

## **“Where Our Treasure Is”**

### **Luke 12:32-40**

“Do not be afraid, little flock,  
for it is your Father’s good pleasure  
to give you the kingdom.

Sell your possessions, and give alms.

Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out,  
an unfailing treasure in heaven,  
where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit;  
be like those who are waiting for their master  
to return from the wedding banquet,  
so that they may open the door for him  
as soon as he comes and knocks.

Blessed are those slaves

whom the master finds alert when he comes;  
truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt  
and have them sit down to eat,  
and he will come and serve them.

If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn,  
and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

“But know this: if the owner of the house  
had known at what hour the thief was coming,  
he would not have let his house be broken into.

You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming  
at an unexpected hour.”

## Where Our Treasure Is

Luke 12:32-40

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### I.

This morning I would like us to consider both the notion of treasure, and where we keep it. Treasure is not a word that most people very often use in common parlance. Which is odd, because we *all* have treasure, or, at least, things *that* we treasure, but seldom do we consider or speak of such things in this way. My guess is for most people, like me, hearing the word “Treasure invokes images of a large chest, with metal bands and a massive hasp and lock being buried on a desert island by a roguish band of pirates. What also comes to mind, correspondingly, is the mythical treasure map, drawn on unrolled parchment paper, tattered and torn at the edges complete with landmarks, cryptic markings, and paces to be marked off to where X marks the spot.

### II.

Treasure is also not just *valuable*, like money, but something *valued* in a way that transcends actual monetary worth. There is emotion behind notion of “treasure,” perhaps even a passion which may seem extreme or, at the very least, disproportional. As if what the treasure *represents* supersedes the treasure *itself*. Treasure, almost by definition, is something hidden, concealed, or securely squirreled away somewhere. Treasure would seem to cause a wariness, or even a kind of paranoia about its safety and security. Treasure also seems to be understood and function more as a savings account than a checking. Rather than something we utilize on a daily basis, it serves as those reserves which are kept for that rainy day which may, or may not, ever come. Counter intuitively, treasure’s greatest value seems to be in the *having* of it, rather than in the *using* of it.

### III.

My guess is one of the reasons that the notion of treasure seems antiquated or quaint, is that the currency of the today’s modern realm is no longer coin or precious metal, and cash is no longer king. Instead, value is an *abstraction*.

It is the plastic in our wallet with strip or chip, ones and zeros floating in the ether dispensed with a swipe on a smart phone, and, now, Cloud based crypto-currency. Heck, I've asked my tech savvy son, Tucker, to explain to me several times just what "Bit Coin" is all about, and I'm still not sure I really get it. I remember the old joke about a person insisting they must still have money because there are still checks in the check book. Now-a-days, people don't even *use* checks, its all electronic transfer and on-line bill paying.

#### **IV.**

In this modern age, all we have, our money and wealth, is just a couple of mouse clicks, and a few lines of computer code, away from a pimply faced 23 year old sitting in his room at his parent's house chugging Red Bull, following the electronic bread crumbs right to our very own desert isle standing over the X we marked so well for him, while he labors tirelessly to simply try and figure out the right shovel to dig up our treasure chest. Yes, indeed, brothers and sisters, the days of money under the mattress, or buried out in the yard in a mason jar have long since disappeared. Not only has the treasure itself seemingly disappeared, right along with it went the notion of *what* we treasure. Its hard to treasure the treasure when you can't see or touch the treasure itself.

#### **V.**

For my money, this leads to the real problem: when the treasure is ambiguous and obfuscated, so, too, is the *treasuring* and, eventually, *what* we treasure. In the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson writes: *We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all people are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*

In a world where treasure is no longer evident, truth ceases to be *self-evident*. It used to be parents, churches, and schools strove to teach our kids the difference between right and wrong. Now, we are lucky if we can convince them that there *is* a difference between the two; let alone what that difference might be. Everything has become *contextualized*. As if the person who spoke or acted in such a way, and their reason for doing so, had any bearing on what was said or done.

## **VI.**

There is no longer an equivalent to the gold standard when it comes to truth; virtue is only ever situational and transactional. Value is now derived from the specifics of the source, and the good it gains us. Expressed another way, what matters now are not the words which are being said or the acts that are being done but, rather, what we choose to believe about who is doing the speaking and undertaking the action, and if we like them or agree with them. With the ends always justifying the means; truth, facts and relevance be damned.

At this point, I'm going to invite us to take a pause. I can appreciate that what I'm saying may seem to be a picture being painted rather bleakly; but it doesn't need to be. In fact, it is only in seeing such a study in gray, that we come to discover that each of us holds an entire pallet of color in one hand, and a brush in the other.

## **VII.**

Many years ago I heard an analogy about human history and development which really hit home with me; it made sense. We humans, as a species, are now moving through a period of civilization likened to adolescence. We have developed the mature body of an adult, with strength and ability, but we are, as of yet, immature in our emotionality and thinking. In short, we are powerful and effective but, at the same time, very often exceedingly foolish. Like a 15 year old, physically we can do just about anything. However, right along with such abilities is the teenage tendency to do remarkably dumb things, and to make a staggering array of poor choices. And, like a 15 year old, we have begun to question what has been taught and told to us; including social norms, ethical standards, and the foundations of truth and virtue.

## **VIII.**

We are in that period of development where we are questioning and shedding what was given to us, but we haven't yet developed our own sense of what we value, and what is valuable in the world. Now, I will fully admit, that the value structure under which we operated as a species for the past several thousand years, in all its various historical and culturally diverse expressions, has been very often been deeply flawed and profoundly unjust. However, it was *something*, a place to start, a toe hold, a context that provided some

modicum of societal cohesion. Now, it seems, that the baby has been thrown out with the bathwater. We have been unmoored and set adrift. We are starting from scratch, nothing is sacred anymore, there are no absolutes. Which, again, isn't necessarily a terrible thing, though it sure feels that way sometimes.

## **IX.**

What it means, however, is that we have to get busy, and there is absolutely no time to waste; the moment is at hand, and the time for excuses is over. Our scripture passage today, from Luke chapter 12, begins with what sounds like a wonderfully comforting promise: *Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* The good news is, the kingdom is indeed ours, but the bad news is we have to help to bring it about, and do something with it once it arrives. So, Jesus tells us we are to be dressed and ready for action, to be alert and have our lamps lit, for the Son of Man is coming at an expected hour. The most important part of our preparation, however, is to assess and identify what we value most in life; that is, our treasure. For where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also.

## **X.**

Up until the past 50 years, the story of human history consisted, chiefly, of following the map others had provided us: governments, religions and despots had put us on a path to seek a treasure which was not our own. These days, however, the treasure is *wholly* our own, but we have no map to guide us to it, and, really, no genuine sense of what that treasure might be. Hence, we have no cause or motivation to treasure it; it is merely an abstraction (like Bitcoin).

Like when we, as Christians, talk about "The KINGDOM of GOD." We tend to see it in abstract terms. Yes, there will be peace and justice and everyone will be welcomed home to it. But, how will actually act toward and treat one another? What is the explicit and unassailable difference between right and wrong? What are our moral and ethical standards? What does such our treasure look and feel like? How will things like virtue, honesty, and character be manifested? How will we safeguard these things? How will go about treasuring the treasure? And where, exactly, will this treasure reside with heart in tow?

## **XI.**

I think you will agreed, that in some ways, these are exceedingly *difficult* questions to answer in an ever pluralized and diverse world. However, *not* answering them is no longer an option; the time is now and there is no time to waste. At the very least, we need to be having these conversations. *Conversations*, not shouting matches. In other ways, though, these are exceedingly *easy* questions to answer. Especially if you already know where your treasure and your heart has taken up residence.

## **XII.**

For us, as people of faith, as followers of Christ, our hearts and our treasure are kept and safeguarded here in this church where X marks the spot (point to cross). Among an imperfect but loving and forgiving community of truth seekers. A group of people who have made careful examination, and are clear on what we believe and how we should act; not overbearing or self-righteous, but resolved and committed. Folks who have their lamps already lit, are alert, and ready to go. Who stand ready not only to welcome the Kingdom, but are also prepared to help usher it in. Children of God who understand not only the treasure we possess, but also the importance of gathering each week to actually treasure such a treasure. Dedicated to guarding it, by the words we speak and by the actions we take, but also delighted to share it with any who stand at the door and await the knock upon it (rap, rap). Amen.