

Heaven Cent

Storing Up Incorruptible Treasure

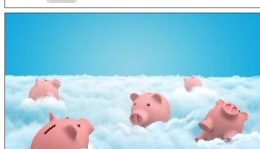
September 18, 2022



Today we're talking about seeing *ourselves* by the the giving in our living. So, based on the way you treat your treasure, right now, how are you looking? **Are you rusty or trusty?**



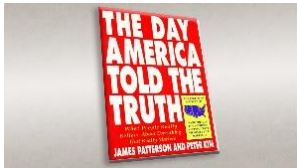
Well, as we've seen, **it's the earth-first hoarders who rust and rot while the heaven-centered givers grow and gain** – by trusting that *their* treasures belong *back* in the hands of the God who gave 'em! And I love our illustration of this lesson in the *buried* Belvedere that went from *new* to ewww in 50 years flat. In fact, we *all* liked it so much that Ken bought one for Bruce! But *apparently*, great minds think alike – because *Bruce* had already ordered one for *me*! However, when it arrived, we realized it was the *rusty* version... *Inadvertently*, we collected the whole set! But why did they make one to memorialize the big *mistake*? Why is there a market for that? Why such a *universal* impact? Well, **rust is a universal problem. And it slowly but surely corrodes and destroys**; whether it's your garden *shovel*, a building's *I-beam*, or a welded work of *art* – rust will *rob* of *usefulness*, *integrity*, and *beauty*. And we all know it first-hand.



I remember the first time I learned rust's power. Y'see, 17-year-old *guys* aren't *known* for their responsibility, and I had a shabby Subaru that *somehow* frequently had open windows on rainy days. Well, cut to a sudden stop where my *stomping* foot went right through the floor... It was eye-opening to *see* how quickly a little neglect could reduce a *modern* machine to a *Flintstone* car! And the sad universal truth *is*: **no matter what we do, from sand-blasting and sealing, to priming and painting, eventually the rust will win.** So, in the parable of "The Incorruptible Treasure" Jesus warns us *not* to invest in *earthly* things:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [Remember in the parable of the talents, how, in the end, ol' one-talent is thrown out into the darkness? Well] The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good [the word means *healthy* or *generous*], your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad [i.e. *unhealthy* or *stingy*], your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters [y'know, like *God* and *Money*]. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. – Matthew 6:19-24 NIV

Hey, speaking of money, Powerball was \$225 million last week... *did you get any tickets?*



I mean, it is *only* \$170 million *after* taxes; but still, I could live on that. What would you do *with* \$170 million? What would you do *for* \$170 million?! James Patterson and Peter Kim conducted extensive surveys for their book, “The Day America Told the Truth”, and examined what people would be willing to do for \$10,000,000. **25% would abandon their entire family ... forever.** 23% would become prostitutes for at least a week. 10% would withhold testimony to free a murderer. And 7% would take the life of a stranger! Maybe *those* are the folks who said they’d set a murderer free!

But do you remember the Twilight Zone episode where a couple *agonizes* over pushing a button on a box that’ll bring them *riches* but *kill* a stranger; someone they’ve *never* met. Well, spoiler alert – they end up pushing it, and a mysterious man shows up with their money and takes the box. They ask him where the box will go next and he says, **“To a stranger.”** And then he grins and says: **“Someone who has never met you!”**

Well Christian author **Steve Farrar says our whole country is infected with a cultural disease he calls: Affluenza.** The symptoms include: the desire for *more and more* – no matter how much we *have*; an obsession with *success* – unrelated to our *joy*; and the inability to accept less than the best of *everything*. And money’s in the middle of it all. We *work* for it, we *budget* it, and we *worry* about *not* having it and *daydream* about having *more* of it. And yet – **God’s not against wealth.** Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Solomon were all wealthy and it’s *God* who gave the riches:

Wealth and honor *come* from You – 1 Chronicles 29:12 NIV

And so, assuming my mom filling our freezer full of jars of jam *wasn’t* a sin – **what is it, or how is it, exactly that we’re not supposed to store up?** Well, two things help us understand this passage. First, the term “store” means to “hoard”, and then notice what follows:

Do not store [hoard] up for yourselves – Matthew 6:19 NIV

God isn’t against saving *responsibly*; but hoarding *selfishly*. The qualifying question *is*: **Do I own my possessions or do they own me?** Jesus doesn’t want to *deprive* us of treasure, but to direct us toward the only type of wealth that brings true and lasting joy. In fact, **our investment strategy should be J.O.Y. (Jesus, others, you).** And sure – it’s good to have a savings account and a home and a retirement plan. But **our first priority should be our post-retirement plan!**



You might have an I.R.A., but do you have an E.R.A. (*eternal* retirement account)? Well, Jesus uses three things to make His point on money’s *temporary* nature: **The Moth, the Rust, and the Thief.** And last Sunday, James referenced the three ways wealth was *hoarded* in Jesus’ day: grain, garments, and *gold*. But because *clothing* was the main way people could *publicly display* wealth, garments were *loud* and *lavish* and even stitched with real gold strands. Cuz this was way before stainless steel and galvanized metal, so *gold’s lasting* look really *stood out*. Maybe *that’s* why we like the idea of Heaven’s streets being *paved* with gold.

This rich believer begs God to let him bring some of his vast wealth to Heaven; so, God makes an exception and allows *one* suitcase. But, he's clever; he converts everything he owns to gold and fills the *biggest* suitcase he can find. There's quite a stir at the Pearly Gates! The angels gather 'round as the man opens the case and reveals the shining gold. The angels in the back call out, "**What's in it?!**" An angel in the front shrugs with bewilderment and says, "**Asphalt.**"

Meanwhile *down here*, between the *moth*, the *rust*, and the *thief*, **we've got that which consumes, that which corrodes, and that which captures.** And *altogether* they demonstrate the full *foolishness* of making material possessions the meaning of our lives.



However, we *have* really *improved* since Jesus first spoke these words; *know how?* We've invented moth balls, Rustoleum, and burglar alarms!



But even they can't save us from rusting away. It's true! If you think back to chemistry class, you'll remember *rust* is just *oxidation* of iron-rich metals. And the *same* oxidation that disintegrates iron into dust can cause our cells to mutate and make mistakes that lead to a whole host of health problems! That's why we're so set on promoting *antioxidants* to the public; because **it takes effort to convince us that we, ourselves are worth saving!**



For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [And your *mind* and your *time* and *energy* and *attention* and *anxiety!*] – Matthew 6:21 NIV

Because, on *earth*, to preserve *anything* we love, we gotta maintain 'em, sustain 'em, and protect 'em. And **when we serve anything with such care, we make it our master.** If you own a boat, you know all about it! So the more I *hoard* – the more the *attention*, *energy*, and *commitment* of my heart is **consumed, corrupted, and captured.** And as we saw last Sunday, **God doesn't need my money, but He does demand my heart.** And where your treasure is, there's your heart! Cuz we're going to *think* about, *focus* on, and *concern* ourselves with our valuables. And we get so *hypnotized*, it's no wonder Jesus uses our eyes as the lens to see the way we look at life.

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, [the word means *healthy* or *generous*] your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, [i.e. *unhealthy* or *stingy*] your whole body will be full of darkness. – Matthew 6:22-23 NIV



The "good" eye views life as an investment opportunity for heaven. Because it's focused on Christ, it brings in "light". The "bad" eye is blinded to what life is really about and exchanges eternal riches for luxury, laziness, and excess. But once again, this warning *isn't* about *wealth*, it's about *greed*. Forget *pink eye* – the really deadly disease is *green eye*! And it afflicts those on Wall Street just as much as those on welfare! Maybe even *more*! So, regardless of where you're at, we all need to answer the same hard question: how "good" do you think *your* eyes are?



Well, let's find out! **I think it's time we all take an eye exam!** Just answer each question honestly to yourself. Ready? Do you give...

Proportionally The more you *make* the more you *give* because you *see* that the more you *bless* the more *you're* blessed.

Sacrificially You see that *true* sacrifice will often require a personal cost of the giver.

Anonymously You *don't* see the need to call attention to your giving; but you *do see* the joy in blessing others secretly.

Expectantly You see that you're *giving* what you cannot *keep* to *gain* what you cannot *lose*;

Generously You see the *goal* and *purpose*; it's *not* to raise our standard of *living*, but to raise our standard of *giving*. Remember, some of these are indeed harder to see!

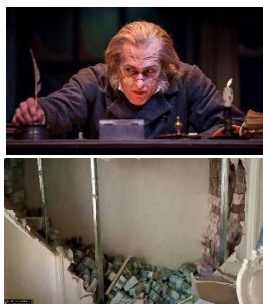
Cheerfully You enjoy *seeing* the *difference* your life can make.

Regularly You see to it that first things are kept first.

Faithfully You see obedience in giving as *worship*; and you give in order to *communicate* to God that money is *not your master*. Because:

No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve both God and Money. – Matthew 6:24 NIV

Now, the word Jesus uses for “money” is a proper noun – a *name*. He *personifies* it. That's why the NIV capitalizes the letter “M”. Because **material possessions with a capital “M” will personally fight for supremacy in our lives**. Because, *like* a god, they promise us *security*, *freedom*, and *power*. But *unlike* the Lord, they fail *miserably* in the end. The bottom line is that there're two kinds of people: trusting *givers* and rusting *hoarders*. And while the givers *grow* and *gain* true joy, it's the hoarders who make themselves *miserable*. *Literally*.



Know the root of the word "miserable"? Miser (one who lives meagerly in order to hoard money). Ever hear of someone who dies *seemingly* poor, and they find a huge secret stash of money somewhere? That's sounds nuts! But **that's what happens when we make our goal our God instead of making God our goal**. Money is a merely a *means* and never ever the *end*! Wealth is to be *used* to for God's good, not pointlessly *accrued* without plan or purpose. Which is why **attachment to money leads to a detachment from God**. Which is why we need to keep our money in the *lower* case.

In the end, the choice is pretty straightforward: **we can trust or we can rust**. And we don't have to be *wealthy* to be materialistic because it's not *about* your wallet; it's about your worship!

So what's in *your* worship? We can easily see by the way we treat our treasure...
And what do you say we fix *our* focus and allow *God* to raise our standard of giving?

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.