

03-18-12

Series: God's Economy

God's Economy (5)

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Matthew 6:19-24

(Continuation from 03-11-12)

The Doctrine of God's Economy

In the present passage Jesus looks at materialism—particularly in regard to luxuries—from the three perspectives of **treasure**, **vision**, and **master**.

A Single Treasure ([Matthew 6:19-21](#))

The Bible gives considerable counsel for working hard and following good business practices (cf. [Matthew 25:27](#)). The ant is shown as a model of the good worker, who “prepares her food in the summer, and gathers her provision in the harvest” ([Proverbs 6:6-8](#)).

We are told that “in all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty” ([Proverbs 14:23](#)). And we are also told in the book of Proverbs ([Proverbs 24:3-4](#); [Proverbs 28:19](#)): Paul tells us that parents are responsible for saving up for their children ([2 Corinthians 12:14](#)). Paul also tells us that “if anyone will not work, neither let him eat” ([2 Thessalonians 3:10](#)).

Paul continues to tell us that “if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever” ([1 Timothy 5:8](#)).

During his exceptionally long ministry, which spanned most of the eighteenth century, John Wesley earned a considerable amount of money from his published sermons and other works. Yet he left only 28 pounds when he died, because he continually gave what he earned to the Lord's work.

It is right to provide for our families, to make reasonable plans for the future, to make wise investments, and to have money to carry on a business, give to the poor, and support the Lord's work. It is being **dishonest, greedy, covetous, stingy, and miserly about possessions that are wrong**. To honestly **earn, save, and give** is **wise and good**; to hoard and spend only on ourselves not only is unwise **but sinful**.

Some years ago, I happened to have contact with two quite wealthy men during the same week. One was a former professor at a major university who, through a long series of good investments in real estate, had accumulated a fortune of possibly a hundred million dollars. But in the process he lost his family, his happiness, his peace of mind, and had aged far beyond his years. The other man, a pastor, also acquired his wealth

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through investments, but they were investments to which he paid little attention. Because of his financial independence, he gave to his church over the years considerably more than he was paid for being its pastor. He is one of the godliest, happiest, most fruitful, and contented persons I have ever heard of.

Matthew 6:19-21 (NASB)

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

²⁰ "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The key to Jesus' warning here is **yourselves**. When we accumulate possessions simply **for our own sakes**—whether to hoard or to spend selfishly and extravagantly—**those possessions become idols**.

It is possible that both our **treasures upon earth** and our **treasures in heaven** can involve money and other material things. Possessions that are **wisely, lovingly, willingly,** and **generously** used for kingdom purposes **can be a means of accumulating heavenly possessions**. When they are **hoarded** and **stored**, however, they not only become a spiritual hindrance but are subject to loss through **moth, rust,** and **thieves**.

In ancient times, wealth was frequently measured in part by clothing. Compared to our day of mass-produced clothes, garments represented a considerable investment. Rich people sometimes had golden threads woven into their clothing, both to display and to store their wealth. But the best clothes were made of wool, which the **moth** loves to eat; and even the richest persons had difficulty protecting their clothes from the insects.

Wealth was also often held in grain, as we see from the parable of the rich farmer who said,

Luke 12:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

Matthew 6:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and **rust** destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

Brōsis (rust) literally means "an eating," and is translated with that meaning everywhere in the New Testament but here (see **Romans 14:17**; **1 Corinthians 8:4**, "eating"; **2 Corinthians 9:10**, "food"; and **Hebrews 12:16**, "meal").

Matthew 6:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and **rust** destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

It seems best to take the same meaning here, in reference to grain that is eaten by rats, mice, worms, and insects.