

Lesson 14

Spiritual Focus

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 6:19-24

Summary

- Jesus gives many teachings about the dangers of earthly riches in the gospel. While it is not sinful to possess earthly riches, one can easily turn them into idols.
- The rich young ruler decided not to give his possessions to follow Jesus. The Lord told him to sell all he possessed, give to the poor, and receive treasure in heaven (Mark 10:21). These instructions grieved the young man. Mark 10:21 says, “he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.” He foolishly put his stuff before his Lord!
- The key to obtaining great physical blessings and being saved is trusting God (Mark 10:27). No amount of money can buy a person entrance into heaven. Salvation is a gift that one must obtain through trust and obedience to God (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- Jesus addresses this issue further in Matthew 6:19-21. He warns disciples of being focused on accumulating earthly possessions. Earthly possessions get old, lose their luster, break down, and can be stolen. By contrast, spiritual riches are eternal. They are protected from corruption, decay, and thievery.
- Jesus often teaches about the need to pursue spiritual riches first by talking about the value of the kingdom of heaven. He compares it to treasure hidden in a field (Matthew 13:44), an expensive pearl that one sells everything they own to buy (Matthew 13:45-46), and a great inheritance from the Father (Matthew 19:29). The treasures that one absorbs himself in obtaining are where his heart can be found (Matthew 6:21). It is where he has put his trust and complete focus.
- In Matthew 6:22-23, the Lord continues this theme by using the example of the human eye. The human eye is a metaphor for the heart. Jesus uses the term “eye” for the same purpose in the parable of the workers (Matthew 20:15). The workers who had worked the longest had an envious “eye” because others who worked less got paid the same as them.
- When disciples have good eyes (hearts), they will be generous, good stewards, and use their possessions to bring glory to God. But, when they have bad eyes (hearts), they will be greedy, selfish, and use their possessions only to benefit themselves. The rich man of Luke 16:19-31 was someone who refused to use his earthly wealth to help someone in need. This ultimately cost him his soul!
- Every person must decide who will be their master (Matthew 6:24). Will their master be God or money? Will a person be possessed by their possessions or completely devoted to God? Will their righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Luke 16:13-14)?

Study Questions

1. List some ways someone can fall into the trap of storing up treasures on earth? Why is this a trap so easy to fall into?
2. List some ways to store up treasures in heaven? Why are storing up these treasures so often neglected?
3. In what way is the eye a lamp to the body? Find other examples in the Bible where the metaphor of the "eye" addresses a similar point.
4. What often gets in the way of our "eyes" being clear? List some practical things that can be done to avoid this problem.
5. Provide some practical examples of ways in which people try to serve "two masters." Why does Jesus say this is foolish?
6. What is the outcome of living a life focused on pursuing earthly treasures? What is the outcome of living a life focused on pursuing spiritual treasures?
7. Why would Jesus include this topic in the Sermon on the Mount? How does this topic fit into the overall message of the sermon?