



MONDAY 17 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 6:19-21 & Ecclesiastes 12

Plug In...

Regarding giving, praying, fasting, Jesus said do it in a way that is for God's eyes only. The rest of chapter 6 helps us get one-eyed for God.

The context pushes the metaphor of 'treasure' beyond money. So far, previous passages warn about seeking glory, fame, esteem from others. The treasure is anything that builds your own profile and glory on earth. By the metaphor of rust and moths, Jesus reminds people that this is foolish for everything will decay.

Verse 21 explains that life is one big treasure hunt. The question is what are we chasing?

Chew It Over...

We are mad people. We know everything decays yet we madly keep running to things just as flimsy with the hope to squeeze out a bit more life before the end. The clues are everywhere. Rust-free nails still rust. Stainless stuff, stains. Crinkle-free shirts need ironing. We can't outrun degeneration. Fame is fleeting; money can't buy the elixir of life – no one stocks it (Psalm 49:7-8). As everything falls

down and we fall down, it injects anxiety about life. The Teacher in the Book of Ecclesiastes notices that everything falls down. So, the Teacher concludes run after God, it is madness otherwise.

If we embrace this worldview of Jesus we end up with two questions to use in conversation with others whenever their goals and plans come up:

1. **Why?** As you hear people talk about what they're doing, ask them why, what are they hoping to achieve/get? Everyone is doing something in order to accomplish something (what treasure hunt are they on?). In the context of relationship, this then leads to a great follow-up question...
2. What happened? Asking them what was the result, did they get what they were after.

In our friendships, weaving in questions that get people to think about what they are aiming at and how it went, helps them notice that life is flimsy.

Prayer Suggestion

Ask the Lord to give you questions that help people see. Bring to the Lord today a friend for which you know their heart is bent on something rickety.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 6:22-23

Plug In...

"The eye is the lamp of the body". Such a powerful image and that keeps turning over to catch a number of different ideas together.

- The eye is like holding a lamp out in front of you to find your way.
- The eye is like switching on a light in the middle of the house to light the whole room.
- The eye is from where you focus your gaze and sets direction.

If the lamp has little wick or oil, it will be poor and you'll stumble down the path. Likewise, turn the light on and if low wattage then everything is blurry.

Chew It Over...

Jesus follows on from the image by enigmatically saying the eye-light of a person can be so bad that the whole person is in darkness. This image and warning rolls on from the previous question of what is your heart following? (Matthew 6:21) Now, what is your eye fixed on?

It is possible to illuminate your whole house with darkness. How do you figure out if that is the case? Try evaluating what you do in the daylight – where do you go, what do you read, what do you watch. Where are your eyes pointed? What is the quality of light? If we are willing to take a good honest look through the window to the soul, all these provide clues as to where we are heading.

Prayer Suggestion

Lord! We remember that Israel failed as a light to the nations. We praise you that in Jesus the light has switched back on (Matthew 4:15-16). Flood our house with the light of your Kingdom. Fix our gaze on you. May the overpowering wattage of Jesus burn publicly that even others may be attracted to the flame (Matthew 5:14-16).



WEDNESDAY 19 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 6:24

Plug In...

God or money. English Bibles try to give some concrete application to the Greek word 'mammon'. Some translate it "money", others "possessions". Some leave it as "mammon". Occasionally a word in one language easily pulls along with it a bunch of concepts because everyone in that culture knows that's how the word works. However, once translated to another language it becomes static. You end up string multiple words together, or giving a sentence to capture the more dynamic meaning. To translate *mammon* as 'money' is too one-dimensional. Dynamically, it means: possessions, stuff, dreams, goals, whether materially based (like money, property) or abstract (like status, fame, success).

Jesus says you cannot double-dip, it is not possible. Don't be fooled, you will be doing one of two things: either serving God, or serving mammon. It is impossible to be part-time Christians.

Chew It Over...

How do you figure out who *really* is our master? Again, honestly looking over what you run around doing; where you spend your time. This will illuminate who/what controls you? Probe into what you worry about? What you spend time planning (and how much time)? What are your nightmares? Your day-dreams? Test yourself, what of God's values are squeezed out? (prayer, reading His word, attending church, sacrificing in order to help others). When presented with options (maybe a choice between two jobs), what needs to be ticked off on before you'll take one?

Resolve today to not waste your life attempting the impossible.

Prayer Suggestion

Lord! Please help us to be good at our professions, wise with money, to run our business profitably. Yet, may we do all these things only in the service of you. Help us sort this out. Make everything else subsumed under "May Your Kingdom Come". When there is a crises of allegiance in our daily affairs, may our love for you come out on top. May there be a clear line between what we do and the love we have for you.



THURSDAY 20 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 6:25-33 & 1 Peter 5:7

Plug In...

Jesus has just said a person cannot serve both God and mammon. Earlier, he said pursuing treasures on earth is futile as they will rust and decay. After these observations, Jesus begins the next section with "Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life". Jesus address the root of our anxieties and worries. His observations include that we are worried people, we are worried our life is running out (v.27). This anxiety plagues the human race. Since the worry of death hangs over our heads, Jesus explains this worry is what leads to a whole bunch of actions (clothing, food, drink – and the previous mentions of money, possessions, treasures) designed to add a bit more life; to stave off the grave for bit.

Jesus provides clarity on reality with some further observations which must have implications that alleviate worry and anxiety for his people:

1. The whole world is in the hands of God – look at the birds, the flowers.
2. The world in God's hands will fade under this hand of God – look at God's control of the grass growing up and then being destroyed.

Chew It Over...

This needs to have massive implications for our level of anxiety and stress. If you are deeply worried, have you forgotten, or fail to believe that God is truly in control of every little detail?

Jesus shares the way back to peace of mind. The real worry of loss (rust, decay, death) serves as a reminder that the world is indeed under judgement, but it is not random, God is the one behind its pending demise (remember the lesson of the grass). It is the Father who knows we need life, given the backdrop of death. The Father knows we need resurrection from this decaying world; our decaying bodies. *Therefore*, seek His Kingdom, seek Jesus – and everything will be yours.

The New Testament teaches us that Jesus' resurrection is the firstfruits of those that will rise from this decaying world. It explains, therefore everything is Jesus'. (1 Corinthians 15:20-28). Those that are joined to Jesus finds everything is theirs as well.

Worries and anxieties are about the future. If we understand Jesus' work and resurrection, we understand that Jesus has given back our future. Surely our worries must evaporate the more we grasp that. Worries are a trust in something other than God.

Prayer Suggestion

Should you be worried today follow up 1 Peter 5:7 and pray accordingly.



FRIDAY 21 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 6:34

Plug In...

After giving reasons not worry, Jesus concludes with “each day has enough trouble of its own”. Here Jesus acknowledges that life right now has many troubles. Yet, Jesus tells his followers not to worry about tomorrow because, as he has explained, whatever happens tomorrow belongs under the control of God.

Chew It Over...

Exploring our worries will show that they are rooted in some fear of loss in this life. Spot yourself worrying, then we really must do what Paul said in Philippians 4:5b-6 “*The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petitions, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God*”. The key to dissolving worry is to recognise that Jesus is Lord and that he is *near*. To be Lord, the prerogative of God, is to have the name of the one with all control, all power, all authority, and is ever present and reigning everywhere – see Psalm 93).

Worry and anxiety is a disease that is out of proportion amongst Christians today. Practically, the only hope we have of doing what Jesus says and indeed no longer worrying (NB: v. 34 is a command) is if we really do trust that Jesus is *Lord*. Do you trust God is Lord of

all and controls everything? Have you bitten off more than you can chew, worrying about the future of which only God knows and directs?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray Philippians 4:6 – God will listen and He can do something, He is Lord.



WEEKEND 22-23 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 6:19-34

Plug In...

Read again this whole section, for in an anxious-ridden culture, there is release from anxiety for the Christian.

The final verse highlights that thinking about 'tomorrow' can be a big distraction. Hebrews 2:15 is helpful in understanding why the human race worries about the future – tomorrow. The inevitability of death generates a fear that grips our life. We spend our efforts trying to bring in a future where we are safe. We worry about how to go about achieving it; worry, will we achieve it.

We've been called to have single-eyed devotion to God and His Kingdom. The God of the universe has mapped the future and as a Father of His Children has told us about it, told us we're part of it so as to not worry.

Chew It Over...

In an anxious-ridden culture we need to think about what things we do, how we speak, that carelessly exacerbates the anxiety of those we influence. If we are anxious, we can easily nurture those we lead and influence into anxiety too – we can foster and pass it on.

Augustine said that many a person has used the excuse that they are investing in their children. The time at work, the chasing of the dollar, the need for investment portfolios may well be done in the name of 'setting up your children', but Augustine goes on to say: "It is a great duty of natural affection, it will be said, for a father to lay up for his sons; rather it is a great vanity, one who must soon die is laying up for those who must soon die also...see to it that greed does not take you in with a sweet suggestion and lovely deception like this".

First, do you have that deep assurance that everything will be okay because you know who your Heavenly Father is and what He is doing? Second, how can you make that single-eyed clarity accessible to those you lead and influence?

Prayer Suggestion

Lord, again we pray may your kingdom come! Help us to seek above all else your kingdom and righteousness.