

Serm.Series: “Christian Life-skills for Every Age” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN —7/8/2001

Title: “Putting your possessions into perspective”

Text: Matthew 6: 19-24

Introduction: *Illus.: What American’s Gotta Have and Treasure Hunt Quote and True Test of Materialism*

Theme: Our Christian life in Christ is not about what we have or don’t have; nor is it about how we use or abuse the material things of our daily existence; rather it is about where our heart is, particularly whether it is in Jesus.

Asking what, really, is most important to you—and why (Read and print verses 19-21)

- **The valuables of this earthly life**
 1. Things
 2. Relationships
 3. Power/position
 4. Physical life
 5. At the whim of natural disasters, decay and destruction, thieves of all kinds, and finally death.
 6. **ILLUS.: SERVED WELL BY DEATH**
- **The valuables of the heavenly life**
 1. **Untouchable** (*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Col 3: 2-4*)
 2. **Incorruptible** (*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1: 27*)
 3. **Uncontainable** (*You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Psalm 16: 11*)
 4. **ILLUS.: VISION FOR LIFE**

Evaluating how you look at your life’s worth (Read and print verses 22-23)

- **The contrast between a “simple” life and a “cluttered” life depends on what we are taking into view**
 1. A healthy perspective or rotted-out soul (ponaros)
 2. Living in the light or lost in the fog
 3. Walking in the truth or constantly stumbling in denial
- **In Christ--counting up our real worth**
 1. **A special creation** “*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*” Psalm 139: 14
 - **ILLUS.: VALUING MOM**
 2. **A perfect redemption** “*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.*” Is 43:1
 3. **A lasting possession** “*For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the people who live on earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his own special possession. Deut. 14: 2*

Determining what will own you (Read and print verse 24)

- **An either/or proposition**
 1. There is no middle ground to what we devote our life
 - a. Either we find our life and hope in Jesus or we try to find it in things
 - b. Either we devote our lives to serving things to get things or to God through whom we receive all things
 2. “*Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.*” Josh 24:13-15
- **Is our devotion defined in the gift or the Giver?**
 1. Possessed by our possessions or owned by the Giver
 2. Leaving a legacy behind *FOR* our children and *IN* our children
 - a. **ILLUS.: WATCH THE LESSONS YOU GIVE**
 - b. *After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time--if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and provoking him to anger, I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed. . . But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul. Deut. 4: 25-29*

What American's Gotta' Have

A recent Business Week poll listed inventions Americans said they couldn't live without (by percentage): Automobile--63 Light bulb--54 Telephone--42 Television--22 Aspirin--19 Microwave oven--13 Blow-dryer--7.8 Personal computer--7.6 **Parade (12/29/96).**

Leadership, "To Verify."

Treasure Hunt

The world is poor because her fortune is buried in the sky and all her treasure maps are of the earth **Calvin Miller, "The Finale."**

Leadership, Vol. 4, no. 4.

True Test of Materialism

"The real point of materialism is not how much we have, but what has us. It's not what we hold, but how tightly we hold it. Not what we have, but how we got it. The test of materialism is whether our goods have made us proud or grateful, self-sufficient or God-sufficient." **Joseph Stowell, "Preaching for Change," *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching*, edited by Keith Willhite and Scott Gibson (Baker, 1999), p.138**

Served well by loss

Sudden loss often simplifies life. One man put it this way when he suddenly found himself on a hospital bed. He writes: "I came to realize I no longer really cared for what the world chases after, such as how much money you have in the bank and how many cars are parked in the garage. As it says in Ecclesiastes, chasing after these things is like chasing the wind, anyway. Suddenly, the rat race became vanity to me, utter vanity. I felt naked before God. "If I died, I would take none of the stuff with me. All that really mattered ultimately was my relationship with the Lord, my relationship with family and friends. If it weren't for the loss of my health, I could have wasted the rest of my life chasing achievements and acquiring more transitory things." I'd say his loss served him well, wouldn't you? **Bill Hybels, "The Often-overlooked Benefits of Losing," *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 80**

Vision for Life

Tree-skiing may sound like a death wish, but some skiers love the risk of skiing virgin powder lying in a stand of aspen or spruce. The key, of course, is not hitting the trees! In *Outside* magazine, writer and skier Tim Etchells lays out the challenge: Even more so than in deep snow or moguls, what you focus your eyes on becomes critical in the woods. Look at the spaces *between* the trees—the exits where you hope to be traveling. "Don't stare at what you don't want to hit," says [extreme-skiing world champion Kim] Reichelm matter-of-factly.

Valuing Mom

My three young children love to get up early and watch out the window for the garbage truck. They take great delight in watching the waste hauler empty the can, then work the lever that causes the truck to compact the trash. On the morning of my thirty-fifth birthday, my husband said to the children with a smile, "Kids, do you know what makes today so special?" It should have been no surprise to us when our 5-year-old rushed past my outstretched arms to the window and replied, "It's garbage day!"

Watch the Lessons You Give

When I was 13, my dad owned his own business—a tiny shack where he sold chicken, ribs, hamburgers, hot dogs, and fries. One day the oil that the chicken was fried in caught fire. In a few minutes the whole place exploded in flames. My dad bolted from the store before the flames could engulf him. Then my mom and I arrived on the scene, and we all stood outside watching the fire burn away my dad's business. All of a sudden, my dad realized he had left his money in the metal cash register inside the building, and I watched in disbelief as he ran back into the inferno before anyone could stop him. He tried to open the metal register, but the intense heat had already sealed the drawer shut. Knowing that every penny he had was locked in front of him about to go up into flames, he picked up the scalding metal box and carried it outside. When he threw the register on the ground, the skin on his arms and chest came with it. He had escaped the fire safely once, untouched. Then he voluntarily risked his life and was severely injured. The money was that important. That was when I learned that money is obviously more important than life itself. From that point on, earning money—lots of money—not only became what drove me professionally, but also became my emotional priority. **Suze Orman, *9 Steps to Financial Freedom* (Random House, 2000), p. 3; submitted by Aaron Goerner**

Matthew 6:19-24

"Stop storing up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moths and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal. ²⁰Instead, store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust don't destroy and thieves don't break in and steal. ²¹Your heart will be where your treasure is.

²²"The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is unclouded, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If the light in you is darkness, how dark it will be!

²⁴"No one can serve two masters. He will hate the first master and love the second, or he will be devoted to the first and despise the second. You cannot serve God and wealth.[GW]