

036: Rewards for Secrets

(based on Sermon #32 in the Life of Christ Series)

When I was in high school, I worked as a short-order cook in one of Chicago's highly-rated, family-owned, made-to-order hamburger restaurants.

- It was owned by two brothers, both Christians, who were my bosses equally. How confusing!
- One brother would tell me to go and do something, and not long after, the other brother would call me over to do something else.
- Of course, both jobs were considered priorities, so I was split between the bosses, which was extremely challenging.
- This would happen to the other employees as well.
- In fact, sometimes it would get so intense that the brothers would actually argue with one another over which one's directive should win the moment.
- That was greatly frustrating to me, and to the others who worked there, because no one can serve two masters, giving full loyalty to both.
- It's simply not possible.

God tells us that in His Word:

- Matt. 6:24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.
- The impossibility of serving two masters is even more evident in matters of spirituality.
- Yet many children of God attempt to split their loyalty between God and something or someone else.
- *Mammon* is an Aramaic word meaning wealth or possessions.

- You cannot serve God and *money*, we might say.
- But other words could just as easily be substituted in place of the word *mammon*, and the principle continues to hold true.
- You cannot serve God and *sports*.
- You cannot serve God and *hobbies*.
- You cannot serve God and *employer*.
- You cannot serve God and *family*.
- You cannot serve God and _____ (fill in the blank).

God must always come first.

- He will not accept split loyalty, for split loyalty is no loyalty; it is infidelity.
- Indeed, it is spiritual adultery.
- That's why James could ask:
- James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses!
- Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?
- What will keep us from this dreadful split loyalty?
- Jesus gives the answer in the text.
- Matt 6:19-21 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What keeps children of God from split loyalty is the choice to lay up treasures in Heaven rather than on Earth.

- Making an investment of that nature will ensure that the heart is focused on heavenly things rather than earthly things.
- In other words, where your treasure resides is where your attention will be directed.

- Many Christians think they can give God a little of their time, energy, and money by doing the “church thing” on Sunday, while living for self the rest of the week.
- That is unacceptable to God, for loyalty is divided.
- What husband or wife would accept their spouse’s commitment a day or two a week, while allowing them to be committed to another for the rest of the week?
- What a foolish notion!
- Yet imagine how God must feel when His children essentially do that to Him.

In this study we will explore another qualification for inheriting the kingdom.

- In a nutshell, the qualification is single-mindedness.
- God’s objective is that His children have a single focus — on Him alone — not God plus something or someone.
- We’ve all heard the saying, “You can’t take it with you.”
- How true, but we can send it on ahead by making spiritual investments — that is, by using our time, money, and resources for eternal purposes rather than present fleshly gratification.
- Incidentally, by urging us to lay up treasure *in Heaven*, Jesus is not referring to matters of eternal life.
- This isn’t a command to make sure you are saved (i.e., regenerated), so that you can enjoy Heaven.
- Laying up heavenly treasure is about qualifying to inherit the kingdom of the heavens, the new Jerusalem, the ruling realm of the Messianic kingdom.

The context makes this clear.

- Matt. 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Matt. 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- Matt. 5:19-20 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.
- Matt. 7:21 Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is talking about inheriting the kingdom of the heavens, qualifying to become a co-ruler with Jesus.

- To that end, we are to lay up treasures, which are essentially rewards.
- That raises an important question.
- Is it wrong to be motivated by the prospect of receiving rewards, as some think?
- Is it selfish? No!
- According to Jesus, the prospect of being rewarded is a valid motivation for service.
- If God desires to lovingly reward those who are obedient and faithful and have an eternal worldview, and if He tells us to lay up treasures (rewards) in heaven, then rewards are a valid motivation, for Christ is glorified when we are rewarded.

We certainly don’t want to have a legal, contractual, entitlement mentality toward rewards.

- That would not be Scriptural.
- In fact, Jesus warned against that mindset in a parable in Matt. 20:1-16.

- But it is critical to realize that being rewarded at the Judgment Seat is a very good thing, and ought to motivate us intensely, because when we are rewarded, Jesus is glorified.
- Think about it.
- One of His great purposes in this age is to bring forth many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10) — those who will be adopted as the firstborn among many brethren to inherit a double portion.

When they are brought forth at the Judgment Seat, there will be great rejoicing, for those who are rewarded will serve as His bride and co-regent during His millennial reign.

- They will appear with Him in glory — that is, they will be glorified together with Him.
- Thus, being motivated by rewards is pleasing to the Lord who offers rewards as a motivation.
- Don't let anyone convince you otherwise.
- To be sure, there are other motivations — such as love, and even fear — but reward is also a valid motivation.

This is demonstrated in Peter's second epistle:

- 2 Pet 1:3-11
- 3-4 His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
- 5-7 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to

perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

- 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.
- 10-11 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Notice the five sections of this marvelous Scripture passage:

- 1. Verses 3-4 describe the provision that was given to all believers at the point of regeneration.
- Gal. 2:20 and Rom. 6-8 describe it as Jesus living within, enabling believers to live righteously.
- We appropriate His provision by claiming the promises of Scripture for victory over sin — which requires faith — and, when we do, we become co-participants in His divine nature.
- This is the glorious process known as sanctification, also known as the salvation of the soul (Heb. 10:39; James 1:21).

2. The process of sanctification does not occur automatically.

- Believers must choose to cooperate with God in faith, adding the characteristics of Christ-likeness listed in verses 5-7.
- This happens when we submit to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18), so that He produces the fruit of the

Spirit in our lives in contrast to the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-23).

- 3. Those who consistently do so will be fruit-bearing, according to v. 8.
- 4. On the other hand, v. 9 warns that those who ignore the salvation of their soul (sanctification), will be blind and short-sighted, not fulfilling the purpose for which they were regenerated.
- 5. In vs. 10-11 Peter promises that those believers who make their “call and election (to holiness) sure” — by becoming sanctified unto perfection (maturity) — will receive abundant reward in Christ’s Messianic kingdom.

Incidentally, Peter uses the prospect of reward — abundant entrance into the kingdom — as a motivation to remain faithful in the sanctification process.

- In other words, knowing you can have abundant entrance into the kingdom, you should diligently submit to God’s sanctifying process in your life.
- Jesus said in John 10:10, I have come that you might have life (the *gift* of eternal life) and that you might have it more abundantly (the *reward* of eternal life).
- Paul shared the sowing and reaping principle as a motivator.
- Gal 6:7-8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Reaping life everlasting is the *reward* of eternal (age-lasting) life, which is according to works.

- It is millennial inheritance.
- The same is true for those who *lay hold on* eternal life.

- 1 Tim 6:11-12 You, O man of God ... pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.
- Timothy was already a child of God when Paul wrote this to him, so the *gift* of eternal life is not in question here.
- Paul was admonishing his son in the faith to lay hold on the *reward* of age-lasting life, which is millennial inheritance.
- In Rev. 2-3 Jesus promises numerous rewards to those who are overcomers (victorious saints).
- Crowns are also promised to those who live righteously (e.g., 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10).

Of course, there is also Christ’s conversation with the rich young ruler in Matt. 19:16ff:

- Matt 19:16 Behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”
- This text is commonly misinterpreted to suggest the ruler was wanting to know how to be saved (i.e., regenerated).
- If that is correct, then Jesus sent the man away with a false gospel of works, for He told the man to obey the ten commandments.
- However, the ruler was not asking how to be regenerated, for as a Jew, He was already an Old Testament believer.
- Rather, he was asking how to inherit the kingdom of the heavens — how to obtain the *reward* of eternal (age-lasting) life.

Knowing the man's one stumbling block to becoming fully sanctified, Jesus said to him:

- Matt 19:21 If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.
- After hearing this, the ruler went away sorrowful, because he was quite rich and not willing to pay the price of discipleship that Jesus expected of him.
- Apparently, the man's riches were the one obstacle keeping him from becoming *perfect*, that is, fully mature and sanctified, ready to hear "Well done!"
- Unless something changed later, this man will not inherit the kingdom of heaven.
- He will not rule with Christ in the New Jerusalem.
- When the man had departed, Jesus said to His disciples:
- Matt 19:23-24 "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven ... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

As discussed in a previous study, to *enter* the kingdom is to *inherit* the kingdom.

- It is not a matter of regeneration. It is a matter of sanctification unto reward.
- Why is it so difficult for a rich man to inherit the kingdom of the heavens?
- Because rich people tend to have two masters, a split loyalty — God and mammon.
- But Jesus makes clear in the Sermon on the Mount that no one can serve two masters.
- So, in reality, the rich young ruler does not have two masters, but one.
- His master is mammon, not God.

Christ's conversation with the rich young ruler sheds light on the meaning of "laying up treasure in heaven" in Matt. 6.

- It certainly includes using money and possessions wisely — an admonition that American Christians certainly need.
- But it also includes the very basic matter of obedience and sanctification — becoming set apart from sin and unto God by growing conformed to the image of Christ.
- The heart of rich people is typically with their riches, not with God, and so this rich man needs to strip himself of riches, like a camel going through the eye of the needle — the small doorway into ancient cities where visitors would enter after the large city gates had been closed for the night.
- To get through successfully, baggage had to be stripped off, so the camel could collapse down on its haunches and scoot through the small entrance.

This is a metaphor for a rich man humbly stripping away the baggage holding him back from serving Jesus as his sole Master.

- Only in so doing can a rich man qualify to inherit the kingdom.
- What an indicting message for American — and even western hemisphere — Christians who have so much.
- Furthermore, notice the continuing context of the rich young ruler passage.
- Matt 19:27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?"
- 28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

The *regeneration* that Jesus mentions is the millennial kingdom.

- He assures His faithful disciples that they stand to inherit a place of rulership in that coming age.
- In fact, Jesus expands the offer to anyone who has paid a price to follow Him in discipleship.
- Again, this is *not the gift* of eternal life, for works are involved.
- This is the *reward* of eternal (age-lasting) life, which is the inheritance of life in the age to come.
- To strive for rewards is biblical.
- The apostle Paul certainly viewed it that way and said it plainly in his epistles.
- In 1 Cor. 9:25 he spoke of competing for the prize, so as to obtain an imperishable crown.
- In Phil. 3:14 he referred to it as “press(ing) toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

To Timothy he said:

- 2 Tim 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
- 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.
- Paul was motivated by the prospect of reward!
- Don't let the concept of being motivated by reward ruffle you, because anyone who truly understands the kingdom

knows that *our* glorification is contingent on *His* glorification.

- So it's not selfish to say, “I want to be rewarded,” because when you are rewarded one day, you will have fulfilled His will for your life, and He will be glorified thereby!

Notice again verses 19-20:

- Matt 6:19-20 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.
- Treasures on Earth, in the Middle Eastern mind of the first century, would have included things such as clothing, which tends to fade and become moth-eaten over time.
- Rust is also a corrupter and destroyer of earthly things.
- However, the word *rust* is actually much bigger than it appears in English.

We think of metal getting rusty, like a car, for example.

- But that is only one application of the Greek word used in this passage.
- In fact, the Greek word translated *rust* actually means “eating.”
- Of the ten times the Greek word is used in the New Testament, these are the only two times (in vs. 19-20) the word is translated *rust*.
- All other times, the word is translated *meat, food, or eating*, because that's the actual idea of the word.
- Consequently, what Jesus is teaching is that earthly things get eaten up.
- Yes, metal gets “eaten” by rust.

- But it's more likely these Jews in the first century are thinking of grain getting eaten by mice — or things stored getting “eaten” by mold — or even possessions getting “eaten,” so to speak, by fire, or taken by thieves.
- Even properties and possessions can be “eaten” by a tornado or hurricane or flooding.
- That is what this Greek word actually conveys — all the ways that earthly things get eaten up and corrupted and destroyed.
- With this in view, Jesus urges His followers not to allow the things of here and now to become the focus.
- They merely get eaten up, whereas the things that glorify God last into the age to come.

How do children of God lay up treasures in heaven?

- Several Scriptural answers can be given:
- 1) By adding to faith — virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.
- 2) By submitting to God's sanctifying work.
- 3) By obeying the *spirit* of God's law *inwardly*, not merely the *letter* of the law *outwardly* — and by the word *law* is meant the *law of Christ*.
- 4) By doing acts of kindness and praying and fasting *privately*, rather than with a desire to be seen of men.
- 5) By giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name.
- 6) By confessing Jesus before men.
- 7) By falling into the ground and dying, as a seed that brings forth much fruit
- 8) By denying self and taking up the cross each day to follow Him.
- 9) By living out the Beatitudes – poor in spirit, meek, hungry and thirsting after righteousness, etc.
- 10) By enduring trials and sufferings in a spirit of humility and Christlikeness.

- 11) By living as salt and light in this world.
- 12) By not worrying about the future.
- 13) By entering in at the straight gate that leads to life rather than the broad way that leads to destruction.
- 14) By living out the priorities of the heavenly realm here and now, instead of earthly priorities.
- This is not an exhaustive list, but it represents the heart of the matter.

After admonishing His disciples to lay up treasures in Heaven, Jesus says something unusual about the eye that, at first glance, seems disconnected from the subject at hand.

- Matt 6:22 The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.
- 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!
- Just as your physical eyes bring in light from around you to guide your body, so your spiritual eyes bring in whatever you are focused on to guide your soul.
- If your spiritual eyes are good — that is, focused on Christ alone, as your only Master — your soul will be eternally focused and, therefore, full of light.
- On the other hand, if your spiritual eyes are evil — that is, divided between Jesus and something or someone else — your soul will be temporally focused and, therefore, full of darkness.

Imagine a chart with two columns.

- The left column is labeled “laying up treasures in Heaven.”
- What characterizes believers who make that their way of life?

- They are persevering in faith, single-minded, walking in the light, serving Christ alone, following Him in discipleship.
- The right column is labeled, “laying up treasures on Earth.”
- Those believers are fainting, faithless, double-minded, walking in darkness, having split loyalties, attempting to serve both God and mammon, which is not possible.
- Child of God, you cannot possibly serve two masters.
- Split loyalty is not loyalty to either master.
- You must choose between God and mammon, which represents everything else in life.
- What’s it going to be?
- Are you willing to forsake all to follow Jesus?
- One day, your decisions will be made manifest at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- I challenge you to THINK ON THESE THINGS