaction

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*"You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." - Psalms 16:11*

## 1. Introduction

- a. We ended our previous session saying that our primary issue in life is not that our desires for joy and fulfillment are out of control and overbearing and need to be denied, but that they are too weak and that we are too easily pleased with shallow and fleeting pleasures.
- b. We also concluded that our deepest desires are rooted in our pursuit of joy and that whatever fulfills our joy is ultimately what we worship.
- c. Thus we concluded by asking this question:

*How then is God most glorified in my life? Or, as a Christian how is it that I bring most glory to Christ?*

## 2. God's Glory and Our Satisfaction

- a. The issue at hand is one of gravest concern. This is because we have come to the very foundation of Christian worship and Christianity itself.
- b. The fundamental claim to being a Christian is that we worship Jesus Christ. What we are essentially asking now is what does that exactly mean?
  - i. Does that mean we believe certain truth claims?
  - ii. Does that mean we sing certain songs?
  - iii. Does that mean we live in a particular way?
- c. What do we mean when we say we worship Jesus? That is the basic question before us. I am going to give you my answer and then spend the rest of our time together arguing and hopefully showing that it is true.
- d. So how is Jesus most glorified in my life?

*Christ is most glorified when I am most satisfied in Him. Therefore the the way to bring Christ the most glory is to pursue my joy and fulfillment in Him alone.*

- e. I am going to argue this two ways:
  - i. That the very nature and foundation of our conversion is a change in desires.
  - ii. That delight is greater than duty.
- f. We will then finish with how it is we can fight for Christ to become our supreme joy and great treasure.

### 3. A Change in Desire

- a. To say that I am a Christian is to say that I have become a new person. Anyone who has encountered Jesus will say that the moment they did they became a completely new person inside and out.

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, **he is a new creation**; old things have passed away; and behold, **all things have become new.**” - 2 Corinthians 5:17*

*“And I will give you a **new heart, and a new spirit** I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My commands.” - Ezekiel 36:26-27*

- b. But in what way have we changed? In our conduct? Sure but unbelievers can modify their behaviors as well. In our morality? Yes but people of all faith's and religions and worldviews can and do live by a set of morals. In our belief system or our idea of truth? Yes, but anyone can say they believe and the Bible tells us that even the Devil believes that Jesus is the Son of God.
- c. The truest miracle of salvation is that our desires are transformed and our greatest joy is now found in God Himself.

*“For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to **my earnest expectation and hope** that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so **now also Christ will be magnified in my body**, whether by life or by death. **For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.** But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit for my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, **having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.**” - Philippians 1:19-23*

- d. Paul's earnest expectation and hope was to magnify Christ with His body. What does he mean by this? That his passion, purpose, drive, and greatest desire if life is to honor and glorify and magnify Jesus.
- e. How will Paul do that? What does that look like? In two ways:
  - i. To live is Christ - Paul would live in such a way that the sum of his whole life would be Christ. Everything in his life would point to Christ, be rooted in Christ, be for the glory and majesty of Christ.
  - ii. To die is gain - Secondly Paul says that he will glorify and magnify Christ by the way in which he dies. How will he die? In such way that views death as gain!
    1. But why would death be gain? What could a person gain in death? The reason death is gain for Paul is death means he gets to be with Jesus. And this he says (being with Jesus) is his great desire!

*“Finally, my brethren, **rejoice in the Lord**...For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, **rejoice in Christ Jesus**, and have no confidence in the flesh...But what things were gain to*

me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed **I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, **that I may gain Christ** and be found in Him..." - Philippians 3:1, 3, 7-9

- f. Let's return to an earlier passage that shows this same reality.

**"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."**- Matthew 13:44

- g. Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to treasure that when found produces such joy that a person upon finding it will willingly give up anything and everything to possess that treasure.
- h. According to this passage how you know a person is a Christian is by whether they treasure Christ more than anything else and find the fulfillment of their joy in Him to the point that nothing else matters.

**"If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised."** - Song of Solomon 8:7

- i. What would you give for Christ? If Christ came and required that you give everything you have away simply for Him would you be able to do it with happiness and joy? This was the test given to the rich young ruler and he failed it. Would you?

**"Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' So Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and your mother.'"** And he said, **'All these I have kept from my youth.'** So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, **'You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.'** But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich... Then Peter said, **'See, we have left all and followed You.'** So He said to them, **'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.'**" - Luke 18:18-23, 28-30

- j. Here was a man claiming to want to follow Christ. He said the right things and did the right things. In fact he had kept the law since he was a child. But Jesus takes this man's request for salvation to the heart level of desire and joy.
- k. Does this man treasure Christ more than anything else? Is Christ His greatest joy and treasure? Because only those whose treasure is Christ Himself are true followers of Jesus.

- i. In fact Jesus goes so far to say that everyone who wants to follow Him will have to leave all. But, although they will lose some things in this life they will gain much more both now and in the age to come.
- l. So have your desires changed? Is Christ your great treasure? Is He the One that satisfies you more than anything or anyone else?
- m. This is how we magnify Christ. This is how we glorify Jesus. That in our life and in our death we consider all things as loss compared to knowing and gaining Christ because He is our greatest joy and treasure.

#### 4. Delight is Better Than Duty

- a. If Christ is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in Him than I must, as a Christian, pursue to do all things to the glory of God.

*“For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.” - Romans 14:8*

- b. And if the way God is more glorified is by my being fully and completely satisfied in Him than in order to do all things to glory of God I must do all things in and with and abounding in joy.
- c. What do I mean by that? Simply that God wants more than your dutiful obedience. He wants your heart. He is more interested in the motivation for your obedience than the obedience in and of itself.
- d. Let’s look at a few examples from Scripture. Pay attention to the fact that God does not just command us to do or perform certain duties but do them with the proper motivation, mainly love and joy.

*“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, **not grudgingly** or of necessity; for **God loves a cheerful giver.**” - 2 Corinthians 9:7*

*“**Rejoice in the Lord,** O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful...sing to Him a new song; play skillfully **with a shout of joy.**” - Psalm 33:1 & 3*

*“Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. **Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.**” - Psalm 37:3-4*

*“**Your testimonies are my delight** and my counselors” - Psalm 119:24*

*“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and **that your joy may be full.** This is My commandment, that you **love one another as I have loved you.**” - John 15:9-12*

- e. Why is it that God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him? Because delight is far more valuable and precious than duty.
  - i. Have you ever received a Christmas present you didn't like? Socks maybe? You open it up, see how uninspiring of gift it is, and know that you have to put on the fake smile and look your aunt right in the eye and say, "Thank you" because you know it is the right thing to do.
  - ii. Have you ever received a gift that meant the world to you? Maybe it made you cry or jump for joy. Upon opening that gift you are immediately overcome with joy and affection and turn to your aunt and exclaim, "Thank you!" because of the joy overwhelming your heart and affections.
  - iii. Now which one means more to the gift giver? The begrudging thank you that is rooted in a sense of duty or the joyful thank you that springs forth from happiness? Obviously the later.
  - iv. So why do we believe that what God wants most or what brings God most glory is simply our dutiful obedience? Doesn't our joy being fulfilled completely in Him bring Him most glory and Him most praise.
- f. Can't you see that joy is actually the doorway into praise? Delight is what ushers us into true and pure worship of God. In fact joy necessitates praise in order that joy might be complete and perfected.
- g. What do I mean by that? C.S. Lewis again does a masterful job here explaining this point:

*"I had never noticed that **all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise** unless (sometimes even if) shyness or the fear of boring others is deliberately brought in to check it. The world rings with praise - lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game - praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars...I had not notices either that just as **men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them** praising it: 'Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that magnificent?'...I think **we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment**; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. **It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is...**"*

- h. How true that is. We have all felt the rush of joy or affection come into our hearts about something and our immediate desire is to tell someone else about it. Furthermore, as Lewis points out, our joy increases and is completed in our act of outward praise and evangelism.
- i. True worship that brings Christ the most glory therefore is not our dutiful obedience and observance of the Law but our finding Him to be our supreme joy and delight.

## 5. Conclusion

- a. So what does all of this mean for us? If God is most glorified when I am most satisfied in Him then how do I grow in my joyful satisfaction of God?
- b. We are told over and over again that conversion and salvation and thus the transformation of our appetite to one that enjoys God is a gift from God not a work of man. Therefore this is not something we simply try harder at. You can not grit your teeth and produce more loving affection for Jesus. It doesn't work that way.
- c. Salvation occurs and a desire for God is birthed when we come to see and realize that before God was ever my joy, my desire, my delight, I was His.

*"...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, **who for the joy set before Him endured the cross**, despising the shame, and has set down at the right hand of the throne of God." - Hebrews 12:2*

- d. You were the joy set before Christ that not only sustained Him but actually caused Him to die on the cross. On the cross we see that we are God's treasure that when He found, He gave up everything to come as a man and die for you and me so that we could be near Him.

*"For **Christ also suffered** once for sins, the just for the unjust, **that He might bring us to God...**" - 1 Peter 3:18*

- e. When you see that you were God's ultimate treasure and the one in whom He delights in and that He came to show that love for you by dying on the cross, when you truly see that, joy and affection for Him will come alive in you and your desires will transformed.