

Where Is Your Heart? (Matthew 6:19-21)

Rev. Ian K. Johnston

St. John's Presbyterian

February 24, 2019

Cornwall, ON

[This sermon influenced by an address given by Rev. Richard L. Hamm DOC]

Most of all of us have heard this message so many times that we no longer hear it at all. We figure we understand it, and there is nothing else in it for us. It is a straightforward, simple proposition. But think about this passage again for a moment. Jesus had a way of taking the obvious truths that everyone accepts as common sense, the obvious truths that go without saying, and putting them in a new light.

What we *think* this passage says is, *Wherever your heart is, there will your treasure be.* That's what we hear because that's the truth that *goes without saying.* We all know it is true that wherever our heart is, that is where our treasure will be.

For example, if your heart is thrilled by cars, you will probably invest a lot of money in a car that your heart really wants. If you love boats, you'll probably work hard to obtain the one that pleases you.

A lady gave her husband a wall hanging that said, *the only difference between men and boys is the price of the toys.* She gave that to her husband right after he bought an airplane, which was basically indeed where his heart was, and she said, *our money soon followed.*

But Jesus doesn't say, *where your heart is, there will your treasure be.* He knows that true; *we* know that's true; *everybody* knows that's true. It's obvious. What he does say is *also* true but more subtle... as matters of the spirit often are.

He says, *where your treasure is, there your heart will be.* Do you hear the difference? Of course, we are going to invest where our heart is, but Jesus' point is that our heart will be where we invest! So the question for us is, *where is your heart?* Which is really the same question as, *where do we invest our treasure?*

A couple of years ago, I invested a considerable amount of treasure in a new vehicle. Now, it might not be what you would want in a family vehicle, but for me, it was perfect: 15 inch cast iron many wheels, V-6, touring suspension, in a royal green with wood type side panels! It was my baby! When our son went to get his drivers' license and took his road test in it, I just about fainted. In those first months of ownership, I alienated my wife and children because I insisted on

parking it a half mile from the doors of the mall where no one else parks so there was no chance of anyone denting it when they opened their doors! My family was *praying* someone would ding it, so this would be over with and I'd start treating it like a family vehicle. That was probably the most serious idolatry going on in my life right then! But it did pass.

These things to which we attach ourselves do become burdens. You are familiar with an old saying: *the two happiest days and a man's life is the day he buys his boat – and the day he sells the boat.*

Wherever we invest our treasure, that's where our hearts will be. Wherever we invest our time, our talent, our energy, and our money, that's where our hearts will be.

When Jesus says, *where your treasure is, there your heart will be*, he is making a plea. He is saying, *if you want to be closer to God, then invest in the kingdom of God, and your heart will follow.* You see, this is a *spiritual* issue; your life will be driven and directed and dominated by whatever it is you invest your treasure in. What do you want to have on the throne of your life? *Things*, or *God*? If we want God on the throne of our lives, then we need to invest in the kingdom of God, and our hearts will soon follow.

Recently, a minister (who shall go unnamed) bragged to me that he hasn't preached a stewardship sermon in at least 16 years. He is very proud of that! But let me tell you about his congregation. They pay this part-time minister with money they receive from people who rent their old manse. They give nothing to mission within or beyond their own town, and they are in deep conflict. Is it any wonder? Their treasure is going elsewhere, so their hearts are elsewhere, too. The minister should be ashamed. Instead of leading that congregation into the kingdom, he's letting it all go to hell! And he's very proud of!

Many ministers, it seems, find it difficult to talk about stewardship. I wonder why that is? My hunch is they fear talking about stewardship because they don't really understand what it is themselves. They think stewardship means paying the church bells, including their salvage, and so they feel self-conscious about. They think stewardship means, *paying the bills*, including their salaries, and so they feel self-conscious about it.

What most congregations call a stewardship campaign is not really a stewardship campaign. It's really a campaign to raise the budget. The argument for

giving usually boils down to something like this: we have this many members and this is a the budget, so your fair share is so much. Oh boy! That's exciting! I don't get to pay bills at home, so I really cherish the opportunity to pay the church's bills. What a spiritual blessing!

So what exactly is Christian stewardship?

In the broadest sense, Christian stewardship means taking care of God's world: the environment, the people, the flora and the fauna. It means taking care of the resources God has provided us – the time, the talent, the money – using these resources in ways that are pleasing in God's sight.

You don't believe these things are God given? We brought none of it into the world with us, and we will take none of it out of the world with us. When J. D. Rockefeller died, there was much speculation about his net worth. A reporter asked Rockefeller's attorney, *how much did he leave?* The attorney replied, *all of it!*

You have never seen a funeral procession with a Brinks truck nor even so much as a U-Haul trailer!

It all belongs to God, but it is on loan to us for a time.

Stewardship means taking care of God's world, taking care of the resources God has given us, and today we need to recognize that it means responding to God's love by giving gifts for the work of the kingdom. To put it another way, as Christians, we are called to give out of *gratitude* for all that God has given to us.

I think it was easier to be grateful to God for the simple things of life like food and shelter, when people lived closer to what is called, raw nature. We who live in the cities and towns forget that food isn't really manufactured. It is grown—grown through the efforts of men and women who nurture the soil and the seed against the sometimes cruel forces of weather. Every kernel of corn we consume, every grain of wheat or rice, every piece of fruit, represents a miracle of God's ongoing creation and providence for our sakes. We need to look past our insulation and recognize anew that all good things come from God.

Paul wrote, *give thanks in all circumstances*. That is pretty far removed from where most of us live, but it is good advice. We would do well to develop our sense of dependence upon God and to develop our sense of gratitude for all God's gifts.

How do we develop grateful hearts? How do we give our hearts more completely to God? We invest – in the kingdom.

Where is your heart? Today, on the Sabbath of our Lord, is an opportunity to invest, that your heart may follow. I am not asking you to give your fair share of the budget. I am asking you to respond to God's love and grace in your life. I am asking you to invest where you want your heart to be... because it *will* follow.
Amen.