

Bible Readings

Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

Riches Are Meaningless

⁸ If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. ⁹ The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.

¹⁰ Whoever loves money never has enough;
whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.
This too is meaningless.

¹¹ As goods increase,
so do those who consume them.
And what benefit are they to the owners
except to feast their eyes on them?

¹² The sleep of a labourer is sweet,
whether they eat little or much,
but as for the rich, their abundance
permits them no sleep.

¹³ I have seen a grievous evil under the sun:

wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners,

¹⁴ or wealth lost through some misfortune,
so that when they have children
there is nothing left for them to inherit.

¹⁵ Everyone comes naked from their mother's womb,
and as everyone comes, so they depart.

They take nothing from their toil
that they can carry in their hands.

¹⁶ This too is a grievous evil:

As everyone comes, so they depart,
and what do they gain,
since they toil for the wind?

¹⁷ All their days they eat in darkness,
with great frustration, affliction and anger.

¹⁸ This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. ¹⁹ Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. ²⁰ They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.

Matthew 6:19-24

Treasures in Heaven

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

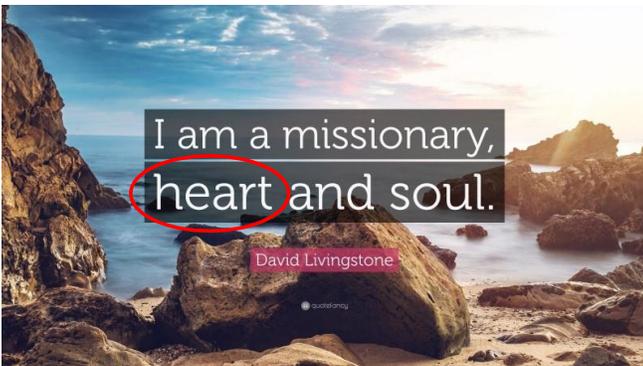
²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Intro

- **Scottish missionary and explorer of Africa - David Livingstone**
- **Born 19th March 1813 and died 1st May 1873**
- David had a **remarkable reputation** as a **dedicated Christian**, a **courageous explorer** and a **fervent antislavery advocate**. So passionate was his **commitment to Africa** - he described himself as - a **missionary, heart** and **soul**

[PowerPoint 1-David Livingstone]



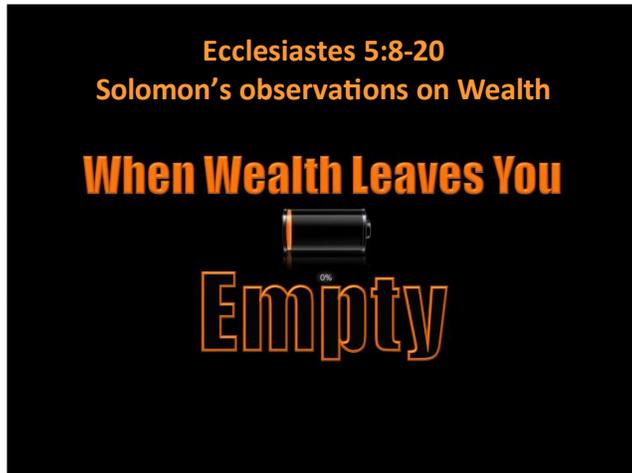
- When David died - his **heart** was **buried under a mvulu tree** in **Zambia** (aka Northern Rhodesia) = now the site of the Livingstone memorial
- His **body** was **buried** in **Westminster Abbey**
- You see - David **treasured Africa in his heart**- so it's understandable his **friends buried his heart there**
- I wonder what we treasure in our heart?

(pause)

Solomon observations about wealth (Ecclesiastes 5:8-20)

- The **writer** of our OT reading from **Ecclesiastes** - probably King Solomon

[PowerPoint 2-Ecclesiastes]



- He had lots of treasures
- His wealth was amazing
- If anyone can write about wealth - it's King Solomon
 - From 2 Chronicles 9 - we discover Solomon had
 - **25 tons of gold** - today 1 ton of gold is worth 63 million dollars - so 25 tons of gold would be **worth about 1.5 billion dollars**
 - Plus, he received **taxes** from **traders and merchants**
 - Plus - the Kings of Arabia and governors of the Israelite districts brought him **silver and gold**
 - Plus - he had **200 large shields** - each covered with **15lbs of gold**
 - Plus - he had **300 small shields** - each covered with **8lbs of gold**
 - **Large throne** made out of **ivory and pure gold**
 - All of his **drinking cups** were made of **gold**

- He had **fleet of ocean-going ships** - which every 3 years brought **gold, silver and ivory, apes and monkeys**
- Because he was the richest and wisest king in the world - all other **kings and leaders** came to him for wisdom and brought him **gifts of silver and gold - robes, weapons, spices, horses and mules**
- He had **4000** chariots and horses
- He had **12000** cavalry horses
- And from 1 Kings 11 - we discover Solomon had:
- **700 wives of royal birth** and **300 concubines**
- As Solomon reflects on his life in his old age - He **sees a problem with the love of wealth**
- He makes **4 observations**

I. **1st observation - There will always be people who are poor and oppressed**
(vv8-9)

- We shouldn't be surprised that there are poor and oppressed people - because we live in a **fallen broken world** - and because there are those at the top of the chain - who are greedy and hoard all their money and don't share it -
- and we shouldn't be surprised there are poor and oppressed because there is **exploitation and corruption** in the world (e.g., Mexico)

II. **2nd observation - The love of wealth brings dissatisfaction** (vv10-12)

- Because when people love money - they always want more - they might not be satisfied with a \$500,000 home they want a \$750,000 home with a huge yard and a pool and a spa
- And because when people become rich - more people turn up for a help or a handout - so there is a striving for more and more
- And sometimes people who are rich don't sleep - they are kept awake thinking about all their business interests and projects. An example is Rene Rivkin - entrepreneur, investor and stockbroker (who died in 2005) - he would often stay up all night to watch the stock markets in various countries around the world

III. 3rd observation - There is uncertainty and futility in accumulating wealth (vv13-17)

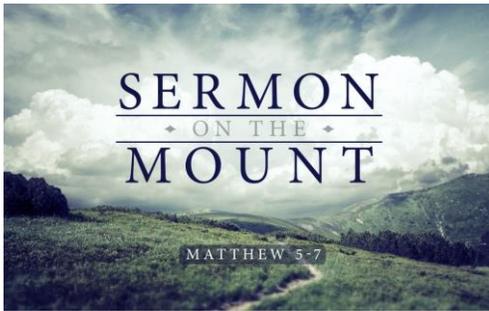
- Uncertainty because one minute the rich person has built up a huge amount of wealth - and then suddenly the stock market crashes - as it did in 2007 (Global financial crisis) and as it did last year (COVID19) - and suddenly their wealth is halved or disappears - and they have nothing to leave their children
- Accumulating wealth is also futile - when we realize how much we can take with us when we die - absolutely none of it - ask the Egyptian Pharaoh's - they took all their treasures with them...
- And there is no guarantee of happiness - just because we're rich. The rich can still be lonely, sorrowful and frustrated - sometimes more than

the poor. The **Apostle Paul in Philippians 4** - says for us to be content with our lot - **content with much and content with a little**.

IV. **4th observation - Make the most of what you have - wealth is a gift (vv18-20)**

- After reflecting on life - **Solomon's conclusion is to make the most of whatever job we have and enjoy it for as long as God gives us life**. The **wealth and possessions we have are all a gift from God - in fact we only have anything because God allows it**.
- So, we should **enjoy what we have**
- In the final analysis - We have to realize that **Solomon's heart** (his innermost desire) **was for his wealth - and not for God - and his accumulation of possessions and his accumulation of wives (often so he could build alliances and receive even more riches) - **his wealth and his wives - turned his heart away from his first love - God**.**

[PowerPoint 3-Sermon on the Mount]



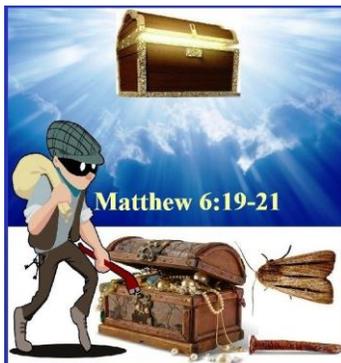
- In our look at the **Sermon on the Mount** in the last few weeks - **Jesus** has been looking at the motives of people's hearts
- He's talked about:
 - murdering people in our hearts;
 - committing **adultery** in our hearts;
 - the **commitment** in our hearts to **marriage** (as opposed to divorce);
 - He's **questioned** if we have a heart of revenge;
 - He's **told us to have** a heart for our enemies;
 - And to have a heart for those in need and **give** from our heart;
 - And **taught us to pray** from our heart - and not for show.
- Now here in our passage this morning - **Matt 6:19-24**
- **Jesus** **tackles** what we treasure in our hearts
- And **Jesus** **warns** against the **danger** of **worshipping our wealth** with all our heart - rather than worshipping God with all our heart.
- And **Jesus** **says** it's a matter of choice.

- Jesus gives 3 illustrations of this choice

The choice between two treasures (Matt 6:19-21)

- 1st illustration compares 2 treasures - in vv19-21
- Earthly treasure and Heavenly treasure

[PowerPoint 4-Treasures]



- Jesus says: **don't store up for yourselves treasures on Earth**
- The key word here is "yourselves" - we can have treasures or wealth here on Earth - which we use for God's purposes and to help others - but if we're storing them up for ourselves - that shows where our heart is - it's for ourselves - and not for God or others
- Jesus also says there's a problem with earthly treasures - clothes get eaten by moths; crops and food can be eaten by vermin - **material things can rust and breakdown** - and **sometimes our stuff can be stolen**
- What if we lost everything in a fire - **how would we feel?** I guess it depends on how much of our heart is in our stuff?
- Jesus says everything we have on Earth is **temporary** - it's **perishable** - it's **corruptible** - it doesn't last

- So, **Jesus says a better thing to do is to store up treasures in Heaven** - which are **permanent - imperishable** - and incorruptible
- **What does He mean by treasures in Heaven** - as we've already been told by King Solomon - **we can't take anything with us** - **so Jesus can't mean taking our treasured stuff with us to Heaven**
- Well **let's be clear Jesus is not saying do good deeds so we get to Heaven** - **because Jesus has already given us a ticket to Heaven** - **in His love and grace** - **in dying on the cross for us**
- Heavenly treasure looks like this:
 - We put **God and His Son Jesus first** in our lives
 - We develop our **Christian character by making our priority** - **spending time with God in prayer and reading His word** - **and applying it to our lives**
 - Then **through God's Word and the Holy Spirit** - **and living a Christ centred life** - **we can show the love of Jesus to others** - and **share our faith** - so that **they can become followers of Jesus** - and **they can spend eternity in Heaven** - **where they will be a Heavenly treasure**
 - We can **also invest our wealth and possessions in helping others in need** - **so they see the love of Jesus and the Gospel in action** - and **they may come to love Jesus too** - and **again** - **they will be a Heavenly treasure**
 - **Remember Jesus said in Matthew 25:40** - **whatever we do for people - we are doing for Him**
- **Jesus says - where our treasure is - that's where our heart is**

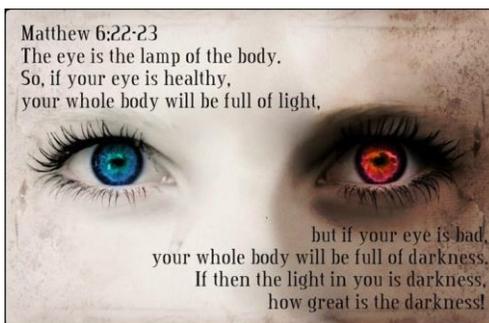
- The question for us this morning is: Are we treasuring God and His Kingdom work in our hearts - OR - are we treasuring ourselves and our stuff in our hearts?

(pause)

The choice between two eyes (Matt 6:22-23)

- 2nd illustration compares 2 eyes - in vv22-23

[PowerPoint 5-Eyes]



- A healthy eye and an unhealthy eye
- Our eyes are so important to help us move in the right direction
- For example - when I lived in Manchester, we often got snow
- Try walking across a field full of snow
- How do you do it?
- If you walk by just looking at your feet - I guarantee you will not cross the field of snow in a straight line
- You need to focus your eyes on something on the other side of the field
- Then you will make it across
- That's Jesus' point here -

- Just as having healthy eyes help us see well and focus well - and gives us good physical vision - and gives us the direction to go
- In the same way if we have good spiritual vision - our eyes will be focused on God and living a life pleasing to him. If we have bad spiritual vision - our eyes will be focused on our stuff - our wealth - ourselves
- Jesus is also making the comparison that a healthy eye sees light whereas an unhealthy eye sees darkness. This gives us the choice of walking in Jesus' light or remaining in the dark. We have a choice - focus on Jesus and walk in His light or walk our own way and into darkness.
- Again, for us this morning - where is our focus? On God and Jesus or on our stuff and ourselves?

(pause)

The choice between two masters (Matt 6:24)

- **3rd illustration compares 2 masters** - in v24
- **Jesus says we can't serve two masters**

[PowerPoint 6-Masters]



- The two masters He's talking about - are **God** and **money**
- **Money** would be **better translated as mammon**

- Mammon is more than money
- It's all the things we value - our **property, possessions, riches, keepsakes, heirlooms** - in fact anything in this world that **diverts our attention and love away from God.**
- Let's be clear - when Jesus talks about two masters - He's not **talking about two bosses**
- Some of us may have had 2 jobs and worked for 2 bosses quite successfully
- Jesus is talking about the world of slavery - where a slave was owned by a master - and could not do anything for another master - a slave could only work for the master who owned them.
- **Jesus is saying it's impossible to have 2 masters -**
- We can't serve God and something else
- **We must serve only God**
- We must not serve our money, our wealth, our possessions
- Let's also be clear that **money, wealth and possessions are not a problem in themselves** - it's the love of them ahead of loving God that's the problem
- **Instead, let our money, wealth and possessions serve God**
- If we go back to the early church - and **we mentioned this a few weeks ago**
- Acts 4:32 - All the believers were **one in heart** and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but **they shared everything** they had
- The bottom line is - **God wants our undivided heart - focused on Him.**

[PowerPoint 7-Undivided heart]



- As King David says in Psalm 86:11 and we'll finish here:

Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an **undivided heart**, that I may fear your name.

Let's pray...