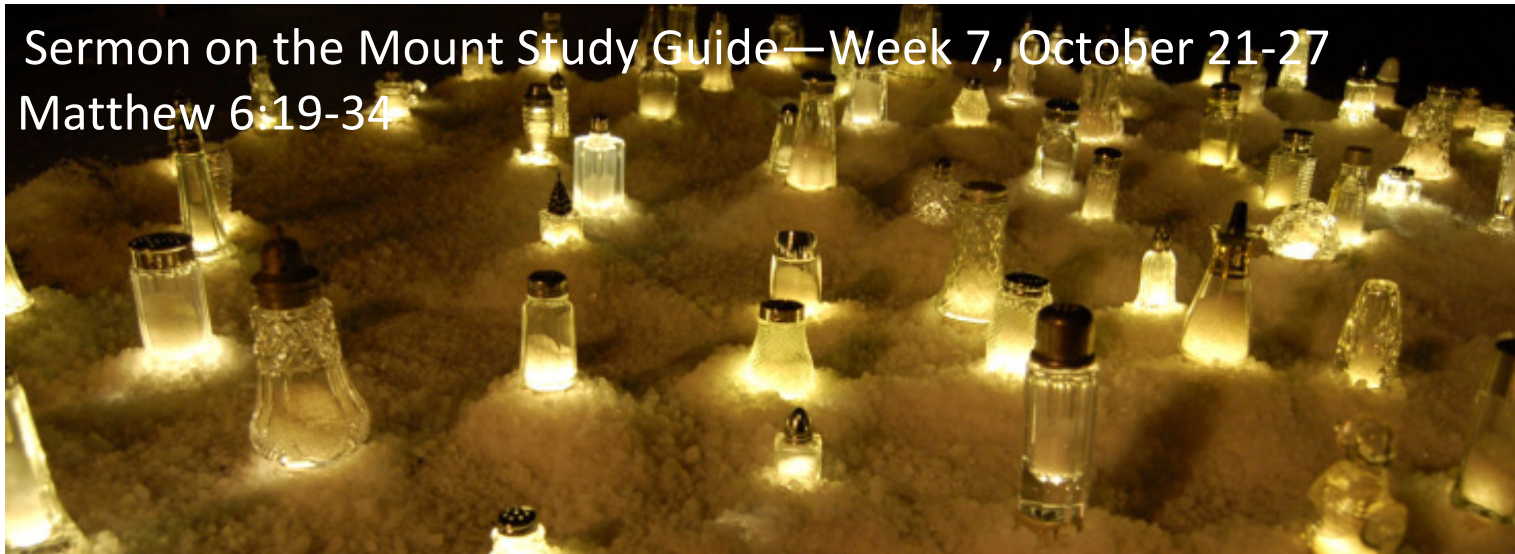


Sermon on the Mount Study Guide—Week 7, October 21-27

Matthew 6:19-34



- I. “Now, when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.” (Matthew 5:1-2)
- II. Opening prayer for Illumination
- III. Read Matthew 6:19-34
- IV. Stott Study Guide: pp. 41-40
- V. *The Divine Conspiracy*, pp. 203-214:

As we saw last week, we have reached a shift in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5 Jesus’ main concern seemed to be outlining how his followers can more completely live as citizens of God’s Kingdom, Matthew 6, then, focuses on some major pitfalls that might waylay people as they strive to live more fully into that Kingdom. Last week we looked at our desire for the approval of others. This week, we follow Jesus as he turns his attention to another deep human temptation: the desire to secure ourselves through material wealth.

Dallas Willard describes the “treasures” discussed in Matthew 6:19-34 as “things we try to keep because of the value we place upon them. They may be of no value whatsoever in themselves; nevertheless, we take great pains to protect such things. Thus, we are said to *treasure* them...” (203, emphasis Willard’s). Willard points out that these treasures could be anything (and not necessarily material possessions). We can treasure relationships, other people, reputations, security, patriotism, social movements, etc.

Against the backdrop of our human treasures, though, Willard writes, “The most important commandment of the Judeo-Christian tradition is to treasure God and his realm more than anything else. That is what it means to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. It means to *treasure* him, to hold him and his dear, and to protect and aid him in his purposes. Our only wisdom, safety, and fulfillment lies in so treasuring God. Then we will also treasure our neighbors rightly, as *he* treasures them” (203, emphasis Willard’s). Willard continues, summarizing Jesus’ teaching here, “Thus to ‘lay up treasures in heaven’ is to treasure all of these intimate and touching aspects of heaven’s life, all of what God is doing on earth. It is to do so in the order and manner heaven has indicated, and especially as we see it illuminated in Jesus himself. And when we live in this way, our treasures are *absolutely secure*” (205-206, emphasis Willard’s).

Once more, the order of the Sermon on the Mount is important here. As we looked at last week, when we give up seeking human approval, we find ourselves able to focus more on God and his purposes in the world, therefore allowing us to live more fully into the reality of his kingdom among us. And once that attitude leads to habits that seek God first, we find ourselves treasuring him, trusting him, and loving him more fully. Such a progression will obviously have implications in our lives and how we live, view other people, and relate to God and his mission all around us in this world. And that’s when we start to catch a more complete glimpse of just how real God’s kingdom is right here, right now.

VI. Questions of 1st Importance:

1. Questions for the Text

- i. The second person pronouns (“yourselves”) in verses 19-20 are plural, while the pronouns in verse 21 (“your”) are singular, indicating a shift from corporate address to a more personal focus. In other words, Jesus seems to be giving a broader teaching in verses 19-20 and then hammering it home on an individual level in verse 21. In essence he is saying, “Every one of you who hears this teaching should remember that your heart will stay with those things you treasure, so value those things of utmost importance—the treasures of heaven.” What does this mean for us corporately? As individuals? What is Jesus saying to each of us in this text?
- ii. *Mammon*, the Aramaic term translated as “Money” in verse 24, seems to come from a root verb meaning something along the lines of “that in which one trusts.” How does this affect our understanding of what Jesus is saying in this verse? How much trust do we put in our wealth? How does such dependence affect our trust in God?
- iii. Verse 32 declares that “the pagans run after all these things (food, clothes—the things human beings need), and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.” What kind of contrast does this set up between Christian and non-Christian views of what’s important?

2. Questions for the World

- i. When we don’t treasure the things that the rest of the world does, we stand out to the world in ways that aren’t always comfortable or easy. Put simply, the church will face hardships, but we don’t always remember this in the West. Willard writes, “Indeed, it is said that more Christians have died as martyrs in the twentieth century than in all the period from the beginning to 1900. The ‘Western’ segment of the church today lives in a bubble of historical illusion about the meaning of discipleship and the gospel. We are dominated by the essentially Enlightenment values that rule America: pursuit of happiness, unrestricted freedom of choice, disdain of authority. The prosperity gospels, the gospels of liberation, and the comfortable sense of ‘what life is all about’ that fills the minds of the most devout Christians in our circles are the result. How different is the gritty realization of James: ‘Friends of the world (*kosmou*) are enemies of God’ (James 4:4). And John: ‘If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him’ (2 John 2:15)” (DC, 214). What do we think of this? Where are our treasures? In what do we put our trust as 21st Century Christians? Is Willard fair in his assessment? Why or why not?
- ii. It’s one thing to believe in trusting God. It’s another to actually do it, to give up our worry and let go of the daily grind that marginalizes God’s claim on our lives. What things do we worry about the most? What worries are the hardest for us to let go of? How do these pressures affect our relationship with God? How might Jesus’ words help set us free from such demands?

VII. Questions of 2nd Importance:

1. Questions for the Text

- i. Why do the NIV and TNIV capitalize the word “Money” in verse 24? What are the translators saying about people’s view of material wealth and how it relates to God?
- ii. Verses 33 and 34 seem to present a contrast and climax for the previous material Jesus addresses in this passage. How do these verses inform and illustrate the rest of what he says in our text for today?

2. Questions for the World

- i. If we’re honest, which master do we really serve: God or Money? Which master does our North American society serve? How does our broader culture affect what we value and hold dear?
- ii. Matthew 6:19-34 is a text that has been used to argue that the poor of this world shouldn’t worry about their condition or try too hard to change it, because to do so wouldn’t be to trust God. How do we respond to such a reading of this passage? Does that understanding seem to catch the major focuses of Jesus’ words here?

VIII. If so desired, watch Monday’s chapel on this week’s text at:

IX. Recommended Spiritual Discipline for this week: Simplicity