

Clear Vision
Matthew 6:22-24
Halifax: 27 June 2004

Introduction:

Last week, we began looking at that part of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus instructs us about earthly possessions.

- His instruction is quite simple.
- He tells you to stop laying up for yourselves treasures on earth and instead, to lay up treasures in heaven.
 - His concern here is not about how much you have or don't have...
 - You can be rich and be godly and you can poor and godly—rich and ungodly and poor and ungodly.
 - Having or not having riches is not the issue...
 - The problem is when you make earthly riches your treasure...
 - When you look to riches to make you happy and to bless you...
 - When you make the acquisition of earthly treasures the thing you live your life around.
 - When you act as if riches have some independent power to bless you apart from God.

Jesus is pointing out that it really doesn't matter how much you have or don't have of this world's treasures.

- The only thing that matters is your relationship to God—because He alone has the power to bless and to curse.
- And because the whole human race has fallen into sin,
 - We are under God's displeasure until we are reconciled to Him.
 - His image has been defaced in us by our sin, and we are under His curse.
 - As a result, this world and all its treasures is passing away.

But now that Jesus has come to reconcile sinners to God,

- we can return to God's favour through Him.
- He promise eternal life to all those who believe—an eternal life in which we are blessed of God forever.
 - And Jesus tells those who are in His kingdom to stop laying up treasures on earth that will all be destroyed...

- And start laying up treasures in heaven that will never be destroyed.
- When Jesus tells you not to lay up treasures on earth but to lay up treasures in heaven,
 - He is telling you to get your priorities straight!
 - Now that He has come to establish this glorious kingdom of righteousness,
 - you have the privilege of being restored to God's glorious image,
 - of bearing the everlasting fruits of the Spirit that God delights in,
 - of becoming like Jesus Christ!
 - These are the treasures of heaven, and they ought to be your treasures!
 - Eternal life is about knowing Him and becoming like Him.
- Jesus gives the very obvious reason why these treasures of heaven ought to be your treasure!
 - The treasures of this world will pass away—
 - moth and rust will destroy them, thieves will steal them.
 - Everything will be lost.
 - But the treasures of heaven will never perish—
 - neither moth nor rust can destroy them and thieves cannot steal them.
 - They will endure forever.
 - Now—in this present world—is the time of planting and sowing and growing all the fruits of the Spirit—
 - When the end of the world comes, it will be harvest time and then it will be too late to plant and to sow!
 - That is why Jesus urges you to begin preparing for that day now!
 - This is your opportunity to lay up treasures in heaven that will last forever.
 - These treasures will be a blessing for you in a thousand years, a million years, a billion years!
 - How foolish you are to make the treasures of this world your portion and to devote yourselves to these when the treasures of heaven are eternal!
 - What kind of fool in this world would labour to invest in a company that he knew for certain was going to fail when he knew of another company that would never fail?

What's wrong with us?

- Why is it that we give so little attention to laying up treasure in heaven?

- I believe Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:22-23:
 - He says,
 - Matt 6:22-23: "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 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!"

I. The reason you are not more attentive about laying up treasure in heaven is because you have bad eyes!

- A. If you have bad eyes, you can't see things as they really are.
1. Suppose a man with bad eyes is out sailing in his boat...
 - A big rock is sticking up out of the water, but he can't distinguish it from the waves.
 - He will tear his boat to pieces because he can't see what is really there.
 - He acts according to what he can see, not according to what he cannot see.
 2. Of course, the idea of seeing can mean more than that...
 - Suppose two men are going out to buy a used car.
 - One of these men knows all about what to look for, and the other doesn't.
 - The one who knows what to look for may find several problems with a certain car—bad transmission, a rusty gas tank, a problem with the suspension...
 - The other man comes along and looks at the same car and he can't **see** any of these problems.
 - Happily, he purchases the car and assumes that he got a great deal on it.
 - We may say that this second man had bad eyes.
 - He was unable to see what the first man saw.
 - He was unable to see what was really there.
- B. That is what is wrong with you that you don't pursue the treasures of heaven more earnestly than you do.
- You simply don't **see** the surpassing excellence of these treasures compared to all earthly treasures!
1. This is the problem that Eve had in the Garden...

a. She began going wrong when she looked at the fruit and **saw** that it was good for food.

1) As soon as she saw that, she saw wrong!

- That tree was **not** good for food because God had told her not to eat it.
- And to buttress that prohibition, He had told them that the day they ate from it they would surely die—they would be cut off from Him.

2) You do the same thing when you look at something and conclude that it would be good when God has forbidden it to you...

- For example, if you want to get a certain job, but the only way to get it is by lying about your experience...
 - Then that is not a good job for you...
- Or if you see a way to make a fast profit, but it will involve taking advantage of someone (legally, but unjustly).
 - Then that money should not look good to you—it comes with God's curse, not His blessing.
- Or suppose you see a house or a car that you just have to have—
 - but to get it, you will put yourself in a position in which you cannot tithe...
 - or in which you will be so strapped trying to pay for it that you won't be able to provide adequately for your family in other ways...
 - or in which you will be forced to work on the Lord's Day and will have no time for family worship.
 - If that house or that car looks good to you,
 - you have bad eyes!
 - That house or that car cannot bless you, it can only curse you.

b. Now I know that this is all very deceptive!

1) The fruit on the forbidden tree was probably quite tasty.

- And that job you have to lie about is probably a very good paying and pleasant job...
- And that gorgeous car or house is probably a real delight...
- The temptation is not strong because it is an ugly house or a bad job.
 - Proverbs doesn't warn us about ugly seductresses...
 - but about the beautiful ones.

- 2) The problem is that you don't see all that you need to see.
 - If you could see the trouble that that thing would bring to your soul, it wouldn't look good to you at all!
 - What's more, you don't see the surpassing excellence of serving Christ to obtaining that treasure.
 - You do not see well enough to distinguish what is most excellent.

 2. This problem with the eyes is the problem that everyone has who rejects the gospel.
 - a. Two people can hear the very same gospel preached.
 - They can both hear that the God of heaven has sent His Son to die on the cross to take away the sin of the world.
 - They can both hear that He has suffered for that sin and that God has accepted His sacrifice in behalf of all who will believe...
 - They can both hear that He promises to give His Spirit to all who believe to give us new life—life in full communion and fellowship with God!

 - 1) And the one man can hear that message and be absolutely delighted by it!
 - He will say, "This is the best news I have ever heard!"
 - "You mean to tell me that a sinner like me can be restored to God!"
 - "Surely this is a marvellous thing!"
 - "I will hear more about this."

 - 2) The other man, hearing the same thing, can shrug his shoulders and say,
 - "What does all this have to do with me?"
 - "I don't see what real difference it could make in my life."
 - "What are you so excited about?"
 - "I am going to go play golf."

 - b. If you are like the first man, you have good eyes...
 - You are able to see what a difference the gospel makes.
 - If you are like the second man, you have bad eyes—you simply cannot see what is really there.
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3. But if you are a Christian who has believed the gospel,
 - You still struggle with fuzzy vision from day to day...

- And it is because of fuzzy vision that you are not as fervent about choosing heavenly treasure above earthly treasure as you should be.
 - Now I want you to think about Moses for a minute.
- a. Do you remember what it says about him in Hebrews 11:24-27?
- Heb 11:24-27: By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.
 - This passage tells you that Moses chose to leave all the glories of Egypt and suffer with God's people because he **saw** that reproach through identification with Christ was a much greater treasure than the riches of the richest kingdom of this world!
 - He went wandering around in the wilderness for 40 years instead of becoming a prince in Egypt because of what he saw.
 - He could see the glory of the One who is invisible—the One that we know by faith in His Word and who calls us to come and be His disciples.
- b. Someone looking at this who has bad eyes would say...
- 1) "What a fool Moses was!"
 - "Egypt was the most prosperous kingdom in the world!"
 - "They had very few enemies that were a threat to them at this time!"
 - "They were wealthy and successful."
 - "Moses could have had whatever he wanted—riches and wives, palaces and exquisite foods, fine clothing and entertainment!"
 - 2) "Not only that,
 - But if he wanted to do good and influence other people—
 - What better place to do it from than a throne in Egypt?"
 - 3) Of course, now that we know what happened to Moses, and how more people know him than know the Pharaoh's of Egypt...
 - we may find it easy to say that he made the right decision...
 - But if you had been there when he first made the decision,
 - when he had to run away from Egypt and wait for 40 years,

- and then spend another 40 years with the people in the wilderness...
 - It would not have been so easy to see that Moses had chosen the best treasure!
- c. So, likewise, if you had lived in the day when Jesus went to the cross and had seen Him suffering there...
- 1) You would have questioned whether He had made the wisest decision...
 - Couldn't He have had more influence and done more good if He had not been so hard on the Chief Priests and Pharisees?
 - Surely there was no need for Him to die at such a young age and in such a horrible manner.
 - 2) That is what happens to you when you have to choose between the reproach that comes from following Christ and some earthly treasure...
 - The earthly treasure can look better if your eye is not very good.
 - 3) Jesus endured the cross because He could see...
 - He could see the joy that was set before Him.
 - He saw what His disciples could not see...
 - He had good clear vision,
 - He could see that blessing came from doing God's will in this sinful fallen world!
 - He esteemed the treasures that came by way of the cross as far more precious than the treasures of this world that He would have obtained by letting them make Him king...
 - as they wanted to do after He fed the five thousand!
 - You will remember that He preached a sermon at that time that caused all those king makers to walk away!
 - Any good politician would think he made a terrible mistake, and so would most church growth experts.
 - But Jesus could see what they could not see!
 - He could see clearly what was the most excellent thing to pour His life into.

II. Brothers and sisters, the quality of your vision affects everything!

A. Jesus says that if you have good vision, your whole body will be full of light—

- And if your eyes are bad, then **everything** in you will be going in the wrong direction—
 - You will think you are doing something good when in fact you are doing something harmful!
 - You see, your eyes are the entry point for all outside information...
 - If they are not seeing things properly, everything will be wrongly processed!
 - Your whole being will be put into motion based on false information!
 - You will reach out your hand and take the forbidden fruit and eat it because it will **look** good to you.
 - As Jesus puts it,
 - “When your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.”
 - Your entire being will be working for the wrong goal!
1. Now that is quite a thought!
 - a. Imagine living your whole life—all for the wrong things!
 - There you are, with twenty-four hours to each day and 365 days to each year...
 - There you are, a complete being, body and spirit—
 - And all poured into the wrong things that will only serve to bring about God’s judgement for eternity!
 - b. Don’t be careless about this!
 - 1) It’s too important a matter to not think honestly about!
 - You must make sure that your vision is clear or you will lose everything!
 - What a tragedy to wake up in eternity and realise that you have been all wrong.
 - 2) Don’t flatter yourself,
 - “Well, I have loved my family, I have done the best that I could—I have gone to church, I have tried to help people out who were in need.”
 - God’s word tells you that all that is not good enough!
 - You are a sinner and your first order of business with God is to believe on the Lord Jesus who died to save us from our sins.

- Unless you have done that, I don't care how good you may think you are...
 - God is not impressed.
 - He sees you the way you really are, and that is full of sin.
 - You need to see that now so that you will run to Jesus for forgiveness.
 - If you don't start here, then everything you do is all for naught...
- 3) You need to open your eyes and see how much you need Jesus and His death on the cross.
- If you don't rely on Him and this great work, you will perish and your whole life will worse than wasted...
 - It will bring about more and more of God's judgement!
 - Oh that you should dare to live before God without a Saviour and act as if you don't need one!
 - What could be more blind than that!
2. You see how Jesus goes on to say that "If the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness."
- a. Jesus acknowledges that you have some light in you, but if that light is darkness, it is even worse than having no light at all!
- You are like the little toddler who goes to see the Powers and Florida and who sees a beautiful coral snake in the grass—you know, those colourful very poisonous snakes they have in Florida...
 - And instead of using the light that has enabled him to see that snake to avoid the snake, he uses it to draw him to the snake!
 - If he had been blind, he would have been better off because then he wouldn't have seen the snake at all—
 - He wouldn't have been enticed...
 - but now he is using what little light he has to lead him into trouble.
- b. This is exactly what people do when they abuse the light that is in them...
- 1) A person will see the pleasure of a new house he can't afford...
- He has enough light to see that the house is beautiful and attractive like that coral snake...

- But not enough light to see that buying a house that will require him to forsake God with tithing, with giving to the needy, with the use of his time, and so on is going to bring about destruction.
 - The little bit light (to see the beauty of the house) leads to a greater darkness than total blindness!
- 2) This person cannot see that by making his treasure to be the things of this world, he is bringing himself into absolute bondage!
- Covetousness is like an addiction that swallows up your heart.
 - Like a Cocaine addict, soon your whole life is lived around getting more.
 - It brings you into greater and greater bondage until you can't escape.
 - You have light that enables you to see where the earthly treasures are and to pursue them...
 - But that light that is in you is great darkness.
 - The Cocaine addict has a tremendous ability—if he moves to a new city—to find Cocaine, even though it is not listed in the yellow pages.
 - He uses the light that he has to bring him into more and more darkness.
 - What wisdom he has to find his treasure!
 - What zeal, and what earnestness.
- c. And further than that,
- a person who is laying up earthly treasure will not only use his light to gain that treasure...
 - He will also use it to frame arguments to justify what he is doing!
- 1) Some people with great minds use all their powers to try to prove that there is no God!
- Martin Lloyd Jones says: This is Satan's great deception—he makes men think they are being very rational and very intelligent when they are in fact supremely ignorant.
- 2) How creative men will be who use their reason to avoid God!
- Take those scientists who claim that the world came about without the hand of God!

- I saw a leading evolutionist who was a specialist in the study of genetics and mutations and he was asked if he could give one example of a mutation where genetic information was increased rather than decreased.
- His whole position was based on the idea that mutations created new information in the genetic pool, but he could not give one example.
- I wish you could have heard the loud silence and seen the perplexity on his face that followed this basic question!
- Such men are men of light, they have a tremendous amount of knowledge—
 - yet the light that is in them is darkness!

3) There is a reason for this...

- These men do not want to have to answer to God.
- That is why they insist on denying Him.
- Their eyesight—their ability to see things as they are—becomes totally distorted because they refuse to let the light of God's truth in!

TRANS> Now what about you?

- What are you rationalising this very moment that is leading you astray?
- What are you pursuing that is drawing you away from God?

B. You turn light into darkness when you esteem the treasures of this world above the treasures of heaven.

1. You use the light that you have to admire the beauty of these worldly treasures...

- and to convince yourself that they are worthy of living your life around.
- And you use that same light to try to explain why God's will is not so important or not so necessary...
 - to rationalise away what He calls you to do because it gets too much in the way of these beautiful earthly treasures that you have your heart set on.
 - or even to rationalise that you are actually serving God in this thing that is drawing you away from Him.

2. What happens as you go further down this path is this...

- Your eyes get worse and worse and the darkness in you gets greater and greater.

- Soon, to your eyes, the treasures of this world look vastly superior and more important than the treasures of heaven!
 - You actually come to think that treasures that will be with you for seventy or eighty years at the most are more precious than those that will be with you for all eternity!
 - Your heart is more excited about a dream house or a dream car than it is about serving Jesus Christ!
 - Your devotion to providing for your children's physical needs is far greater than your devotion to instructing them in God's word.

TRANS> Do you see how serious it is to have bad eyes?

- If you go wrong at the point of entry, your whole body becomes filled with darkness and that darkness is very great indeed.

III. But there is also good news about your eyes

A. The opposite is also true—If your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light!

1. With a good eye, you will see more and more...

- And the things you will see will absolutely delight you!
- You will understand that excellence of heavenly treasures so that earthly treasures will pale in insignificance.
- You will delight in Jesus who loved us so much that He left the glories of heaven to come and die on the cross for us.
- You will rejoice in the glory of God that is going to be revealed at the last day to all the world.

2. And if you see things clearly, your whole being will be set in motion for Jesus Christ.

- You will choose Him and His way above all others...
 - You will want above all to be filled with all the goodness that He is filled with—
 - with the same love that is Christ,
 - with the same faithfulness and dedication,
 - with the same joy and hope,
 - with the same wisdom and understanding,
 - with the same patience and willingness to sacrifice.
- Every decision will be based upon what pleases Him.
 - Your whole body will be full of light—both thought and action!

- You will give up everything for Him—everything will about doing His will—
 - that will be your food and drink...
 - That will be the reason you live and labour...
 - that will be your conversation and your joy.

TRANS> But you all know that you are not so full of light as this—

- If you are a Christian, you struggle because you know that you too often lay up treasures on earth and do not lay up treasures in heaven!
- And I have told you today that the problem is with your eyes—you don't see well.

B. What can you do to improve your vision?

- The only way you can improve your vision is by looking at everything through the lens of God's Word.

1. Let us go back again to the very beginning.

a. Eve made her first mistake when she saw that the fruit of the forbidden tree was good for food.

- As I pointed out before, perhaps that wasn't even formally wrong—it was something that was tasty and edible...
- But if our whole reason for being is to glorify God and God has told us not to eat something,
 - then it is **not** good for food for us...

b. But what is it that would have made all the difference for Eve?

- What is it that would have enabled her to see clearly?
- If she had simply looked at things based upon the word of God—
 - not based upon her own rationalisation...
 - not based upon her own feelings and fears...
 - If she had simply based her thought and action on God's counsel...
 - Then she would have seen clearly.
 - The entrance of God's word gives light!

2. All this means that if you want to see clearly, you need to be continually and diligently receiving God's word.

a. One of the purposes of preaching is set before your eyes the glory and beauty of Jesus Christ.

- 1) When you see Him as He is revealed in the word, then He becomes the fairest of Ten Thousand **in your eyes**—
 - He is that, but you can't see that until you see Him as He is revealed in the word.
 - You can't truly see Him with spiritual understanding in any other way.
 - When you see Him as He is, you will say:
 - Who is so lovely and so excellent, so righteous and so faithful as my Lord?
 - Who else is clothed with such wisdom and grace as He?
 - What master is so kind to His servants as my master?
 - What master is the chief servant among His servants and gives them so much more than they ever give Him?

- 2) When you see how excellent He is, you will want to serve Him above all else...
 - a) Is it not this seeing of Christ and His glorious excellence that makes us zealous to serve Him?
 - Does the Bible not say that our service will be perfect when we see Him perfectly?
 - "That when we see Him, we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is?"
 - What is it that we will see when we see Him as He is?
 - I don't believe it will be anything different than what is given to us in the gospel.
 - It is not a pretty face or even a shining face that will attract us, but rather that we will understand the cross!
 - Where else but the cross do you see wisdom that saves miserable sinners?
 - Where else do you see pure justice that demands the blood of the Son of God to atone for sin?
 - Where else do you see grace and mercy that provides such a sacrifice at such great personal cost?
 - Where else but in the gospel do you see this glory?
 - b) Oh brothers and sisters, when you come to the word, come and behold the glory of Jesus Christ!
 - Then you will say:

- “Surely, this is the one that I want to please...”
- “How privileged I am to be shaped for service in His house...
 - Where I am taught how to love and how to minister to others...
 - Where I am taught how to fight my Lord’s battles...
 - Where I am given so much help and grace—all that I need to do His will.
- “What excellent counsel He gives to His servants—counsel that makes them as beautiful as He is.”

b. And that leads to the second purpose of preaching...

- It is to set before you all that your Lord has commanded you.
 - As Jesus said, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded.”
- The goal of the word is show you where you have gone wrong in your thoughts and your behaviour...
 - And then to show you what is right and how you can practice it:
 - How you are to worship and give thanks to God for all things
 - How you are to trust Him and to see His hand at work, responding to Him with wisdom and patience.
 - How you are to treat your brothers and sisters in Christ...
 - How you are to deal with difficult people and with enemies.
 - How you are to do your daily work.
 - How you are to treat your spouse, your parents, your children, and how you are to live together as covenant families.

3. Brothers and sisters, God’s word is precious!

- You will never see clearly until you see everything from the perspective of God’s word!
- Without the word,
 - Things that are not very glorious will look glorious to you,
 - and things that are not very excellent will look very enticing and wonderful.
 - Your whole body will be full of darkness.
- But when the light of God’s word enters,
 - Then your whole life will be full of light!

- Everything you do will be governed by discernment that chooses what is most excellent and rejects everything else.
- If only you will see clearly where the treasure is, you will surely forsake the world because you will esteem the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the glories of Egypt.
- **Open our eyes Lord that we may see wondrous things out of your Law!**