

Sermon Sunday 8th August 2021

Matthew 6:19-24.

In the preceding Chapters of Mark's Gospel Jesus has been teaching about such matters as the Law, anger, lust, the poor or needy and loving one's enemies to mention a few; importantly the preceding part of this Chapter in verses 5 to 14 Jesus teaches about Prayer and gives us the Prayer we know today as the Lord's Prayer.

He then goes on to teach about money. We live in a materialistic society where everything is counted in wealth or money. Man has created institutional structures paying vast sums of money to individuals and generally forgetting the weak and needy. Look at salaries and bonuses earned in banking for example and low salaries paid in the retail industry. This difference is not fair or just. This discrepancy can I believe be described as evil. If we are to live in a fair society, we must change this evil for the good of all.

Jesus is teaching us about money or wealth and how we use it, in our reading from Matthew's Gospel today. He starts by warning us about storing up

treasures on earth where they can be destroyed or stolen. Jesus tells us to store up our treasures for Heaven but what does this mean for us? Yes, by all means carry on tithing your wealth but it means obeying God in all things and how we use our wealth here on earth. I mentioned tithing just now; tithing or giving our wealth for God's work is like investing treasure in Heaven provided our intentions are right. Don't be like the Pharisees and rich men in the Temple openly showing their wealth as they place their offerings in the box, openly boasting about their wealth but be like the widow putting her two mites, all she could afford, quietly in the box without drawing attention to herself or openly moaning that's all she has.

Jesus is telling us we should use our wealth for the fulfilment of God's work but it is so much more. Everything, not just the use of wealth, we do should be about seeking God and doing His work in all we do, say and act or put more simply having God at the centre of all we do in our lives. This way we too can store up treasures in Heaven by serving God.

Jesus tells us in verse 22 'THE EYE IS THE LAMP OF THE BODY. IF YOUR EYES ARE GOOD YOUR WHOLE BODY WILL BE FULL OF LIGHT.' I recently had a cataract operation. During the operation as the cataract, shown as a yellow covering on the screen I was focusing on, was removed from my eye, I saw an amazing white light. That operation and its outcome reminds me so much of this reading from verse 22 of receiving light, the light of God. Jesus here is talking about spiritual vision; for us to have the light of God in our hearts, governing everything we do or say and see clearly what God wants us to do. Don't let spiritual vision be clouded by being selfish, by creating wealth or gathering possessions for our own use. All these block God's vision or light in us.

Jesus then tells us we can only have one master. VERSE 24 'YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD OR MONEY.' In some translations of the Bible the word 'money' is replaced by the word 'mammon' which has come to mean the devil or something evil. The word, my research has shown me is an ancient Syrian word meaning in fact 'riches or wealth.' However, it still means we cannot serve God or money. Timothy

reminds us in 1 Timothy 6:10 'THE LOVE OF MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL.' There's the word 'evil' derived from the word 'mammon.' If we lust after wealth and money or just accumulate possessions for our own good, we are displacing God in our lives.

Jesus here, I think, is telling us that if our possessions or wealth are becoming more important to us, we need to cut back and let God back into our lives or to let the light of God in. Jesus is telling us to live with what we have in a contented way or manner. By following God and His teachings in all we do we can use our wealth or possessions to serve God and mankind. So, it is all about having God at the centre of our lives and using all we have in His service and the service of others.

To use words from the materialistic world in which we live, rich or poor, we can all serve God and our fellow man in so many ways; by giving all we can afford and more, always think more in God's service or helping someone who is lonely by talking to them which costs nothing and in doing this we are using God given wealth in our lives in His service.

So, rather than just accumulating earthly wealth or possessions live contentedly with what we have, use it in God's service and have God at the centre of our lives, this way we accumulate incorruptible heavenly treasures. Amen