

## Our Treasure

**SCRIPTURE**..... Matthew 6:19-21.....Pastor Susan

'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup>but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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Today we talk about our treasure, our true treasure, the treasure that Jesus points to over and over again. Where is this treasure and how do we claim it for ourselves? That is the fundamental question, not only in this scripture but in our entire lives. Finding our treasure is the purpose of all religions. When a young adult embarks on a journey to "go find themselves," they are embarking on a journey to find their treasure, their true meaning, their purpose in life. Searching for our treasure is a journey that humans have made since the beginning of humankind and will be a journey for every human until the end of time. The whole purpose of Jesus' ministry comes down to this fundamental point where he points not only to where our treasure is, but also what our treasure is. So, let us listen carefully to what he has to tell us.

In the sermon on the mount, the reference to our treasure is introduced by referring to those religious things we do and how we do them. Before Jesus gets to our treasure he points to how we offer alms, in other words, how we share what we have with others. He warns us, not to sound the trumpet when we give to another, whether it's an individual in need, a non-profit that does good work or the church. Whatever we're giving to, if it's done in the name of God, if it's done because you have a sense that this is what God is calling you to do, you must do it without any fanfare what-so-ever. In other words, it must be done in secret.

The sermon goes on to explain that whenever we pray, we must not do so publicly, out on the street, for everyone to see how holy you are. No when we pray, we are to go into our rooms, close our doors and our prayers must be done in secret.

Then again, one more time before Jesus tells us where our treasure is, he refers to the times when we fast. Fasting was and continues to be a practice that we do that will lead us closer to God. But Jesus warns us, when we fast, don't look dismal, don't let everyone know that you're making this sacrifice, that you're doing this holy practice, but when you fast, do so in secret.

Over and over again, Jesus points to practicing our faith in secret. What is all this secrecy about? Where is this "secret place?" Emmet Fox, in his book "Sermon on the Mount" points out that the secret place that Jesus refers to over and over again, and not just in this

particular sermon, but the secret places that he points to throughout his ministry, in words and his own practice, is the place of our consciousness.

Our consciousness is connected to our sub-conscious, and our sub-conscious is connected to God. Jesus draws us to the treasure within us, deep within us, as the source of life. The source of True joy, True peace, True faith and True love. True with a capital "T." We are taught over and over again, from our spiritual guru Jesus, as well as spiritual gurus all over the world and throughout time, TRUE LIFE COMES FROM WITHIN.

But you know as well as I, we are immersed in a culture that looks for outer, temporary things for either our happiness or our security. We can't get away from it, it is everywhere we look. Turning away from what the world teaches and toward what Jesus teaches is a very very difficult thing, especially for people of such privilege like you and me. Nevertheless, the truth does not change. No amount of money, no amount of security, no amount of friendships, no amount of health, no amount of anything outside ourselves will promise an escape from anxiety or fear or ego. None of that will ever bring into your life the divine treasures that God has to offer. None of it.

Many times, we'll discover this treasure from God in our secret place when we are faced with our own mortality. When the possibility of death comes knocking, we face the fact that there is nothing the earth can provide that will offer us the treasures that only God can provide. Those treasures are the love that bonds us to others. The joy of knowing we don't have to live our lives of quiet desperation. The peace that comes from a deep connection with our Comforter. The hope born from a trust in something greater than ourselves. These are our treasures in our secret place. Now how do we find them?

We are taught that whatever we give our attention to, that is the thing that will govern our life. If we feed our fears, our lives will center around fear. If we feed our hatred, our lives will center around hatred. If we feed our ego, our lives will center around self. Whatever we steadfastly direct our attention to, will come into our lives and dominate it.

There is a short native American story that illustrates this point:

*Once upon a time, there was a Cherokee grandfather (or Navajo grandfather), who told his grandson, "Grandson, there are two wolves inside of me. One wolf is white and full of light – it is good and altruistic, generous and kind. The other wolf is black and filled with darkness – it is mean and greedy, violent, fearful and angry. The two wolves are in a constant fight." The grandson, with wide eyes, says, "But which one will win, grandpa?" And the grandfather says - "The one which I feed."*

My friends, Jesus teaches us that if we direct our attention to God, if that is what comes first in our lives, if God rules our life, then we have found the Holy treasure. The wolf that is good and altruistic, generous and kind, is tied to our subconscious, and our subconscious is tied to our Higher Power, whether you call that Higher Power, the Great Spirit, Allah, Yahweh, Christ or simply Love. When we feed this inner wolf with our attention we have found the only treasure we truly seek.

The wolf that is mean and greedy, full of fear and anger, anxiety and insecurity, he comes from our outer world. When we give our attention to the outer world, we feed the wolf of darkness.

This is the human struggle. Which wolf will you feed? The dark one that is outside of you that you've invited into your heart and moves from the outside in? Or will you feed the wolf of light, that is deep within you in that secret place. The one that longs to live from the inside out?

That's our decision every single morning we open our eyes. We may look to our treasure within that will always grant us the most precious gifts of life OR will we look outside ourselves, to the world's treasures that may or may not materialize.

This is our choice. Every day. I pray we all go to that secret place deep within our subconscious and feed the only wolf that satisfies.