

INTRODUCTION

Jesus said it is foolish to hoard stuff in this life because everything here is so insecure. Moths eat it up; Rust eats it out; or thieves rip it off. We have to guard our stuff, store it, and turn on the alarm because there are people out there who want to steal our stuff.

Pastor Greg Laurie tells the story about an older lady in Los Angeles who was given a handgun by her grown son in case she ever needed protection. She completed the training and paid her fee and got her carry permit. Then not long afterwards she was shopping and as she approached her car she found four strange men in her car. She dropped her shopping bags, drew her handgun and screamed, "I have a gun, and I know how to use it! Get out of the car!" The men got out and ran like crazy.

Her adrenaline was pumping and she felt pretty proud of herself as she loaded her groceries in the car. But she was frustrated because she couldn't get the key in the ignition. Then it dawned on her that her identical car was parked in the next row! She had run those men out of their own car. Feeling foolish she loaded her groceries and drove straight to the police station to turn herself in. The desk sergeant nearly fell off his chair laughing. He pointed to the other end of the counter where four young men were describing their carjacker as an old woman with thick glasses and grey hair. No charges were filed.

We sometimes get carried away when we start protecting our stuff, because we think it's ours. Jesus taught us that we don't own anything. God owns it all.

I mentioned earlier in this series that we are in a new budget year, and we face the challenge of setting aside some money for capital improvements. We are going to soon pay off all our indebtedness and I don't want us to have to borrow money for upkeep.

So we're one month into our budget year, how are we doing? Our budget goal for January was \$1,172,104. This past month our budget offerings equaled \$1,063,674. The good news is that this is over \$100,000 more than we received in January of 2014. But the not-so-good news is that this is still short of our budget goal by \$108,430.

We have one of the most generous congregations on planet earth, but I still think we are under-giving our potential. I've always been open and honest about our financial situation here, and I want to share some information that might surprise you. Now, let me remind you that I don't know how much any member of our church gives except for my wife and me. But our accounting software can give us a lot of financial data. For instance, in 2014, we had about 7,500 family units in our church. A family unit may be a husband and wife and kids, or it may be a single person. Of those 7,500 family units, about 3,900 families donated to GABC last year. Based on this number and the total given, it's simple to figure the median amount given every month by a family unit. Would you like to guess what that amount is? The median monthly amount given last year to GABC was \$87.50 a month; that's about \$20 a week. The median amount means that 50% of our families give more than that, and about 50% of our families give less than that per month. So, I believe we have some room to invest more money in what God is doing.

During this series, we've been focusing on five keys to unlock God's treasure truth.

1. God owns everything; He allows me to manage some of His wealth.
2. I can't take treasure with me to heaven; but I can send it on ahead.
3. My heart abides where I invest God's money.
4. I honor God when I give back to Him the first and the best.
5. The antidote for materialism is the joyful cycle of giving to receive to give even more.

Last week we studied the story Jesus told about the foolish farmer who hoarded all his crops and goods in his barns and built even bigger barns.

Jesus told the story, gave a summary, but He kept talking. I want us to see the REST of the story today.

Luke 12:20-34: "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 'This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.'"

Let me remind you that the original New Testament didn't have any chapter or verse divisions, and the newer translations set the next section off with a new heading, but that is misleading; don't stop there, Jesus had more to say about this subject. Keep reading:

"Then Jesus said to his disciples: 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'"

The principle we're examining in this message is "You can't take it with you. But you can send it on ahead." Like a coin with two sides, this truth has two points.

I. AT DEATH WE CARRY OUT EXACTLY WHAT WE BROUGHT IN WHEN WE WERE BORN

Jesus started this parable with the statement, "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." The Foolish Farmer was born with nothing. Then he spent his whole life accumulating more and more stuff. And then he worried about it. He said, "What shall I do?" His possessions dominated his thoughts, so he built bigger barns. And then he died suddenly and left it all behind.

So why do you think Jesus immediately launched into the strongest teaching in the Bible telling us not to worry? Because He knows we tend to worry about possessions. Have you ever lost sleep, or wrung your hands, or worried about money or possessions? Someone once said worry is practical atheism. You may claim to believe in God, but worry robs you of faith. After four decades as a pastor, I have observed that worry is the #1 sin among Christians.

Don't worry; be faithful. You can't take it with you when you die. Someone was kind enough to point me in the direction of a neat song entitled, "Trailer Hitch" written and performed by Kristian Bush, he's half of the duo known as Sugarland. The main message of the song is "We try; Everybody tries to fit it in that ditch. You can't take it with you when you go. Never seen a hearse with a trailer hitch."

The Bible teaches that we bring nothing into this world and we will carry nothing out. Solomon was one of the richest men of history. To give you an idea, Bill Gates' net worth is about \$100 billion and to his credit, he has pledged to give half of it away. When you calculate only the value of Solomon's gold (not silver or real estate) in today's dollars, it would be about \$850 billion.

Toward the end of his life Solomon turned rather cynical and made this observation. "I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner...Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand." (Ecclesiastes 5:13-15)

Most babies are born with their fists clenched—but there's nothing there. Then we start grabbing and we spend our lives grabbing and grabbing for more and more. In death, rigor mortis returns our hands to a fist—and we carry nothing out.

The New Testament verifies this. Paul wrote, "Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content." (1 Timothy 6:6-8 ESV)

Ann Landers had an interesting letter in her column a few years ago. It was from a girl who was writing about her uncle and aunt. She said, "My uncle was the tightest man I've ever known. All his life, every time he got paid he took \$20 out of his paycheck and put it under his mattress. Then he got sick and was about to die. As he was dying, he said to his wife, 'I want you to promise me one thing. I want you to promise me that when I'm dead you'll take my money from under the mattress and put it in my casket so that I can take it all with me.' The girl's letter went on with the story. "He died, and his wife kept her promise. She collected all the money from the bed the day he died. Then she went to the bank and deposited it. She wrote out a check and

dropped it in his casket on the day of his funeral." He wanted to take it with him, but he's going to have a hard time cashing that check.

II. IN LIFE WE STORE UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN BY INVESTING TO GET PEOPLE THERE

As followers of Jesus, we live in two worlds at the same time. We live in this temporary world—it's a physical, natural world. But we are also citizens of heaven. It is a spiritual, supernatural world. Like many Americans, the Foolish Farmer concentrated all his efforts on this world. That's storing up treasures on earth. But Jesus said we could store up treasures in heaven by focusing on the kingdom of God. The most important thing Jesus said in this text and in Matthew six is found in verses 30-32. He said, "And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."

Let me tell you what storing up treasure in heaven ISN'T, then two ways to send it on ahead.

A. STORING UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN IS NOT having a storehouse full of gold and diamonds when we get to heaven

There has been a traditional teaching that the more good deeds a Christian does, the more good stuff in heaven you'll have. If you do a lot of good deeds, then you'll have a larger mansion in heaven.

Elvis made the song "Mansion over the Hilltop" famous. He sang, "I'm satisfied with a cabin below; A little silver and a little gold. But in that city where the ransomed will shine; I want a gold one that's silver lined."

There are plenty of unscriptural jokes and stories about St. Peter escorting Christians to their mansions. If you've done lots of good things, and given a lot of money to God, then your mansion will be huge. And when St. Peter opens the door the rooms will be filled with gold, silver, and jewels. And you'll run and dive into all the wealth and swim around.

It reminds me of an old Daffy Duck cartoon where Daffy discovers a treasure and he dives in and says, "I'm rich! I'm wealthy! Yahoo! (dives in comes up with a diamond on his head). I'm comfortably well-off. Whoo hoo!"

The other side of this mistaken belief is that if you were saved, but you were stingy and selfish, and never performed good works, then when you get to heaven you'll have a little cardboard lean-to. And the person will say, "Well, I'm in. That's all I care about!"

And sometimes this belief is taken to the extreme, which we love to do. Some even think if you're poor here, then in heaven you'll be driving a Rolls Royce. But if you're rich here, then in heaven you'll be poking along in a broken-down Ford Pinto.

At worst this belief is a terrible heresy. At best that is pure legalism. Even after you're saved, you can't do anything to earn any more love or favor from God. It's all by grace.

So here's a revolutionary thought to change your thinking. Treasures in heaven aren't something you enjoy post-mortem after you die and go to glory. The Kingdom of heaven exists here and now. So stop thinking that you'll enjoy a lot of *stuff* in heaven future. You won't need anything in heaven future. So let me show you two ways you be storing up treasures in heaven NOW and enjoying the benefits of them now.

B. STORING UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN IS showing God's love through acts of kindness done in the name of Jesus

Jesus said, in Luke 12:33, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor." He didn't say sell ALL your possessions—just sell some of them—any extra stuff you don't really need, then find a needy person and help them. There was only one man in the New Testament that Jesus told, "Sell ALL your possessions, give to the poor, and follow me." That was the Rich Young Ruler, and Jesus knew gold was his god and greed was his creed." You can't serve God and Money. The Rich Young Ruler turned and left because he loved his gold more than God.

The Apostle Paul understood how to lay up treasures in heaven. He wrote, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

Most of us are rich according to the global standard of living. According to the World Wealth Calculator, if you make \$50,000 a year, you are wealthier than 98% of the world's population. The happiest rich people I know are those who have discovered the joy of giving their money away in the name of Jesus to help hurting people.

General philanthropy is wonderful. But if Jesus is your Lord, then your acts of kindness should be done in His name. If you do them in your name, you get the glory. If you do them in the name of Jesus, He gets the glory. Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16 NKJV)

Is anybody thirsty right now? I'd like to demonstrate this principle in a visual way. Come up on the platform and allow me to give you a cup of cold water. Please take this cup of cold water. I'm giving it in the name of Jesus who is the Living Water. Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward." (Mark 9:41)

What is the reward? Not gallons of water in heaven; we won't need it. There's a river of life flowing through future heaven. The reward is hearing our Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

C. STORING UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN IS sharing the Gospel so others may receive the treasure of knowing Jesus

If you want to store up treasures, you first have to define what heavenly treasure is. Here's the bottom line: Heavenly treasure is knowing Jesus Christ and having Him live in your life. How many of you have that treasure?

Feeding a hungry person or clothing a cold person is a great act, but we do it in the name of Jesus so that the person will know that God loves them. But if we don't share the gospel with them that just means that a hungry man may die with a full tummy and go to hell.

So that we can be clear about the identification of heavenly treasure, focus on what the Word of God says, "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." (2 Corinthians 4:5-7)

Heaven is a real place, but I don't believe that it is on a planet a billion light years away. I believe heaven exists now in another dimension that is closer than you can imagine. When Stephen was being stoned in Acts 7, he looked up and saw the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

That world is eternal. The only two eternal things in this world are the Word of God and the souls of people. When you invest in getting people into heaven, you are laying up treasures in heaven.

The main purpose of Green Acres Baptist Church is to share God's love and to spread the Gospel for one simple reason. We want to take as many people to heaven with us as we can. That's why the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ exists on earth. When you give to Green Acres, you are investing so that people can come to know Christ. Your treasure in heaven is those who come to Christ because you gave, or you shared the Gospel.

CONCLUSION

I've read Randy Alcorn's book, *The Treasure Principle*, over a dozen times. I'm grateful to him for supplying a lot of the material to stimulate my thinking for this series. His book is in our bookstore. It's only about 100 pages long and you can read it in a couple of hours.

Randy writes about visiting a missionary couple in Egypt a few years ago. They took Randy and his wife to visit two graves.

The first was William Borden. William Borden was the heir to the huge Borden Dairy Products Company. His father was a millionaire when few reached that level, and there were no billionaires. Borden's mother became a Christian when attending Moody Church in Chicago, and she took her son William who was saved under the preaching of R. A. Torrey.

William attended Yale University and graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary. He rejected the promised wealth of his father's company and instead chose to be a missionary. He ultimately wanted to go to the Muslims in China, but went first to Egypt to learn Arabic. He soon was sharing his faith with many Egyptians. After only three months there, the 26-year-old Borden contracted spinal meningitis and died. He was buried in an American cemetery in Cairo. His death made international headlines. When his mother later examined his Bible she found three phrases he had written. When he first felt called to missions he wrote: "No Reserves." When his father told him he would be cut off from the family fortune if he became a missionary he wrote, "No retreats." Just weeks before he died in Egypt he wrote, "No regrets."

Randy Alcorn wrote that after they visited his simple grave, the missionaries took them to the Egyptian National Museum where they visited the fabulous, expansive tomb of King Tutankhamen, King Tut. His tomb is mind-boggling. He died at age seventeen, and when he was buried, tons of gold, jewels, food, and wine were buried with him. The Egyptians believed in an afterlife, one where they could take earthly treasures with them. That's why the Pyramids are there. But all of Tut's treasures were still there thousands of years after he died.

Randy Alcorn said he couldn't help but see the contrast between the two graves.

King Tut was unable to take any of his treasure with him. He is facing the misery of a Christless eternity. William Borden's simple grave is a testimony of a young man who didn't take anything with him—he sent it on ahead. His life was given to the Kingdom of God, so he stored up his treasures in heaven. And his reward was hearing the Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

You can't take it with you. But you can send it on ahead.

OUTLINE

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- B. Showing God's love through acts of kindness done in the name of Jesus

"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

- C. Sharing the Gospel so others may receive the treasure of knowing Jesus

"For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." *2 Corinthians 4:5-7*

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
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