

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR SUNDAY – OCTOBER 29, 2023 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Matthew 6:19-34

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION UPDATED EDITION

[Jesus continued teaching saying,]

¹⁹ “**Do not store up** for yourselves treasures ON EARTH, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but store 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 your **HEART** will be also.

²² “The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is unhealthy, 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 a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and **WEALTH**.

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not **worry** about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by **worrying** can add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸ And why do you **worry** about clothing?

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—**YOU OF LITTLE FAITH?** ³¹

Therefore do not **worry**, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ ³² For it is the gentiles who seek all these things, and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Matthew is one of four gospels – telling the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and his teachings. Matthew is the only one of the four to include the larger sermon on the mount (Chapters 5 to 7) with which we’re wrestling this fall. The context of the Sermon on the Mount is radically important, without it the teachings can seem like disparate moral teachings, as opposed to a radical reinterpretation and recreation of the world.

Jesus has invited everyone to “repent. Change the Way they live. Because the kingdom of heaven is here.” Those that respond in chapter 4 are fisherman, the sick, the broken, the marginalized - those who are overlooked and unimportant in the Roman Empire and the way of the World – but blessed and included in the Kingdom of Heaven. Their lives matter despite what the world says. For Jesus tells them that they are the light of the world and the salt of the earth – demonstrating God’s radical love and breaking-into-the-world-reign through their actions.

Do not:: beginning the phrase with a negative command assumes that the treasuring or storing up of wealth is common. We know that like our society today, in the ancient world wealth was seen as a key indicator of social status and respectability. (Maybe even as a sign of God’s blessing or love).

store up:: θησαυρίζω pronounced "thésaurizó" means to put away, "store up"; lay aside treasure, built up (accumulated) for the day of future recompense. This verb means both the act of acquiring and the attitude of valuing material goods. Notice that the emphasis is “**for yourselves**” – it’s not the acquisition of things in order to survive or live; but rather the excessive accumulation of limited resources.

consumes:: ἀφανίζω pronounced "aphanizó" mean to make unseen as in to cover, hide or disfigure, and to destroy. This same word is used in 6:16 ““And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark (disfigure) their faces to show others that they are fasting.”

³³ But seek first THE KINGDOM OF GOD and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴ “So do not **worry** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

We’re also reading the poem “Wellness Check” by Andrea Gibson in their book *You Better Be Lightning*.

In any moment,
on any given day,
I can measure
my wellness
by this question:

Is my attention on loving,
or is my attention on
 who isn’t loving me?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- Jesus talks primarily about being clear what you’re living for and serving. He’s preaching a radical integrity and wholeness in life centered upon God’s priorities. What are those priorities?
- We often read this as Jesus seemingly being “out to lunch” saying don’t worry about things. But he’s not saying we should just sit around and do nothing waiting for God to uber-eats us our next meal. So, what is Jesus saying?
- What is Andrea Gibson saying in the poem about wellness in life? Jesus is talking about healthy living. Are they talking about the same thing?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – *or to us, as a church* – to act, speak, be, or change, through this word of scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

ON EARTH -- IN HEAVEN:: the contrast reinforces the notion that heaven is the realm of God, where God’s will is done. So treasuring the stuff of earth typifies the neglect of God’s will which is to live by indiscriminate acts of mercy done in secret to sanctify the life of all.

HEART :: in both Hebrew and Greek the heart was considered the center of human commitment and decision. Jesus is saying not to live with divided loyalties.

The eye is the lamp of the body:: we tend to think of the eye as letting light into the body. The ancients understood the eye to be like the sun, letting light within the body out to guide a person’s way. So it’s about how our unhealthy intentions or what we treasure in our heart can prevent us from finding God’s way in life. The word **healthy** suggests wholehearted focus and integrity, a life rooted in God’s will. associated with health, but also that which is good and of God.

WEALTH:: μαμωνᾶς pronounced "mammonas" meaning riches, money, possessions, property. Jesus personifies the serving of mammon, recognizing that the things which people possess become the possess and the masters of people.

worry:: the word is used 5 times in the short passage. Worry has to do with priorities, with “that which monopolizes the heart’s concerns.” **Not worrying** does not mean that nourishment and clothing do not matter. What is forbidden is a materialism that monopolizes human actions and commitments and defines identity and lifestyle. Plus, worrying is futile. It doesn’t, and can’t, change anything.

To worry today about tomorrow is, in the light of God’s sovereignty, unnecessary and unfaithful. It distracts us from what God is doing here and now. We can trust that God will meet our material needs.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD:: this reign or empire of God is the main purpose of Jesus’ preaching, since 4:7 “From that time Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’” And 4:23 “Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.” And the first beatitude – “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3.

Notes from Matthew and the Margins by Warren Carter, pp. 170-175.