

# How Much Has Christianity Cost You? (Tharptown Baptist Church)

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 6:21-23  
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This is a tremendous privilege for me to be here tonight with you, a tremendous privilege.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Father, I come before you in the name of your Son. And what a comfort he is. And I pray, Lord, that you would speak through your Word about your mission and we how we are to be dedicated to that thing with everything that we are and everything that we have. Lord, I pray that you would, indeed, revive, that it would be more than a meeting or a name, that it would be a reality in the lives of your people in Jesus' name. Amen.*

There are so many things that are done in the name of revival, so many things that are done in the name of church, in the name of Christianity, good motivation behind it. But how much of it is real? I mean honestly, do you really want revival, honestly? How much are you willing to pay for it? A few meetings on a few days of the week? How much do you really want revival?

Because I can tell you here and now that revival will cost you your life. And most people I know aren't willing to pay that.

You see, Christianity is sort of like an accessory in the United States of America. You know, when you buy a dress and you decide, well, you need a belt to go with it and shoes to dress it up and maybe, if we were in England, you would need a fine hat to go along with that dress. That is the way most people see Christianity. It is just a part of their life, something they do.

But Christianity is not a part of your life. If it is a part of your life it is nothing. Christianity is your life. Jesus said something very offensive one time. He said, "Unless you are willing to eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have nothing to do with me and I have nothing to do with you."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See John 6:53

And when he said that almost everybody walked away from him. What was he saying? He said, “I am not to be a part of your life. I won’t let you get away with that. I will be your life or I will be nothing to you.”

You see, one of the most horrible things that happens to us is prosperity. I don’t know anything about you, but I know that you are richer than 95% of the people in the world. If you live here you are wealthier than 95% of the people in the world. And wealth never prospered Christianity. Materialism never leads to godliness. Things are only obstacles that get in the way of an eternal perspective.

We talk about mission. There will be some of our brothers tonight in places around the world on mission for God. They will starve to death tonight because of their confession of Christ. There are others that will live in places you wouldn’t put your pigs for the sake of Christ, on mission for God.

We Southern Baptists have made it so convenient. You can have your cake and eat it, too. You can be on mission for God just as much as you want. And if you do it just as much as you want, it probably won’t cost you anything.

Before we get started talking about mission let me ask you something. How much has Christianity cost you? How much has it really cost you? How much have you had to suffer for the cause of Christ? How much have you lost for him?

When we talk about missions there is a passage in the Bible in Matthew chapter six—and this is just going to be a brief introduction and then we will go on to our text, but Matthew chapter six. He says in verse 21:

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!<sup>2</sup>

What is he saying? Well, the eye is ambition. It is the direction of your life. Your eye is a perfect revelation of your heart, just like your words are a perfect revelation of your heart, so your eye is a perfect revelation of your heart. Not that someone can look through your eyes into your heart, but wherever your eye is looking tells us what you desire.

I will always ask young people, you know, what do you talk about most? There is your god. What do you think about most? There is your god. What do you have your eye set upon? There is your mission and your god and your heart and your treasure. What consumes you?

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 7:21-22

One of the worst things you can do is reduce Christianity down to a moral thing you do because it is what everyone else who is moral does. We are talking about passion. We are talking about treasure.

Now let me say something very, very revealing about myself, about human nature, about men. When I was in Peru serving the Lord it was during a terrible war. People were dying all around. Sometimes I was in the city of Lima which was considered the worst place on the face of the earth at that time, sometimes in the jungles on the Amazon, sometimes on the [?], sometimes in the Andes Mountains fraught with danger.

People used to tell me, “Oh, it must be so hard to live for Christ there.”

No. Easiest thing I have ever done was live for Christ there. Why? You have nothing. You have nothing, but Christ. And if Christ doesn't save you that day you won't be saved. If he doesn't feed you that day you won't be fed. If he doesn't protect you, you will not be protected. There is nothing you can do in the arm of your own strength. Get up in the morning. You get out of the tent, you go bathe in the river. You come back. You eat something. You go preach the gospel all day. You come home. You collapse in the tent. You wake up the next morning. You do it all over again.

No cars. No homes. No keeping up with the Joneses. No designer clothes. No malls. No anything. Just Christ. And it was so easy to live for him. It was so easy. It took almost no effort because there was nothing competing with him.

But then I feel like one of the worst things that ever happened to me—even though I know it isn't because it is within the will of God—God called me to come back to the United States. Oh, it was hard. It was horrible. It still is. Try being in Peru and all that poverty and then snap yourself out of there in one second and stand in the middle of a North American mall. It will make you want to puke. Look around at everything that glitters and shines. It just makes you nauseous.

It is not hard to live for Christ in Peru. It is hard to live for Christ in the United States of America, such a battle. And to be honest with you, folks, we are losing it. We are losing it.

I knew two Russians years ago that had escaped and they came to our church and were talking and they shared about how the KGB busted in to their congregation and grabbed the pastor and threw him up against the wall and made all the congregation sit there while they pulled his tongue out. They cut it out of his mouth and threw it on the ground and said, “You will never preach the gospel again.”

And then right after telling that story they explained how difficult it was to live for Christ in the United States.

And someone said, “What do you mean difficult? There is no one busting into our churches cutting the pastor’s tongue out. What do you mean it is difficult to live for Christ in the United States? Why is it so difficult to live for Christ here?”

And they said, “Well, it is just that it is easier in Russia because there’s no Jacuzzis in Russia.”

You see, we are not to live like monks, but we are to live like people who use the things of this world and are not owned by it and who live in this world, but our minds are set on things above and our treasures are in heaven and we live for that... no we live for two days: the day when Christ hung before all men and the day when all men including everyone in this building will stand before Christ.

You will be judged. And you will not be judged for what you give away. You will be judged for what you keep.

A man with 10 million dollars a year can give away five million dollars. He will be judged severely because you are not judged for what you give away, you are judged for what you keep. You are judged for the shape and condition of your heart.

Do you want God? Are you willing to lose everything?

I knew a guy one time who was reading out of where Jesus told the rich young ruler to give everything he had away to the poor and come and follow Christ. And the preacher said, “Well, you know, he doesn’t... you know, he doesn’t mean that literally for us. He is just telling us we shouldn’t let things have us.”

And a man that I knew said, “Well, that’s amazing because he has told me to do that three times I have had to give up everything I have owned.”

You see, when you look at the radical nature of the call of Christ it is dangerous. See, your greatest problem is your Christ is safe. He is a very safe God. He doesn’t require much from you. He doesn’t ask you to die. He doesn’t ask you to sacrifice. He just asks you to come on Sunday and on special meetings and to give a little bit, but not so much that it would hurt.

But the Christ of the Bible is dangerous. As C.S. Lewis said, “He is not a tame lion. He is not safe. He can cost you everything.”

I feel like I am in a good place to judge at this moment. Why? Because of the struggles in my own life. I have been on the other side. I have lived with nothing but a pair of blue jeans and a half eaten monkey. It is much easier to serve Christ in places where there are hardly no temptations then to serve him here where the moment you walk out this door tonight a great part of this message will be stolen from your heart and you will forget about most of it before you even get home.

Someone said, “What is it going to take to revive America, brother Paul?”

Soldiers and bull dozers. Bulldozers bulldozing down our buildings and soldiers with guns telling us to deny Christ. That may be what it takes to bring revival.

If we will not cleanse ourselves from all of the things that are obstacles to our Christianity, then God will see fit to come in and cleanse us.

On mission for God it is the greatest privilege, but you have got to realize that we are often so tied down, so in debt, such a life style that is beyond our means that we are constantly running, constantly working, constantly anxious, constantly doing everything. If we were to get sick for two months we would lose our homes. We are so extended we can't think about being on mission for God.

Cars and boats and golf clubs and guns and fishing poles and this and that and every other thing makes it almost impossible to think about serving him. And then what's worse is we take our children and we baptize them into the very thing that has so enslaved our lives, materialism and debt and this and that and Christmas and birthday and soccer and football and basketball and running here and there and everywhere until we can't even be together as a family, but we are going to go on mission for God.

You see, when you talk about revival you can't talk about just getting zapped by God. You have got to talk about an entirely radical restructuring of your life because for the most part Christian life in America is anti biblical. Everything.

You see, every thing in this book deals with every thing in your life down to even how you are to buy a pair of shoes. Everything is here. And to bring revival is when God sweeps through a place and doesn't just quicken them in their sin, but purges them from their sin, separates them from the things that are obstacles in their life and then fills them with the Holy Spirit.

Revival, if it were to come, would cast most of us on the floor weeping out and crying for mercy.

Do we want revival? No. We don't. Let's just put it that way, because that is the truth.

But we can want it. What can make a person so entrenched in this world begin to hate this world and desire something different? A view of God, a view of the kingdom, a view of the fact that every thing in this world is passing away. It is rotting as we wear it. It is corrupting while it shines.

So when we talk about mission we have to first come to this idea. He says in verse 19, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.”<sup>3</sup> He says, “Before you can even think about going on

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 6:19

mission you have got to discern, according to the will of God, what is valuable and what is not, what is proper and what is rot.”

Is what you are living for worth dying for? Is what you are living for, is it standard, the judgment throne of Christ?

He says here, he says, “Store up for yourselves treasures on earth. Don’t no.” He says, “Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”<sup>4</sup>

I was actually graduated from the business school at the University of Texas. Someone asked me one time when I went to Peru, “How on earth did you end up in Peru?”

And I said, “Well, I was always pretty good in finance.”

And they said, “What?”

I said, “Yeah, I was all... my finance class, economics, everything. I was always pretty good. I was better in macro than micro, but...”

They said, “No, hold it. That doesn’t make any sense.”

I said, “The reason I went to Peru is I have always been good in investments.”

They said, “What are you talking about?”

I said, “Here is what I am talking about. You get one portfolio and it has a terrible history. And the men who run the thing, the brokers who run the thing have a terrible name. They are always untrustworthy and everyone who has ever gone with them has lost absolutely everything. You have another portfolio here which not only promises, but renders eternal reward and the one who signs all the papers is God almighty. Now where are you going to invest your life?”

You see, it is about treasure. He doesn’t tell us not to seek treasure. He just tells us to seek the treasure in the right place. And where is that place? Heaven.

I just got back today from Illinois. My mother is 80 years old and she is dying. She only has a few more months to live. She wishes that she had less. She is so ready to go home because she has a home to go to, 64 years as a Christian. Her mother, Croatian, suffered from the faith, persecution, terrible. My mom saw it. She witnessed it. She knew that the only thing that matters is living for Christ. She wants to go home because that is where her treasure is. That is where her treasure is.

Where is your treasure? And where are you teaching your children to put their treasure? Where? Because they are going to follow you. And, gentlemen, they may just follow you straight into hell. Your children will follow you.

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 6:20

When they look at your life what do they say? “My father is serious about this thing. He really believes that there is only one place to look to, one place to live for and it is the kingdom of God. It is Christ and his kingdom, nothing else, but Christ and Christ alone.”

As I often say, “Yesterday I was a nine year old boy. Today I am 45. Tomorrow I will be dead.”

Life goes that quickly. How then shall we live?

Jesus says something very important. “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.”<sup>5</sup>

You say, “Yes, we shouldn’t store up treasures here on the earth because the devil can use all his henchmen to do all the...”

These things I have just mentioned—moths, rust and thieves—may not be the devil’s henchmen. They may be God’s. That God so loves his people and will so seek their godliness and he so desires that they have treasure in heaven that when God’s people, truly God’s people begin to put their treasure on earth, God sends moth and rust and thieves to destroy it.

You see, one of the greatest signs in the Scriptures... now you won’t hear much about this in modern day Christianity in America, but one of the greatest signs of God being with a people is his discipline. And one of the greatest signs of God not being with his people is the lack thereof.

One of the greatest instances of the presence of God in the Old Testament Bible is this: When he brought the people out of Egypt. God was with them. He was with them in a pillar of cloud, in a pillar of fire. He was with them. And what is one of the great indications? Someone broke a commandment of disobeying the sabbath and they were killed. Two priests offered strange fire and they were killed immediately.

But if you go on and you see Israel in her sin and sin until she becomes apostate and she is no longer God’s people, they can offer every sort of wicked sacrifice in the temple and God does nothing to any of them.

Another case in point: Ananias and Sapphira. God’s presence was there. The day of Pentecost and in the working out of Pentecost in the early church, those first years in the early church such power of God. God was with them. How do we know? Ananias and Sapphira lied to the church leaders and immediately dropped dead.

He says that to his people he will come as a refiner’s fire. And that is why when his children begin to set their eyes on things of the world it is not the devil’s henchmen, but it is God’s soldiers who come to destroy what they have done. Why? Because God loves

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 6:19

you so much he won't let you waste your life. He knows what is valuable and he knows what is not valuable. And we are to give ourselves to the things that are eternal and we are to teach our children what is eternal, what really matters.

He says in verse 20, "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven."<sup>6</sup>

We need to be actively thinking about ways to serve God, actively thinking about ways to promote his glory, actively thinking about ways to give more and more of our life away. If only we had this attitude our marriages would be fixed, our families would be fixed, our churches would be fixed.

What would a husband be like who sat down most of the day figuring out how he could give more and more of himself away to his wife in service? What would families be like? Wives that were sitting home thinking, "How can I more and more give my life away in service to my husband?"

No, that is not the way we are. "How can I get more out of my wife? How can I get more out of my husband?"

Or thinking, "How can I give away more and more of my life to the people of God? How can I give more and more of myself to service? Even more than that, how can I give more and more of my life to my children?"

Some of you don't think.... don't need to think about serving God in some ministry because God won't accept your service. If you are a husband here your first obligation is to serve your wife. Your second obligation, you and your wife, is to lay down your life for your children and serve them. And that does not mean loading them in the van and taking them everywhere every day of the week so that there is no time for God, family or anything else.

So when we give our lives away we do it biblically. Give our lives away to our wives, to our husbands, to our children.

And then where? I will tell you where, to our church, our local church that we attend and that we are members.

I had a young guy come to me years ago and he says, "Oh, I just love people from China. I want to go to China. I want to be a missionary in China. I just want to go to China. I just love people from China."

I said, "Do you want to know why you love people from China?"

He said, "Why?"

I said, "Because you don't know any of them, that's why."

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 6:20



It's easy to love somebody 10,000 miles away. Everyone wants to go on a mission trip. Everyone wants to do this and wants to do that.

I want to tell you something. Missions begin not in even your community. Mission begins in your New Testament church. We have reduced church down to nothing more than a spectator's sport. We will quote that verse all day long. "You know, be careful, don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together."<sup>7</sup> And then we all think, "Ok, I did that. I came on Sunday. I even came on Wednesday. I did that."

No, you didn't. That is not what the verse means. It means come together in loving communion with brothers and sisters in Christ so that you can personally and practically serve them and encourage them. It doesn't mean come to church, sing a song, receive a sermon, say hello and go. It means start visiting each other in the fellowship. Start finding out their needs and meeting them.

You younger people need to be finding if there is any widows, if there is anybody in the church who has needs, needs yards mowed, needs their bathroom fixed, whatever. And go and serve them.

Men in this church need to be doing the same. You need to be serving one another, loving one another, encouraging one another, involved in each other's life. When one commits a trespass other brothers go lovingly and with mercy to bring them back to Christ, working as a community in mission, not just playing church, being a church and serving one another according to your gifts, serving one another.

We have so adapted a Catholic view of church. The preacher, he is the preacher, he does the stuff, maybe a couple of other leaders with him might do a few things. That is not biblical. But each one of us who is truly converted according to Ephesians chapter four, according to 1 Corinthians 11 through 14 and on and on, Romans 12. I could just keep going. We are all gifted people. If you have truly been born again you have been given in the Holy Spirit spiritual gifts for which you are stewards and you will be called accountable on the day of judgment.

How many of you know what your spiritual gifts are? And then how many of you are exercising those spiritual gifts in this local body knowing that you will stand before Christ, you will be asked what your spiritual gifts were and you will be held accountable for them, the development of them and the practice of them in this community.

You see, it is when we talk about mission. See, most people think I am going to come to church. I am going to talk about the needs all around the world. No, that's too easy. We are going to start here, real church, real church.

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<sup>7</sup> See Hebrews 10:25

Now, if I were to—and I won't do this—but if I were to pull up a young man right now and say, “Young man, I want you to run back to that door as fast as you can, spin around and run back up here to the pulpit.” He would do so that quick.

I did that one time in a church. It scared the Baptists, literally, to death. They didn't know what was going on. And then I... after he did that I said, “Well, that was very good. You are quite athletic.” I said, “Now here is what I want you to do. I want you to grab your right foot like this and I want you to run back there as fast as you can.”

So he took off hopping, turned around, hopped all the way back. It took him probably five or six times longer. And then as he was holding up this leg like this, I then said, “Now I want you to grab your other leg the same way and run down the aisle.”

You know young people. They are not, you know, not the sharpest, you know, tool in the shed. He actually tried to pick his other leg up.

But then he realized that he couldn't.

And I said, “Now, look at this, church.” I have taken away two members from his body and it can no longer function. Do you want to know why this body cannot function as it ought? Because you know as well as I do there are more than two members who are not doing their part. There are more than two members who are not functioning according to the gifts God has given them.

So when we talk about mission... he says in 21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”<sup>8</sup>

It is amazing. Peter tells us that those who suffer cease from sin.<sup>9</sup> Now he is not teaching sinless perfection, but what he is saying is this. “Someone who is suffering for the cause of Christ, possibly imprisonment, beatings, their mind isn't wandering around full of lust. They have burnt every bridge behind them. The only hope they have is Christ. They are being locked away and beaten every day with a whip.”

They are not thinking about buying a new car they don't need. They are not watching television programs that they shouldn't be watching. Their hope is set on God. And God becomes their treasure.

It is a shame, but it is a truth, that God only seems to have our heart to the degree that he takes other things away from us because things have such a power.

And in the United States you know we are a consumer oriented people, aren't we? It is all about things, the right kind of shirt, the right kind of shoes, the right kind of car, the right kind of house, the right kind of this, the right kind of that. And then we become enslaved.

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew 6:21

<sup>9</sup> See 2 Peter 2:14

You see, when you give your heart to the things of this world it enslaves you. When you give your heart to the things of God it sets you free. It sets you free.

How free are you? How free are you?

If this is like any other church there are people here that make quite a bit of money and yet are in so much debt right now it is almost tearing their family apart. Things, things.

You can't even think about setting your heart on things above because you can't even think about things above because the things below have our life so enslaved.

And he says this, again, "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light."<sup>10</sup> Sometimes I was telling someone... actually I was telling the pastor just a few minutes ago when they were hooking me up with this Madonna looking rig thing, have to wear these now in all the churches. I don't know. I feel like break dancing whenever I got one of these things on.

But hooking up all these wires. I can remember one time getting ready for this big kind of conference and they are hooking me up with wires everywhere and they got tape on my back and clips here and everything else and I just literally got so... I just wanted to start grabbing wires and pulling them off my body. And I could think about times in Peru standing on a hill preaching to 1500 people with no microphone going all the complexities. It is just another sign of all the complexities.

I mean you can't even witness to anyone anymore in a park.

You know, back in the old days, some of you, you walk up to somebody, hand them a tract or the gospel of John. Now you have got to bring a media van and do a full blown media presentation with, you know ipods and mp3s and everything else. You can't witness to anybody anymore. Everything is just so complicated.

It is like some of you men remember. You could cut... your dad could cut a stick off of a tree for you and you could play with it for an entire summer and think it was the greatest thing on the face of the earth.

Now you can spend a fortune on your kids and they are bored a half an hour after they get it. That's not their fault. It's yours. It is our culture. It is what we have done. Everything is just so... there is just so much. And the key in our life is to just start tearing these things away, to start tearing out everything in your life that is not eternal. And it does not lead to a closer relationship with your own immediate family and then the family of God. Anything that is an obstacle to that just needs to go. Anything that gets in the way of being godly...

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 6:22

Some of you would have a revival if you would just take that stinking television set of yours and smash it with a sledge hammer because you will go home tonight after talking about revival and watch something that 30 years ago would have been considered pornography by unbelievers.

Now you understand why I preach in a lot of Baptist churches only once. But what I am saying is true. It is true.

It is to be free. Holiness basically means separation.

Why does God want to separate us from the things of this world? It is so hard for people to understand. “Well, he wants to take away my joy. He wants to take away this. You know, he just wants to make my life so restricted.”

No he doesn't. He wants to set you free so that you can walk with him. He just wants to set you free so you can walk with him.

Look over at Matthew six verse 25. “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”<sup>11</sup>

Well, is it? Is not life more than food? And isn't it more than clothing? And what does it matter, what does it really matter? You have enough to eat. Well, then you do well. You do well. You do better than 90% of the people on the face of the earth. Twenty-six thousand children will starve to death today. Do you have enough to eat? You do well.

Clothing? As long as we are decently covered it doesn't matter.

“Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?”<sup>12</sup>

I saw this picture and it is kind of trite, but in a way it is kind of quaint also. You see all these people coming out of church and they are all worried and just totally bothered by everything in their life. And there's these two little birds sitting up on a branch and one of them says to the other one, “Why are those people so worried and so distraught?”

And the other bird answers, “Well, I can only guess that they don't have a heavenly Father like we do.”

But then let me not let you get off the hook.

Now this isn't going to sound like revival speech. But some of you older people are going to recognize this. You know what is wrong? And it started with my generation. And then it just got even worse as younger generations came along.

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew 6:25

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 6:26

You see, my dad fought in World War II and when he and my mom got married, they lived in a little kind of dumpy place and they made a table out of an old spool for cable and that was about it.

By the time I was a teenager they lived in a nice home. Then I, like everyone else in my generation, we graduated and we expected immediately to live in a home not just as nice as our parents who had worked for 40 years, but better.

One of the biggest problems hindering this church is that very thing right there. There is no sense me being super spiritual with you. You are fraught with worry and everything else and it is not because soldiers are going to knock down the door persecuting us or things such as that. We are just totally filled with anxious thoughts and worry and problems and everything else. And usually it stems because we spend more money than we make and we are not content with anything.

When people come to me for financial counseling usually the first thing I tell them is, “Well, looking at your finances, I have pretty much figured out the problem.”

And the guy goes, “Well, what?”

I go, “You didn’t got to med school.”

And he goes, “What do you mean?”

I go, “This is the number one problem I come across. You did not pay the price to go to med school. You did not study all those years to go to med school. You didn’t work all those hours and days when everyone else was playing. You did not go to school until you were 40 years old like someone who went to med school, but you expect to live like a doctor.”

You see, we expect to live a certain way even though we haven’t earned it and even though it is not God’s will. That is our problem. That is standing in the way of revival. That is standing in the way of service in this church and so many other things.

And we are so filled with worry and you fight with your wife.

I don’t know why I am talked about this so much. There must be someone here tonight that needs to hear this. You fight with your wife and everything else and one of the reasons is you are just in bondage to things and you can’t say, “Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?”<sup>13</sup> You can’t look at the birds and say, “I am as free as they are, even more free because I have a heavenly Father watching over me.”

And then he says in 27.

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<sup>13</sup> Matthew 6:25

And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.<sup>14</sup>

Has God ever given you anything? Many of you would maybe have to say no. And the reason why is because you got it for yourself impatiently instead of waiting on the Lord to give you something better. You got something worse, went in debt, instead of waiting on God who is going to give you something better for free.

You see, what I want you to see is this. You have heard the word אָדוֹנָי (aw-do-nai). How many of you have heard the Hebrew word אָדוֹנָי (aw-do-nai)? We sing that song, אָדוֹנָי (aw-do-nai). We don't know what it means because if we did we wouldn't sing it. אָדוֹנָי (aw-do-nai), it refers to an owner of a home. It refers to an absolute sovereign master over a household. It is also a word used to describe a master over a slave, אָדוֹנָי (aw-do-nai) is my master. Whenever you call God your master, אָדוֹנָי (aw-do-nai), what you are saying is this. "You are my master and I am only a slave."

Now what that means is this. Let me talk to you about slavery for a moment. A slave in a sense is a very free person. In what way? The only thing the slave has to think about in oriental culture is doing whatever his master says.

You say, "Well what is freeing about that?"

Oh, this is what is freeing about it. The master has to worry about where the slave will sleep, how the slave will eat, clothing the slave, protecting the slave, caring for every one of the needs of the slave. The slave only worries about one thing, the will of my master. And the master's job is to care for the slave.

What a revolutionary thought this is to the Christian. That is why he will go on to say... Look at this in verse 33. "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."<sup>15</sup>

Look what he is saying. Now, let's just step back for a moment.

Verse 30.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things;<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Mathew 6:27-29

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 6:33

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 6:30-32

Now, do you eagerly seek all these things? I want you to think about it. Do you eagerly seek [?] let's go eat.

“Let's go eat. The only reason we go to church on Sunday is so we can go out to eat afterwards. Be glad when this sermon is over because we are not going to beat the Methodists there if we don't... if he doesn't hurry up.”

I mean I honestly... when I look at people the way they come in to church to worship and the way they leave to get to Swamp John's or whatever the catfish place is, it is absolutely amazing. You would think that the archangel Gabriel has come down and is blowing a trumpet in the middle of Cracker Barrel because they just take off with glee.

“We got the bad part over. We took our medicine. Now, let's go eat.”

Eagerly seek to eat. Eagerly seek what to wear.

“What are you going to do this Saturday?”

“I'm going to go to the mall.”

“Why?”

“I'm just going to go to the mall.”

“But why?”

“Well, I am going to go to the mall, look around.”

“You don't have any money.”

“That never stopped me before, did it?”

But even if you know you don't have any money and you don't have any money to spend you still go to look. At what? Things that you want.

Now how spiritual is that?

Look what he is saying, though. Who does these kind of things? Who does these crazy things?

Gentiles do them. Who are Gentiles? Gentiles are people who don't know God.

So what he is saying, “Christians, stop living like people who don't know God. Don't seek after these things.”

And why does God tell you not to seek after these things? Because he doesn't want to give them to you. No, because maybe he does want to give them to you. Because look what he says. "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."<sup>17</sup>

See, you go get them yourself and don't do God's will, fine. Do God's will and let God take care of you. Let God take care of you.

You cannot... let me put it this way. A dear friend of mine, Jim Ellis, a dear friend of his says this, "God delights in vindicating the confidence of his children. God delights in vindicating the confidence of his children."

He really does.

Let me give you just an example. Several years ago I was in Peru and I mean I was going to be a bachelor to the rapture, the apostle Paul to the Andes, the first evangelical Baptist monk. I just wanted to live on nothing.

I was so carnal and I was trying to be so spiritual. One day a pastor—I came back to the United States—and he said to me, he goes, "Paul, all right, look. You are in your late 20s now. You have been running around in Peru like a crazy man for several years. You have got to grow up, son." He goes, "You have got what? Two pairs of blue jeans? You have got a guitar. You don't have a checking account. You have never had a credit card. You don't exist." He goes, "What if you get married? I mean you can't do this to a woman."

I started to really feel bad. I was starting to put two and two together. Now I am figuring out why I never get married.

And then he goes, "And what if God calls you to come back to the states?" He says, "You will have nothing. Hey, what are you going to do, rent an apartment? Well, how are you... You can't build a home. You don't have a down payment. You don't have anything."

About eight years ago God called me and my wife to come back and we came back to the states. We didn't have a credit card. We didn't have anything. We didn't exist. We were just... we were going to start this missionary organization and... Where are you going to live?

A guy calls me up and says, "Paul, I want you and your wife to come over."

We came over to their house. He said, "You know, it is really funny. I was asleep the other night and I woke up and I had this number in my head. My wife came to me the next day. She said, 'God has just given... put this number in my head.' And we are just supposed to help you. We don't know what you are doing. We don't even know if you are coming back to the states or what, but here."

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<sup>17</sup> Matthew 6:33



Got out in the car. I opened it up. My wife goes, “That gave us \$300.” She looked again, she says, “They gave us \$3000.” She looked again. She said, “They gave us \$30,000. And there is a note here that says this will make a down payment on a home.”

What am I trying to tell you with all this? I am not even preaching the message I had for this night. I am trying to tell you this, that God is worthy of your confidence and if you would stop looking for all these other things and just look to him and serve him, he will take care of all your other needs. He will. He will. And if you will wait on him you won't have to get everything for yourself and pay as a slave to one who owns you.

He says, “Seek ye first the kingdom...”<sup>18</sup> That is the number one principle when we talk about life in the kingdom, your number one principle. For those of you who are younger maybe seeking a mate, you are just looking for a mate, seeking a mate, wanting a mate, wanting a husband and wanting a wife, this, that and everything else. Stop it. Someone just needs to slap you, set you down for... just stop it.

“Seek ye first the kingdom and his righteousness.”<sup>19</sup> In this church it is the same way. As the pastor pointed out, it is not the pastor's church. This is not the deacon's church. It is not your church, it is not my church. It is Christ's Church.

So the only question ever to be asked is, “Is this seeking first the kingdom?” Are we going to seek first the kingdom? What are we going to do? Are we going to play church? Is it going to be church as usual? Is it going to be church as church has always been or are we going to seek first the kingdom and his righteousness and let him take care of everything else?

He says, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”<sup>20</sup>

Now, just as a closing word, I could have more in my hand right now than you have days left to live on this planet. And even if, young person, you are afforded 60 more years, what does that matter if you live all of it in vanity?

I remember one time preaching to a college group years ago and I noticed—I tell this story quite a bit—I noticed that right at the beginning, it was a big group of college people and right when I got up to preach a bunch of people entered in the door like right over in the front where everyone could see them come in. And it looked like a parade of supermodels. I don't know if it was a sorority or what it was, but they had all timed it just perfectly so that they could just march in and everyone would see their glorious beauty and they sat down on like the first two or three rows.

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<sup>18</sup> See Matthew 6:33

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 6:33

And as I was preaching I was thinking about that. I was thinking, “Lord, how can I help these girls?”

And I walked over to them about half way through the sermon and I said, “You all are very, very beautiful. But I just want to share something with you. It may be a word of encouragement. One day each of you will be very, very ugly. If you live long enough, trust me, sister, you are going to be ugly. You are going to walk in front of a mirror and terrify yourself. It is going to happen.”

And they were all just looking like, “How dare he say this?”

How dare I say it because it is true?

We were born to die. Our life is a vapor. All the things that we accumulate, all the things that glitter and gold and of this earth, they will rot. Thieves will take them away. Or, simply, we will be taken away. We will be taken away.

And then those of you in retirement let me make you mad at me right now. Are you going to get to heaven one day and show Jesus your seashell collection? You are retired? What do you think that means?

You know, “Oh, now I am just going to do whatever I want.”

Slaves don't do whatever they want. If you are working you are the Lord's freeman. You have an obligation to your employer and the Lord understands that and you are free from the Lord's doing, but once you retire you are now the Lord's slave and it is of you to take the last and probably best part of your days and to serve the Lord with all your might.

When my mother retired years and years ago I remember going to her and saying, “Mom, now it is time.”

She said, “Time for what?” She said, “I am 65. It is time to rest.”

I said, “No, it is not time to rest. Now it is time to go to work. You have just been called in to full time ministry.”

And so she did. Never paid, but full time ministry. Now she is 80. In a few weeks she will not be with us anymore. I wonder if she is happy that she took those last 15 years and served the Lord with all her might. And instead of puttering it away on a golf course or collecting sea shells on the gulf.

Serve the Lord. Serve the Lord.

Hell is moving. Death is coming. Work while it is day because night comes when no man works with every breath you have.<sup>21</sup> Praise the Lord. Serve the Lord. Give yourself to the things of God and teach your children to do the same so that on that day when the trumpet blows and the dead in Christ rise you have a gleam in your eye because you know that your treasure is in heaven and you are leaving nothing.

C.T. Studd, one of the wealthiest young men in all of England, considered by some even today to have been the greatest cricket player who ever lived. Cricket is the English version of baseball or vice versa. He was saved at Cambridge. He went to China and pulled people out of opium dens as a young man. He then went to India as a middle aged man and preached the gospel there. He finally died in Africa.

His daughter Mary had made one last trip to Africa to visit him, found him sleeping on a board in an old hut. And he ran out to meet her and he began to cry. He said, "So much I have longed to give you a wedding gift, but I gave everything to Jesus years ago."

Live your life today while it is day for Christ.

Now, I have rambled a bit. I said I would bring it to an end, but I have one thing that really disquiets my heart right now that I need to share with you. And it is this. When I say live for Christ to not accumulate treasure on earth I want you to understand something I am not saying. This is not the Catholic idea of asceticism. This is not the Catholic idea of grab a robe and beat yourself with it and hide in a cave and live in a dungeon and starve yourself to death.

I have on a nice shirt. My pants are ironed and I have some really nice shoes from J.C. Pennies.

When you seek the things of God, he will care for you. He will care for you. This is not about a spiritual man, a truly spiritual man...

Have any of you ever heard of T.W. Hunt? He was a dear friend of mine at seminary and mentored me a bit and just... he is the Southern Baptist prayer guru and he really does pray.

Someone asked him one time, "T.W., how much did Jesus eat?"

And this is what T.W. said. "Jesus ate and ate and ate and ate until if he had taken one more bite it would have been sin."

The point that he was making was this. We are not talking about you are spiritual if you walk around in rags, if you never take a vacation, you drive a beat up car and if you live in a house that is going to fall down. You might have to. But you don't do that for the sake of being spiritual.

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<sup>21</sup> See John 9:4

But what we are saying is this. There is a lot that we could cut out of our lives and still be a very prosperous people. And if we would give ourselves more to serving Christ and the people of God and the lost world we would see God's hand in caring for us to a much greater degree.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Father, I come before you in the name of your Son and I do pray, Lord, that you would use this unusual thing tonight in the hearts of your people to help them. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

For some of you who may want to put this in practice, let me recommend... I know I will talk to the pastor maybe after the service I will and we will talk about some of the books Randy Acorn has written and different people that may put this idea of a treasure in heaven more firmly planted in your heart because preachers are famous for telling you what to do and then not telling you how to do it.

And so if you are interested in that, you can talk to your pastor. And if you are here today, tonight and you don't know Christ? You can throw away every thing in your home, you can go feed the poor for the rest of your life and you will still die and go to hell because God is a holy God and he is a just God and to stand in the presence of God and have fellowship with him you have to have an absolutely perfect record from the moment you were born until the moment you die. You don't have that kind of record and neither do I.

If you died and were judged based on your own merit, you would be found wanting. As a matter of fact, if you took all of the best men on the face of the earth and added their virtue together and stood them before God, they would still be found wanting for this reason. Your sins had to be paid for.

God is just. He cannot just forgive you. Before he can forgive you, justice must be satisfied. And the only way justice can be satisfied is through the death of the one who has broken God's law.

You deserve to die and so do I. But God's son became a man, lived a perfect life that you could never live and then went to a cross. And on that that cross he bore the sins of his people and every bit of divine wrath of holy justice, of God's punishment toward evil, every bit of it that should be poured out on you and me, was poured out on God's Son. God crushed his only begotten Son and his Son willingly submitted to being crushed that as a man someone might die in your place. Jesus Christ died. He paid for every crime you have ever committed or will ever commit against God. He rose again from the dead and it was God's sign and seal that his death was accepted as payment for your sin.

Now Christ is seated at the right hand of God and you say, "What must I do?"

I will not tell you, “Pray this little prayer and you will be saved.” But I will tell you this. Repent of your sins and believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

You say, “Brother Paul, how do I know if I have repented?”

Let me ask you a question? Has God worked in your heart in such a way that the sin you once loved you now hate? And the God you once ignored you now desire? Those are at least the first fruits of repentance. Now believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.<sup>22</sup> His arms are wide.

There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.<sup>23</sup> And that testimony is given here tonight that Christ died for your sins and he rose again from the dead and you can be saved.

But there will come a time, right now, the love of God holds one hand up to heaven and restrains God’s wrath and another hand reaches out to you and pleads with you to come. But I want to warn you. One day that one great obstacle of love will be removed and God will come and he will save his people. But those who have refused to come to love’s call, those who have refused Christ, they will be judged and it will be so terrifying on that day that the Bible says that the great captains and the great men of the earth will cry out of the rocks to fall upon them to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.<sup>24</sup>

But until that day it doesn’t matter who you are, it doesn’t matter what you have done, you can be saved. No one who ever came to Christ was ever cast out, no one.

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<sup>22</sup> See Acts 16:31

<sup>23</sup> See 1 Timothy 2:5; Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45

<sup>24</sup> See Revelation 6:16