


Radical Faith:
The Hard Sayings of Jesus
Part 3: Radical Treasure

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. *—Psalm 145:11*
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. *—Joshua 22:5*



Questions for Reflection

- Which of the following statements is **more** true of you:

"I cling to my possessions, find it hard to lend them to others, and become angry/bitter when they are damaged/taken away."

or

"I have renounced ownership of my possessions and consider them the Lord's, gladly lending and giving them to others, and thanking Him when they are damaged or lost."

How does your response to these statements compare to where you were five years ago?
To where you hope to be in five years?

- What possession is **hardest** for you to have a Matthew 6:19 attitude about?
- Are you willing to ask God to help you learn to renounce your possessions, saying something like: *"Lord, I know that in reality You own everything and have let me manage it for a while. Please help me to handle Your things with a loose grip. Please help me grow in gratitude, and in generosity."*

Why or why not? If not, **what would it take** for you to be willing?

- Read Luke 4:1-8. In what ways was Jesus tempted by the things of this world?

How did He respond?

What resources do we have to help us respond as He did?

What role does grace play in your successes and failures to respond as Jesus did?

How could grace play a greater role play in it for you?

Application-Challenge

- Give Jesus your heart.
- Give to God first.
- Leverage your earthly resources for heavenly gain.

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Sermon Summary

We are in a series of messages where we are examining the hard sayings of Jesus. Some of Jesus' sayings are hard to understand, some are hard to hear, but some are just hard to do. Today's saying falls into that category. In Matthew 6:19, Jesus commands: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth..." Jesus' point here is really pretty simple. He is saying, "Heaven, not earth, should be your goal. We are here for just a little while. Why would you store things in a place where you are just passing through?" But there is something inside all of us that wants to store things. Jesus says, "Hey, that's ok, just store them in the right place."

Based on the rest of Scripture, Jesus is not saying that we need to take a vow of poverty. We know this from both the Old and New Testament (Proverbs 10:4, Job 42:12, Ephesians 4:28). Throughout the Bible, wealth is a blessing from God upon those who work hard. Money isn't the issue. The issue is our attitude towards it: what we do with it and where we store it. Jesus is saying that, as his followers, it should be obvious by how we handle money that heaven—not earth—is our goal. Jesus makes it clear that where we store things is a heart issue. He teaches that where our treasure is, our heart is (Matthew 6:21). Living in a materialistic culture, the pull of our heart is to get, get, get...more, more, more...and then store, store, store. Only by generosity can we loosen the grip that materialism has on our lives.

If you are going to learn to store up treasures in heaven, Jesus says that you first and foremost need to cultivate a generous heart. And next, you need to work towards living a focused life. In verses 19-21, Jesus is talking about money. And then in verses 21-23, he is talking about eyes and lamps, light and darkness. And then he talks about money again in verse 24. While on the surface they may seem unrelated, they are not. In verse 22, Jesus states, "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light." In other words, when you are focused on storing up treasures in heaven, it is like lighting a lamp with a match and suddenly, that lamp illuminates everything. And your whole life will be filled with light because you are on the right path.

But the opposite is also true. Verse 23: "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" Jesus is saying, "If you are not focused on eternity, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light that you think you have is really darkness, then how great is that darkness. You think you are seeing clearly, but you are not. So, you will just keep heading down that dangerous path."

Then Jesus makes this hard saying even harder with this last saying in Matthew 6:19-24: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." Jesus is teaching that if you want to store up treasures in heaven and not on earth, then don't be enslaved to money! If money is your master, then God is not. Three attitudes help us as we struggle with this hard saying:

Give Jesus your heart. Jesus is generous, and until you understand that, you are not going to be generous. When you receive God's love, it changes everything. When you receive his love and his forgiveness, it changes your outlook. It will turn you from a stingy person into a generous person, because treasure and heart go together.

Give to God first. When you get paid, give a percentage of that back to God and his church. When you give to God first what are you saying? You are saying, God, first and foremost you have my heart, not money. It is impossible to say that you serve money, if you give to God first. When you give to God first it loosens the grip of materialism. Your heart grows. Your generosity grows. Your walk with Christ grows.

Leverage your earthly resources for heavenly gain. Ask yourself, "How can I use the things that I have for heavenly gain?" We all have things that we can leverage in ministry to others. That is a great way to store up treasures in heaven.

Church, we are not going to be here long. We are just passing through. Let's don't store up treasures here on earth. Let's store them up in heaven!

Talking To Others About This Week's Message

If a neighbor or friend at work asked you, "What kind of stuff do they talk about at your church?", how would you summarize the most important elements of this week's sermon and the key lessons you intend to apply to your life? Can you explain it in **plain language** anyone could understand?

Far from a peripheral, mundane matter, the Bible presents the grace of giving as a core aspect of what it means to be a member of Christ's church.

Romans 15, 1 Corinthians 16, and 2 Corinthians 8-9 yield ten principles which show that regular giving is rooted in central themes of the gospel: the grace of God, the cross of Christ, and the unity of the Spirit...

1 Christian giving is an expression of the grace of God. (Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-6)

Paul does not begin by referring to the generosity; behind the generosity of Macedonia, Paul saw the generosity of God. Our gracious God is a generous God, and he is at work in his people to make them generous too. How easily our comfortable western culture can deaden our sensitivity to others' needs, but the Macedonian's suffering (poverty) made them sensitive to the needs of others. Jesus suffered and gave himself for us; Titus had been exhorting the Corinthians to give in the same way as Jesus and the Macedonians.

2 Christian giving can be a *charisma*, that is, a gift of the Spirit. (Read 2 Corinthians 8:7)

The Corinthian Christians had many spiritual gifts; Paul exhorts them to excel in the grace of giving as well. Romans 12:8 lists "contributing to the needs of others" among the list of *charismata*. Some Christians are given the "gift of giving"—they are entrusted with significant financial resources and therefore have increased responsibility to give.

3 Christian giving is inspired by the cross of Christ. (Read 2 Corinthians 8:8-9)

The grace of God is at work in us (v. 1), and the grace of Christ challenges us to respond in like manner (v. 9). This is one of the most penetrating principles. Notice the two references to poverty and the two references to wealth. Because of our spiritual poverty, Christ renounced his riches so that through his poverty we might become spiritually rich. As we give, may we, too, reflect on the cross, and all that was achieved for us through the death of Christ. How meager are our earthly riches in comparison!

4 Christian giving is proportionate giving. (Read 2 Corinthians 8:10-12)

Eager willingness must come first. So long as it is there, our gifts are acceptable in proportion to what we have. There also are times when we are called to give as the Macedonians gave—***out of proportion*** to our income. This is a sacrificial offering. But Christian giving should never be less than proportionate to our income.

5 Christian giving contributes to equity. (Read 2 Corinthians 8:13-15)

Paul is putting the affluence of some alongside the need of others, and calling for an adjustment. The Greek word, *isotes*, can mean either "equality" or "justice". This is not egalitarianism (equal income)—but if, due to disparity in economic status, we are embarrassed either to visit other believers in their homes, or to invite them into ours, something is wrong. The inequality is ***too*** great, for it has broken Christian fellowship.

6 Christian giving is carefully supervised. (Read 2 Corinthians 8:16-24)

Paul not only wanted to do right, he wanted to be seen to do right. What steps did he take? First, he did not handle the financial arrangements himself; he delegated it to Titus. In addition, he sent a trusted brother along with Titus. The people carrying the offering to Jerusalem were elected by the churches because they were known to be trustworthy.

7 Christian giving is stimulated by friendly competition. (Read 2 Corinthians 9:1-5)

Paul boasted of southern (Corinthian) generosity, so that the northerners (Macedonians) would give generously. Now he urges the southerners to give generously, so that the northerners will not be disappointed in them. Paul played the north and the south off against each other in order to stimulate generosity in both. We too can be stimulated to greater generosity by hearing about others' generosity (especially when church leaders first set the example).

8 Christian giving resembles a harvest. (Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11a)

We reap what we sow. Whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly. Whoever sows generously will reap generously. We are to give based on settled conviction ("what he has decided in his heart to give"). Our decisions to give are to be reached after careful consideration; rarely is it necessary to give on the spur of the moment. Our reaping has a double purpose: both to provide for our needs and for further giving.

9 Christian giving results in thanksgiving and glory to God. (Read 2 Corinthians 9:11b-15)

Authentic Christian giving leads people not only to thank us, the givers, but also to thank God. They see our gift as a reflection of God's indescribable grace, shown supremely in the gift of his Son.

10 Christian giving has theological significance. (Read Romans 15:25-28)

Twice Paul notes that "they were pleased to do it", and twice he notes that "they owe it" as well. Giving expresses our confidence in the gospel—it's worth it to give. Giving expresses our belief that every man, woman, and child bears God's image—they deserve to live in humane circumstances. Giving acknowledges the centrality of God's purpose—his desire for our maturity. So much is involved; Christian giving is no simple transfer of money! What an awesome privilege we have in helping others around the globe as together we give glory to God!