

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes October 4, 2006

Matthew 6:19-24

Matthew, chapter 6

- 19: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth,
where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal,
- 20: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.
- 21: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
- 22: "The eye is the lamp of the body.
So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light;
- 23: but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness.
If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!
- 24: "No one can serve two masters;
for either he will hate the one and love the other,
or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.
You cannot serve God and mammon.

Discussion Notes:

Introduction:

- Could be / often are studied as individual sayings.
 - All of these sayings are also in Luke in diff locations.
- But actually clarifying illustrations of the central point of his Sermon:
 - Discipleship requires single focused pursuit of holiness.
 - The Beatitudes are the process of focusing our lives in His direction with an undivided heart.
 - Much of the rest of the sermon involves illustrating this and especially dealing with the distractions of life (world, flesh, & the devil) that try to pull off track.
- Previous section on authentic piety (prayer, alms, fasting) delineated between rewards:
 - Earthly, transient rewards from trying to impress men;
 - Heavenly, eternal; rewards (beginning now) from a focus on the Father.
- In this section, Jesus reiterates the same lesson using different images / metaphors.
 - Possibly because Jesus knew his audience:
 - We all have different interests, enthusiasms, temptations, vices;
 - (i.e., sports, cooking, politics, farming, literature, movies, history, music, art, etc., and we may not *hear* a speaker until he touches our interests.)
- Also note, all three use similar logic, which in turn strengthens their connections:
 - Two alternative, incompatible lifestyles / life-choices;
 - A conclusive statement of challenge.
- All 3 address the chief obstacle to whole-hearted conversion:
 - Preoccupation with the things of this world.
 - Obsessed with providing for the future; "Hope for best, plan for worst."

A: True Riches for Treasure Hunters (also in Luke 12:32-34)

- 19: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth,
where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal,
20: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.
21: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

- The people of Jesus' day hoarded their wealth in clothing, precious metals, & jewels.
- So the danger to their futures? Moths, rust, and thieves.
- How does modern man protect his futures?
 - Banks, investments, insurances, etc.
- Is Jesus warning against providing for your family's future?!
- No: the key is the word "treasure"
 - More than mere storing up essentials for future needs;
 - Implies cherishing, adoring, even lust.
 - Like Golum & the ring ("What's he got in his pockets?")
- Our heart becomes centered on what we cherish / value most.

B: True Light for Truth Seekers (also in Luke 11:34-36)

- 22: "The eye is the lamp of the body.
So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light;
23: but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness.
If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

- Think about a person trying to find his way thru a dark cave with a lamp...
- "Sound Eye" or an "Unsound Eye" is a Hebrew idiom.
 - A person with a "sound eye" was generous; a person with an "unsound eye" was stingy (see Deuteronomy 15:9).
 - Even today in Israel when someone is collecting for a charity the person soliciting may say, "Give with a good eye," meaning, "Give generously."
- St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on St. Matthew 6, 22-23*
The Eye refers to motive. When a person wants to do something, he first forms an Intention: thus, if your intention is sound – simple and clear – that is to say, if it is directed toward God, you whole body, that is, all your actions, will be sound, sincerely directed toward the good.
- "Eye is the window of the soul" ...
 - our soul has no senses; is dependent upon the senses of the body to experience the world;
 - If our eyes focus on "darkness" / evil, our soul becomes polluted;
 - If our sense focus on "light" / goodness, truth, beauty, our soul becomes pure.
Phil 4:8 "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."
- If our soul is, therefore, darkness, then where are we headed?

C: A True Master for Willing or Unwilling Servants (also in Luke 16:13)

- 24: "No one can serve two masters;
for either he will hate the one and love the other,
or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.
You cannot serve God and mammon.

- I entitled it this way because the Jews refused to believe that they served anyone!
Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to any one. How is it that you say, 'You will be made free'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin. (Jn 8:31-34)
- He begins with rhetorically true statement about slavery, which therefore may have provoked blind, proud self-righteousness.
- Then he drops the bomb on them: treasuring riches leads to slavery to riches.
- *Mammon* = comes from Semitic / Aramaic word for wealth, riches, money (*mamona*).

D. How does one strike a balance in life between trust in God and providing for one's family?

- Too many interpretations, applications, & exhortations ... have led to confusion & finger-pointing.
- This is why Jesus gave us BOTH an infallible Scripture with an infallible Teacher: the Church.
- CCC, 2419-2436 on the Social Doctrine of the Church
- But in the context, the key issue involves distractions from whole-hearted discipleship: CCC, 2729

The habitual difficulty in prayer is distraction. It can affect words and their meaning in vocal prayer; it can concern, more profoundly, him to whom we are praying, in vocal prayer (liturgical or personal), meditation, and contemplative prayer. To set about hunting down distractions would be to fall into their trap, when all that is necessary is to turn back to our heart: for a distraction reveals to us what we are attached to, and this humble awareness before the Lord should awaken our preferential love for him and lead us resolutely to offer him our heart to be purified. Therein lies the battle, the choice of which master to serve.¹⁶