

Jesus is the only place we are going to find the security we're looking for. To illustrate that, I want to talk a little bit about where our culture is right now. To do that, oddly, I'm going to go back to January 1848 in a little town off the American River called Coloma, California.

There was a carpenter named James Marshall, who was inspecting a sawmill under construction. He noticed tiny little flakes in the water wheel. Marshall was quoted as saying, "It made my heart thump, for I was certain it was gold." I wish we still talked like that. Marshall tried to keep it a secret, but by March, a San Francisco businessman had heard the rumor.

The businessman decided to stock up on mining supplies. He got a little vial of gold and began yelling through the streets, "There's gold, gold, gold in the American River." He ended up making quite a fortune from selling to miners. By August, the gold strike was confirmed by President Polk, which launched a global migration frenzy. Tens of thousands of people poured into California in 1849, hence the 49ers.

A half a decade later, 300,000 people had arrived in California from all over the world, many of whom had sold everything and left their families behind. They risked their lives, all for the hope of finding these little gold flakes, and a few struck gold, but most did not. San Francisco transformed from a village to a giant economic powerhouse almost overnight and changed California forever.

There was also a dark side to the gold rush. What started off as a temptation to finally find the good life and to get rich quick ended not so great, with the genocide of the Native Americans, racism, anti-immigrant violence, and the destruction of California's landscape. Most of the settlers who came and sacrificed everything to move here ended up finding only more greed instead of prosperity.

If you fast forward 150 years or so to January 9, 2007, Steve Jobs stood on a stage a few miles from here and changed the world forever. He said, "Today, Apple is going to reinvent the phone. It will be an iPod, a phone, and an internet communicator." He said that these are not three separate devices, but one device. And the gold rush started again.

The waters we swim in are still filled with little flakes of gold, and the promise of the good life is still pervasive in every single one of our lives here. If I could just make this amount of money, if I could only buy a house, if I could finally get that promotion, if I could only work at that company with the great stock options. A

unique mark of where we live is that we run frantically to try to find and accumulate the right kind of life. In the process, we miss out on the life that's right in front of us. We can call this the gold rush mindset.

To be a follower of Jesus in this type of context is challenging to say the least. I know it is for me. We've mentioned a few times in this Sermon on the Mount series that there are going to be some things that Jesus talks about that are going to make us feel uncomfortable, and we will undoubtedly be tempted to disagree with what Jesus said. This might be one of those days. Jesus is not after your stuff. He's not after your wallet—he's after your heart. Nothing has the power to grip our hearts quite like stuff and money.

Jesus has three things to talk to us about in this text—our treasures, eyes, and master. If you're a Jesus follower or maybe just considering becoming a Jesus follower, before you interject your own wisdom, I ask that you allow God to hold it open and give you his vision of accumulation and resources and what that looks like in his kingdom because he created it all.

I grew up hearing this phrase that our time and treasures tell us everything we need to know about what we truly love. I don't know if you believe that or not, but I grew up hearing that a lot. Such as, if you could look into my bank account, you would be able to say that you know what Brandon really loves. He spends this much money a month on candy, so he must really love candy.

I think everyone has treasures. Having treasures is a big part of being human. Some of us have secret treasures that we don't tell anybody. You reserve them for only the people that you trust the very most. If you don't think you have treasures, think about little kids for a second. Any parent in here knows the panic that ensues if you leave the house with your 1-year-old and forget their security blanket. My daughter, Olivia, had her little pink blanket. If we left the house without it, there wasn't a number of miles that we wouldn't turn around if we left that blanket at home because nap time wasn't going to happen, and bedtime wasn't going to happen. For kids, this is an important thing.

Psychologists call this a transitional object. It's important for that phase of life that when a moment arises when a child needs to be separated from their caregiver or their parent or whatever, it provides them with temporary, transitional comfort until they learn how to self-soothe. Most of us, hopefully, are beyond that stage in this room. I don't see many blankets in here, but we're not without our security objects, even as adults.

We look for routine in chaos, for mementos in grief, for wealth when we fear lack, and for control when things are anxious. I want to remind you that to treasure things, to be a treasurer, is not a sin. It's not wrong to treasure. In fact, God created us, and it's by design that we are treasuring beings.

Jesus knows that the human heart has this tendency to give more weight to earthly security blankets than to him. That's where all of this gets messed up. So that's what Jesus is speaking into today, and as he speaks to this crowd on this hill, this sermon that we've been studying for the last number of weeks, I want to remind you that he's speaking to first-century Palestinians who are under Roman rule. They are highly taxed. This is not like a super-wealthy crowd. This is a crowd of people who are most likely struggling. So, into that context, Jesus says,

**"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21"**

Most of us living in the Bay would never store our valuables where we know they're going to get stolen or eaten, but they still have to put signs up in parking lots to make sure not to leave any valuables in the vehicle. We probably wouldn't leave a laptop on the front seat because we know what can happen. Some of us have experienced going up to our car and seeing the broken window. The biggest problem is fixing the window!

I remember the last time my car got broken into. There was a reminder for years to come with that car because when they broke the window, they nicked the weather stripping. It whistled when I drove it, calling me stupid for leaving my laptop in my car. Most of us would not leave stuff where it's going to get eaten or destroyed. Jesus says, Don't store it here on earth, but store it in heaven. What of our stuff do we store? Can we bring it to heaven?

I remember when I was little growing up in the Baptist Church, singing all those weird little songs. One of the songs that we sang was "Oh, You Can't Get To Heaven (On Roller Skates)." Repeat after me. "Oh, you can't get to heaven in roller skates. In your roller skates. No, you can't get to heaven in your roller skates. You skate right past those pearly gates." This was my childhood.

So Jesus says we're supposed to focus on storing treasures that are going to last, things that are going to last. Martin Luther said, "The great idol mammon has anointed three trustees, rust, moths, and thieves. That ought to remind us of the temporality of possessions." So I started thinking about Jesus in this moment, speaking to this crowd. I don't picture Jesus like this very often, but when you consider for a second Jesus' economic position,

this really bothered me a little bit. I viewed Jesus as not having anything.

He had almost no earthly possessions. He ate probably through fishing, farming, and donations. He lived on very little. He lived from the generosity of others. He stayed with other people. He undoubtedly knew hunger and thirst. That's the Jesus who is teaching this message. Dr. Stanley Hauerwas has said something to the effect that Jesus embodied a carefree trust in God, a kind of economic vision. He demanded simplicity because he lived it. He expected care for the poor because he had experienced it.

For me, thinking about this of Jesus challenged me because I started wondering how I would react to him, as a guy who didn't really have much, who didn't really seem to be concerned with the same stuff that I was concerned about. If this guy, who doesn't even seem to have a home, comes up to me and says, "You don't have to worry about any of this stuff," I might be tempted to say, "I have to live in the real world. I have bills. I have to pay the rent and car payment. I have investments. I have a 401 (k). Jesus, do you really understand the world we're living in, the pressures that we're under?"

Then I started having this thought that if my way conflicts with Jesus' way, that's a key that I need to look deeper. If I start making justifications, such as, it's different now. If my way looks different than Jesus' way, I need to look deeper. By the way, if nothing that you ever do disagrees with Jesus, it is most likely that it's not Jesus you're following, but some version of him that looks a lot more like you. I can't help but reevaluate how I view possessions and accumulation in light of how Jesus himself lived his life.

I'm challenged because I have everything I need and then some, but I still have this desire, this need, this compulsion to hold onto things like there's not going to be enough. What if I don't have it, or can't have it? There's a fear and an anxiety in me.

I want to bring up these two different mindsets that I think might help frame this a little bit. One is the scarcity mindset, and one is the abundance mindset; see if any of these resonate with you.

### **Scarcity Mindset**

The scarcity mindset says that there's never enough to go around. If someone else succeeds, I lose. I must hold tightly to what I have. I can't afford to be generous. Resources, love, and opportunities are limited. I have to compete to stay ahead. Failures define me.

This one is big for the Bay Area. There's no room for rest, only hustle. I'll never be enough. What I see is all there is. We have developed this scarcity mindset over time. I was trying to trace my own struggle with this. When my twin brother and I were nine years old, my parents found Jesus. They decided they wanted to go on this adventure with God, where they moved from the Midwest to Iowa, to go into ministry and learn to trust God.

Then my dad decided to go up to Minnesota for a few years to go to seminary. He was working two part-time jobs, and there were another set of twins on the way. So there were two sets of twins and my parents living in this tiny little apartment with my dad working two part-time jobs. They would come to us and say that they didn't know how they were going to pay rent, but they've watched God deliver, and they were trusting God with their money and finances. So they wanted to bring it to us, not to scare us, but to let us know that they believed God was going to provide.

Sure enough, a week later, a check would show up, which would be just the amount we needed. I watched this happen over and over again, and I realized, looking back now, that what my parents saw as God's providing, built up their faith, and they were excited for how God was going to provide in their life. However, all I could think of was what happens when you don't pay your rent? Do they kick you out? Minnesota gets very cold. I could not see God working because I couldn't move past the idea of what if he didn't make it happen? I realized that all through my childhood, and even now, when I watch my parents and the way they live. The way that they trust God, it makes me uncomfortable because I have a scarcity mindset—there's not going to be enough.

### **Abundance Mindset**

The abundance mindset looks more like this: There's more than enough, especially in God; other people's successes do not threaten mine. I can release it because I trust God will provide. Generosity multiplies. I can collaborate instead of competing. Failure is feedback, not final. Rest is holy, not lazy. I'm enough, and I have enough. When's the last time you thought that God sees beyond what I can see?

Let's not forget that just a few chapters before, Jesus asked us to pray, and what did he say? He said, "Give us our daily bread." We're supposed to go to him every day and ask God to give us what we need for today. We want more days. We want a pantry in case God forgets about tomorrow. Jesus wants us to go to him every single day for what we need, not store it. Sam Wells says it something like this.

**The promise is that the human imagination is simply not large enough to take in all that God is and has to give. We're overwhelmed by God's inexhaustible creation, his limitless grace, his relentless mercy, his enduring purpose, and his fathomless love. It's just too much to contemplate, assimilate, and understand. This is the language of abundance, and if humans turn away, it's sometimes out of a misguided but understandable sense of self-protection, a preservation of identity in the face of a tidal wave of glory. Sam Wells**

He says that our problem is that our imagination is limited on who God is and how abundant his creation is. Could it be that

our lens is clouded? That our perspective has shifted and that it's not an economy of scarcity, but one of abundance. God didn't give us a gray world with basic oxygen and flat landscapes. He gave us sunsets that make the artists cry. He gave us flavors that dance on our tongues when we go out to eat, he gave us colors that don't need to exist, and he gives us stars that we will never reach.

Why? He is abundant, and our perspective of God is so important because it determines if he is actually worth trusting. If our perspective is distorted, we're at risk of missing all that God has for us. So Jesus, in light of that, goes into this next section. It feels like it is an aside, but he says this,

**"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! Matthew 6:22-23**

To understand what Jesus is saying here, it's helpful to understand how the first century viewed sight. There are two theories of sight in the first century—intra-mission and extra-mission. Intra-mission: They thought that light would come into your eye and would enable you to see. So seeing was a function of what was outside of your eye. Extra-mission was the other, more dominant definition that held for quite a while. This was the belief that there's light coming out of your eye. So whatever light comes out, wherever you look, there's a light beam kind of coming out of your eyes and illuminating what you are looking at. Jesus says the eye is the lamp of the body, and it provides light so that you can see clearly.

**Healthy(NIV) Single(KJV) Clear (NASB)**

**haplous - Single, Unfolded**

**To be single-minded, not duplicitous. Focused on Good. Generous**

**Unhealthy, Evil, Bad**

**poneros - Evil or Wicked, Stingy**

In fact, other translations of this say healthy, single, and clear. These words are often used in the context of generosity and stinginess. With this sandwiched between the two passages here, it's definitely the context that he's talking about. The word haplous is healthy, single, or clear, depending on what transition you're looking at. Single, unfolded is what it literally means to be single-minded, not duplicitous, and is focused on good and generous. Ponerous means, unhealthy, evil, bad, wicked, or stingy.

So if your eye is good, if your perspective or your lens is good, generous, single-minded, not duplicitous, inner light will come from inside of you and light the way from your body and help you to see the world according to the kingdom of God, an economy of generosity and abundance. So Jesus is saying that

our generosity or lack thereof says something about what's going on inside of us.

If you're a generous person, you see the world through a different lens. But if there's darkness inside of you, he says, and that darkness comes out to try to illuminate your field of vision. How dark is that going to be? So just imagine if the light coming out of your eye theory were true, if there's only darkness in you and you are trying to see something in front of you, only darkness will come out. You would not be able to see. Your whole lens would not only be distorted, but you would not see anything.

It makes me think of when we go to the parking lot, sometimes my daughters will play this game where I have to close my eyes and they put their hands on my shoulders and steer where I go, and I don't get any say in the matter. So I close my eyes, and it feels like it's going to be a fun game until my eyes are shut. Then I stop trusting my daughters. I start thinking that they're just going to kill me. They're going to run me into a car, or a pole, or something. I start panicking. I can't see!

Hopefully, this hasn't happened to you, but maybe you're driving and someone covers your eyes for a couple of seconds. It freaks you out. How dark is that dark going to be? How are you going to find your way? If the kingdom vision of Jesus isn't reshaping our approach to possessions, to accumulation, then we are not fully living out Jesus' Kingdom vision. I want to let this confront you a bit because it did me.

Here's the reality. I am more convinced right now than I've ever been that Jesus' way is better. I have the desire more than I've ever had to apprentice under him to be more like him. What confronted me is that it's not helpful if I have that desire, unless it's shaping my life. If it's not shaping my decisions and my habits with money and accumulation, then I'm not fully participating with God in his kingdom. What's more is in this kingdom, he's designed us back in the Garden of Eden, to partner with him. To be his light in the dark world, to bring hope to the hopeless, to bring that clarity of vision to people who don't have it. To show what generosity and God's abundance are really like.

All we have is meant to be used for all of his glory. And when we withhold that piece of our hearts, we're telling God that he can use these other parts of us. Our intellect, family, marriage, and our time, but just not this. When we seize control, much like Adam and Eve did in the garden, and follow our own way, we miss out on how God could partner with us in this world. Jesus goes on to say, *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money"* (Matthew 6:24).

Other versions of this text might translate that money word as mammon, which is defined as wealth, regarded as an evil influence, or, this is the key here, a false object of worship and devotion. That word devotion just means to hold fast, to cling to, to

be devoted to. You cannot be devoted to two things. If you're clinging to one thing, you have to not cling to the other. Have you ever tried to serve two masters before?

I remember years back, I was trying to play music shows at every venue I possibly could. Someone told me that I ought to get into the casinos. They said they were great, but they were just depressing. But I was trying hard to get into this casino, Tachi Palace. One day, they reached out and asked me and my band to perform. I looked at the calendar for the date they wanted me to perform, and I was so disappointed because I had a worship camp that I was going to lead at Sugar Pine near Yosemite. I was doing that all week long.

Instead of turning down the casino, I looked at the calendar, and decided I could do both. I looked at the time of the camp sessions and what time they wanted me to be at the casino, and I arranged for people to bring a sound system to the casino for me. I was like, "I'm going to do both of these things."

The camp was an hour and 45 minutes away from the casino, so I was up and down the mountain. I led worship there, then sprinted to the car and drove an hour and 45 minutes down to the casino, played the casino, came back, led another thing, and then rinse and repeat every day that week.

What's crazy is when I look at the video of this, I have zero memory of it. I don't remember it at all. I think some cool stuff happened that weekend. But I was not showing up the way God wanted me to show up. I was serving two different people. I was giving both masters a pretty poor version of myself.

The sense that I want to give you is the anxiety and pressure, and the way that we live while trying to serve two masters. Maybe you feel this in your heart right now. You may be trying to have a foot in both worlds. Trying to serve the world, while trying to also serve God, creates this angst inside of you that was never meant to be experienced. God didn't create you for that. He created you for peace.

I want to remind you of what I said at the beginning, that God is not after your money or your stuff. He's after your heart. He wants you to be free. During worship, I was in my head about this. Normally, I lead worship on Sunday mornings, so it's very hard for me to just worship freely because I'm analyzing things like the sound mix and how well the drummer's doing and all this kind of stuff. I was in my head. Totally tied up and not free. I watched this little girl dancing and doing spins in the front, and I started getting emotional and crying because she had no sense of being tied up and locked up in the things of this world. She was just dancing for Jesus.

## God Wants You Free

*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well"* (Matthew 6:33). He just wants to help



you put things back in the proper order. Oswald Chambers says, "The rival of devotion to Jesus is not evil things but good things which are not ordered by the Spirit of God" (Chambers).

It's very possible that the stuff tying you up is not inherently sinful or evil. It's not like money is inherently sinful or evil, but it is in the wrong order, and you're putting a little bit too much emphasis on it. So what do we do if our money has our heart? What do we do if we're addicted to storing treasures? If we've given our hearts to earthly securities instead of God? I'm going to give you four practical steps, things that will help as we go on this journey of untangling our hearts from money and accumulation.

## **Reject Shame In Isolation**

The first one is to reject shame in isolation. Talk to someone who has learned to trust God with money. Some people are naturally good at this, but most of us have to learn how to trust God with money.

All summer, I've been talking to different missionaries. When I was in North Macedonia, I was talking to one of our missionaries and was blown away by the way that he lives his life with this trust. He was telling me how their support works, and that they can't even take a side job. They're completely dependent on how people support them. I was asking if we could talk to them and maybe change some of that? Because I wanted them not to have to worry about money when they are out on the mission field.

He said he could tell it was bothering me. I confessed that it was bothering me that they couldn't do anything to even earn extra money. They couldn't work their way out of it. He said, "Brandon, every single time we need something, God shows up. Every single time. It's gotten to the point now where I actually expect it." I started seeing the difference between his lens on the world and mine—scarcity versus abundance. So talk to someone that you know who has worked through this.

There also might be a temptation to believe, when you look around a room like this, that nobody struggles here. You must be the only one who struggles with money. I want to tell you that's a lie. I guarantee someone is here with you today is struggling or has struggled at some point, trusting God with money. Maybe you're in a position right now where you want to be generous, you want to be free, but you're so upside down, your life is so complicated, or you're in debt, you can't even think about being generous. Maybe you're consumed with your lack of resources.

And I just want to encourage you that this is a time when you bring God into the equation. Don't leave him out of it. Let him help you with it, and then lean into this community, bring it into the light. Learn how to do this together. God wants to free you up.

## **Move Toward Simplicity**

How complicated is your life? How much does stuff and money have a grip on you? I feel this tension nearly every time I walk into my garage. Why am I storing things? Why has that thing been in here for 15 years? What is going on? Invite God into the mess, to the chaos. Ask him the difference between wants and needs. Do I want this or need it? Every time I go to Costco, I see this big tent with like eight rooms in it, and I always say to Katie, "Babe, I want that tent." She's like, "Brandon, we haven't camped ever." And I say, "But if I had that tent, I would camp." Is it a want or is it a need?

## **Create A Generosity Habit.**

Plan your generosity. Now we are prone to hipshot emotional giving. Studies show that most of us do emotional giving, which I don't think is a bad thing. I think it's a beautiful thing when God stirs your heart to give to someone or something. Certainly, we see that a lot around here. We see it with the missionaries we've talked to, so I'm not down on that at all. But in addition to that, I'm going to ask you to plan your giving so that generosity extends even beyond when you're feeling it, even when the timing doesn't feel right.

Prayerfully consider with God and your family what ways you can be generous? We've talked ad nauseam around here about believing that you become your habits. If you feel like you're struggling with generosity, maybe it's time to put some habits in your life that can help you become more of a generous person with the Holy Spirit's power.

We're going to be talking about that a little bit more this fall. But consider a generosity habit, maybe once a week or once a month. Add something to your rule of life that involves sacrificial generosity, regular giving to someone in need, maybe a missionary or someone else that you meet around town.

I'm just giving you ideas, but maybe cooking for your neighbor. Maybe you can do that on a regular basis. Something that costs you something. So many of you do this by regularly giving to your church. So many of you're so great at this. Others, maybe this is an area where you can grow and move into. Maybe you can share your stuff. Is your car off limits to everybody? Maybe let someone drive your truck.

## **Practice Gratitude Regularly**

I was reading about this, and it was fascinating. Gratitude and anxiety cannot exist at the same time in our brains. Robert Emmons, who's a psychologist and part of these studies, says that gratitude blocks toxic emotions such as envy, resentment, regret, and anxiety. It's impossible to feel envious and grateful at the same time. Isn't that interesting? God hardwired us for gratitude, for abundance.

Start small. Start where you are. Don't put shame and guilt on yourself, but keep it consistent. Over time, this starts to train your heart to see giving as ordinary. I want to remind you that

giving can be fun. It can be amazing. It's amazing when God leads you to give to something and you see it flourish. It's amazing to see God at work in his kingdom. So what is God's kingdom like? I'll leave you with Jesus' words. He says,

**"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. Matthew 13:44-46**

God and his kingdom are worth everything. When you begin to trust God with all that you have, you start to realize that there's more than you ever thought you could imagine.