



## Heavenly Treasure – Our Number One Priority

Devotion

*“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 .... But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” Matthew 6:19–21, 33.*

Treasure hunts are great fun when we are children. Even when we are older, we love to go to a variety of places and gather the requirements to win the prized treasure. When we are reflecting on these experiences, we are amazed. We remember how much fun the search was and yet, how quickly the treasure and its meaning have disappeared.

What is your greatest treasure on earth? Perhaps your family – children, spouse, parents, or extended family – may be a common response. The example Jesus gives us in verse 19 refers to material things. Sometimes we are like children on a treasure hunt. We go after earthly things that we can physically see and touch. Things that we can touch and see eventually decay and disappear from this earth. This desire for earthly things is so strong in us that Jesus uses a negative imperative, *“Do not lay up,”* to emphasize the great challenge it is to us.

In verse 20, Jesus changes to a positive imperative, *“but lay up.”* Also please notice that the place where the treasure resides changes. Verse 19 refers to *“treasures on earth”* and in verse 20 the setting changes to *“treasures in heaven.”* All earthly treasures will decay; however, the treasures in heaven will last forever.

Verse 21 raises the question, “What is the desire of your heart?” This desire anchors your heart either to earth or to heaven. Where is **your** heart’s home?

What treasures are we to “store up” in heaven? Is it possible to have heavenly treasure on earth? The first spiritual treasure is called the *“kingdom of God”* and only righteous people participate in it. To “look for” or “seek” the kingdom of God means to be active in it. What are activities in which we engage to experience more and more of God's grace? Remember the prayer time with our children when they were little? Watching our children fall asleep in the arms of Jesus as they pray with us is a vivid picture of being in God's Kingdom of Grace. Remember a time when you were waiting for news that your loved one was safe or recovering well from surgery? Perhaps a stranger brought you something to drink and smiled and assured you that God was watching over your loved one.

God's Kingdom of Grace works both ways. When we are in need, His Kingdom of Grace comforts us. Certainly, whenever we are whispering the prayer God hears the most, “God, help me,” God's Kingdom of Grace becomes spiritually meaningful. Prayers are ascending to

the Lord; He sends someone to comfort us; heavenly help is on the way. His very presence becomes apparent to us in this Kingdom of Grace experience. Whenever we are communicating with our dear Lord, we are seeking, finding, and participating in His Kingdom of Grace. Please remember and share some of these experiences from your life.

What does it mean when we ask God in prayer to enlarge His Kingdom of Grace on earth? When more people receive faith and come to know Jesus as their Savior, God's Kingdom of Grace is enlarged. When someone is baptized, the pastor asks us to pray for the newly baptized person. Not only does the newly baptized enlarge His Kingdom of Grace, but also all of the prayers said on behalf of the newly baptized person enlarge His Kingdom. When a stranger stops to help or encourage you, you may be surprised to find that he or she believes in Jesus as his or her Savior. Ask him or her to pray for you. You may be making a new friend in God's marvelous Kingdom of Grace. Sometimes we remember the hymn or choir anthem from the divine service. It keeps returning to our minds and hearts all week. You are experiencing heavenly treasure. Christ is present in the Kingdom of Grace.

In verse 33, Jesus commands us to seek God's "*righteousness*" in addition to the "*kingdom of God*." What is God's "*righteousness*"? Righteousness is a legal (forensic) term as it is used in God's Word. Because of the faith that He gave us in our baptism, God declares us righteous in His sight. God's righteousness is also a gift resulting from His gift of faith. Declaring the faithful "righteous" is made possible by the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. (See Romans 4:22.)

Our heavenly Father sees us as righteous and holy because His Son paid the price for all sin with His death on the cross. Having God's righteousness means we confess our sin to God and ask for His forgiveness. Since we are forgiven because of Christ's suffering and dying, we may rightly conclude that Jesus is the righteousness we seek. That also means Jesus is our heavenly treasure that will never rot, be destroyed, or be stolen.

**Prayer:** Gracious heavenly Father, we thank You for sending Your only Son to be our Savior. We also thank You for His example to us in His earthly life of "laying up heavenly treasures." We ask for strength and wisdom to keep our heart and mind focused on You and You alone. Help us to find You in Your Holy Word, to worship and praise You in the body of Christ, and to receive Your forgiveness in the Word and Sacraments. Father, we give all glory and honor to You in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Conclusion:** Sing or read the first verse of "Jesus, Priceless Treasure" *LSB* 743, *LW* 270.

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