14th Sunday after Trinity
SERIES ON DISCIPLESHIP - THE DISCIPLE'S TREASURE
West Henrietta - 1961

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. Matthew 6: 19-21 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth not rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The disciple's treasure is in heaven. In an age of materialism and carnal security, this is a truth which bears repeating. Because we are such earth-bound creatures, there is always this temptation to divide our heart between God and things. But the heart cannot be so divided. It is either - or! Neither the love of things nor the care for things has a place in the disciple's life. Jesus' words are sharp and cutting: No man can serve two masters...You cannot serve God and mammon. If a man loves things; if he commits himself to laying up treasures on earth, to the pursuit and attainment of a decent standard of living or the good life, he has committed his heart to that which perishes - and his heart will perish with the things that fill it. He has exposed, not only his clothing and possessions but his very life to the eating of the moth, the canker of the rust, and the subtle hands of thievery. When a man wholeheartedly takes things, he cannot any longer take or leave them; he is taken by them, and his eternal destiny is determined by them. They become his god.

Jesus is not imposing a rule of poverty upon his disciples. It is ultimately not a question of how much a man (seeks to have has), but of how deeply a man is concerned about having. And we do well to remember that a man can be as deeply and fatally involved in a few things as in many. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Whatever gets your attention gets you. How earthly treasures have crowded God out of the life of modern man is illustrated pointedly by E. Stanley Jones. He tells how a villager in India looked through the window of a government house and saw a European reading before a candle stuck in a whisky bottle. The villager ran off to his village and announced, Now I know what the white man worships - he worships the whisky bottle, for I saw him burn a light before it, and he had a book open before it and was saying his prayers to it. There is just enough truth in

that to make it sting. Modern man worships the intoxicating pleasures of life, and he says to the Golden Calf of material gain and achievement, These by thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. Instead of having one aim, one love, one purpose, one treasure, one Christ, one God, modern man has a whole raft of inferior, time-consuming, time-wasting, purposeless aims and interests.

One man makes his object and aim in life the accumulation of wealth. How he toils till late hours in order to make more, to get more, to add more to his pile. In the process (How he) neglects his friends, his wife, his children, his church, his Bible, his God, his prayer life ~~just to have more time~~ all to acquire material things. But the appetite keeps growing with the eating. He can never fill his bottomless bag. The more he gets the more he craves. And so he forfeits the great treasures of God for a lot of trinkets. One day God will say to him, as He said to the barn-building farmer, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.

Then there is the man who thinks that his happiness will be found in one round of social activity after another. He must fill this engagement and that, be here, there, and everywhere, attend this social function, drink with that crowd, be the life of the party. But when he takes time to contemplate, to think things through, he finds that his life is empty, shallow, filled with nothingness.

Still others believe that happiness consists in throwing off all inhibitions, of casting all restraints to the wind, of enjoying sinful pleasure to the hilt. The old standards are not for them. Freedom means license To them drunkenness is a legitimate pleasure, gambling is good sportsmanship, loose morals are the spice of life. But in the end they too must find that this kind of a life brings nothing but heartache, sorrow, remorse, shame, and a feeling of guilt. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Life without God is empty and hollow. John Marquand, in his book, Point of No Return, tells the story of Charley Gray, a brilliant young man who was driven

Now he was vice-president – What else was there to live for?

by an almost desperate longing to become a vice-president of the Stuyvesant Bank. After years and months of waiting and hoping and working, he at last got the job. But almost immediately he was overcome with a strangely hollow, empty feeling of frustration and futility. His soul was empty. He was laying up for himself treasures on earth. When will we learn that even the presidency of the greatest bank will not fill up our soul's emptiness, nor will the headlines in all the newspapers, nor the crowd's shouting our praises, nor the million dollars we thought would do it! Crowns are empty things and so are bank accounts and the other things we sell our souls for.

Do you remember the story of Zacchaeus? He was a little man and must have had an inferiority complex. Thus He was driven by a burning desire to be top dog, to show 'em. His ambition made him a good businessman and very successful. He became the chief tax collector, and very rich. But these treasures didn't satisfy. His soul was empty, and he knew it. ~~Nothing else on earth would have~~ It was this emptiness which caused this little rich man to go running out on the road after a simple Galilean carpenter - much less climb a tree in such an undignified fashion, just to get a glimpse of Jesus. This was out of character for a rich, respectable man. And of all trees, the sycamore is no tree to climb. The fuzz underneath its leaves gets into your eyes and makes you sneeze. Can you imagine Zacchaeus with his eyes watering skinning down the tree when Jesus looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today.

Why did Zacchaeus do these things at the risk of being laughed at? It was more than curiosity. Luke says it was because he sought to see who Jesus was. His love – how He – He had heard of Jesus' deeds of healing and mercy. No doubt his friend Levi, the chief tax collector of Capernaum, had told him how this Man had dared risk the enmity of the Pharisees in order to eat at his house; and of His wonderful words as they sat around the table. Zacchaeus had no doubt heard of Jesus' claim of being able to forgive sins. More than all else that is what he needed. He was rich, respected, and well-fed, but his soul was empty! Empty! This emptiness in his dark soul was crying out for something that would fill it.

Today salvation has come to this house. Thus Jesus described what had happened to Zacchaeus. Salvation had come to his house and filled the emptiness of his life with abundant meaning, abundant joy and love and peace. of forgiveness It was a treasure that would make his life so worth living that even death could not put an end to it.

From that time on ~~Now~~ Zacchaeus was no longer ~~not~~ bent on laying up earthly treasures for himself. His life was no longer hollow and empty. He was no longer bored with his money and his work. It was a new stewardship that made him say, The half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone of anything I restore it fourfold! His money was no longer a weapon against the world. His money was no longer an end in itself. It was now a method, a means of expressing the divine purpose of his new life. He was in business now not for himself but for his Lord.

So it must be with us. You will never get over your emptiness until your whole life becomes a stewardship of all that you are - talents, time, possessions, strength. Your life will never be loaded with sunshine until you find peace with God in Christ, and this never happens until you are going God's way all the way and not your own way. Then only will your days be thrilled with the joy of giving and serving, + the full treasures of discipleship

What is your greatest need and mine? Let's face it. The one thing that you and I want most of all is to belong have our sins removed, our guilt taken away. We want to be free from the terrible feeling of shame and guilt. And even more, we want sin no longer to have the rule over us. We want to thow off the dictatorship of sin that dominates our wills and makes us willing tools of Satan. And it is only Christ God in us, ruling our spirit, guiding our lives, that can do that. Christ and His Cross of redeeming love, the peace of His forgiveness, the joy of His salvation, the wonder of a new life lived in Him and for Him forever - these are the treasures that neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and that thieves cannot take away from us.

We need to know that we belong again to God — that He knows us & calls us by name. We can only belong to the Holy God when →

These treasures are permanent. Earthly fortunes may dwindle. Poor men may be made into millionaires and millionaires into paupers. Health may be lost never to be regained. The passing years slowly sap the strength of youth with its beauty of face and figure. The resonant voice of the opera star will one day crack

the skillful hand of the artist will become clumsy, the violinist will lose his sensitive touch, the keen-minded scientist will lose his sharpness. But, as St. Paul says, Neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, now powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Accidents cannot rob you of this. Sickness cannot take it away. Unfaithful friends cannot deprive you of it. Even death cannot wrench it out of your heart. Therefore, let the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord be your one and great treasure now and forever. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Amen.