

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

July 14, 2024

I. Introduction

- A. **Matthew 6:19–25**, “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. [22] The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. [23] But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is 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 one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. [25] For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”
- B. Life is best for us and everyone effected by our choices and behavior when we are mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually healthy. But we can only gain that kind of health when we trust God, willingly submit to His will, and humbly live according to His word.
1. It is my opinion that the Beatitudes form the foundation for mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health – for they present the qualities of character and ways of living that lead to a happy life.
 2. This means that the foundation for the best possible life is humility, mourning over our sin, meekness – even in the face of mistreatment and oppression, hungering for righteousness, being merciful, pursuing a pure heart, urging and helping others to be at peace with God and one another, and willingly enduring persecution for the sake of promoting and protecting righteousness in the part of the world where we live.
 3. But how do we, weak humans, get to such an exalted and godly way of living? First and foremost, we need God’s help and empowerment. But equally important is the need to do our part – as described in the word of God.
 4. As we see in **Matthew 6:19-23**, doing our part includes treasuring and loving what God treasures and loves – because what we treasure and love has the most influence on how we live, and how we live –

day in and day out – builds and supports either godly choices and behavior **or** selfish and sinful ones, either godly wisdom and right thinking **or** worldly wisdom and wrong thinking.

- C. Jesus follows His comments about storing up treasure in heaven with a truth that is as certain as gravity. What we treasure and love – what we devote ourselves to, fill ourselves with, get involved with, or even dabble in – either increases the light of God and righteousness in us or it increases the darkness of self-centeredness and evil.
- D. Pray

II. Our choices and behavior either add to the light or the darkness within

- A. [22] The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. [23] But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!
 1. This is an illustration – where the **eye** represents seeing or perceiving (*information gained through the senses via some experience*) coupled with thinking – for the purpose of deciding if what is seen or perceived is valuable enough to be treated as a treasure.
 2. A **clear eye** represents someone who has decided that God, obeying God, and living a life that is pleasing to God is the greatest treasure one can have – now and throughout eternity.
 3. **Light** represents truth about God, **and** the truth we get from God about ourselves, about salvation from the power, practice, and penalty of sin, about how to live a godly life, about how to know God more nearly as He is, and how to love those around us as we ought.
 4. To be **full of light** represents knowing, trusting, treasuring, and living according to the truth we have about God and about living a godly life.
 5. A **bad eye** represents deciding that the ways of the world, the selfish and spiritually unhealthy desires of the flesh, and the benefits of sin (*or at least certain sins*) are true treasures worth obtaining.
 6. **Darkness** represents the devil's lies, our own self-deception, distrust of God, irrational fears, anxiety, ungodly desires, self-centeredness, self-rule, pride, and anything else that gets in the way of seeing or accepting the truth about God, His goodness, and anything we need to live a godly life.
 7. To be **full of darkness** represents knowing, treasuring, and living according to the darkness inspired by the devil, our own selfish desires, and the wisdom and ways of the world.

8. A paraphrase vs **22-23** in light of these explanations might go like this: “As you go through life, you encounter people, things, and experiences. Some of them you deem to be a treasure worth holding on to. If your decision making is based on God and His word, you will treasure those things that teach you and enable you to love God and those around you as you ought. If you live this way, you will take in more and more light which in turn will teach and enable you to grow more and more in your love for God and for those around you. If your decision making is based on the world’s values, the devil’s lies, and your selfish desires and felt-needs, you will treasure those things that strengthen and increase the ungodliness that is in you – until there is so much ungodliness in you that you will either be unable or unwilling to see God’s goodness and the truths of God for godly living. Of all possible human conditions, this condition is the worst.
- B. In presenting this illustration, Jesus uses black or white, either/or terminology. Either we live in the light or we live in the darkness.
1. For the unbeliever, this either/or reality is true. The darkness that is in them is so dark, they either cannot or they don’t want to see the light.
 2. And even if they get a glimpse of the light, it either makes no sense to them, or it is deemed too costly to their personal happiness to be taken seriously. For example, try explaining to an unbeliever about turning the other cheek or treating your enemy as you want to be treated, and see what they say.
 - a. The Bible addresses this in **2 Corinthians 4:3-4**, “Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, [4] in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”
 - b. Jesus illustrated this in His parable about the rich man and Lazarus (**Luke 16:19-31**). The rich man enjoyed a bountiful life of wealth and good times. Lazarus’ life was filled with poverty and disease. Upon their death, the rich man found himself in hell, and Lazarus was in heaven.
 - (1) The explanation given to the rich man for each of their eternal conditions was, “Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted (*instead of in agony*), and you are in agony (*instead of living the good life*)” (**Luke 16:25**).

- (2) Because of what the rich man treasured during his lifetime, he blinded himself to the truth about God, treating others as he wanted to be treated, and eternity. Being blind, he saw no need to repent, change his ways, and begin treasuring those things that lead to life.
 - (3) However, he showed his own failure to heed the truth available during his lifetime by his request that Lazarus be sent back and warn his brothers. In other words, though it was too late for him, he now understood the importance of treasuring the right things, and the power that **treasuring the wrong things have** to blind us to the truth.
3. However, unlike unbelievers, it seems to me that, *generally speaking*, Christians are double-minded, that is, a mixture of light and darkness. In fact, the only person I know of who has lived in this world in total light is Jesus. The rest of us, and that includes God's more godly people – like Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Peter, and Paul – fall short.
- a. And yet, even though we fall short, double-mindedness is neither praise-worthy nor supported by the Word of God – for we read in:
 - (1) **James 4:7-8**, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. [8] Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”
 - (2) **1 Peter 1:14-16**, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, [15] but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; [16] because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”
 - b. Though it ought not to be, double-mindedness is a reality among Christians. Therefore, in order to apply these verses to ourselves, we will look at them in terms of percentages or degrees rather than as black or white, or either/or.
- C. In terms of percentages, whatever amount or to whatever degree we treasure some aspect or form of darkness, or carelessly allow darkness to come in, or allow darkness to remain in ourselves, to that degree we blind ourselves to the truth that God has given us about Himself, about ourselves, about how to live a godly life, about how to love those around us, and about how to know God and interact with Him in an intimate way.

1. In other words, you can only see, understand, and apply in realistic, practical, effective ways as much truth about God, God's word, and how to live a godly life as the amount of darkness in you allows.
 - a. In other words, the more darkness, the less truth you see, understand, and are able to apply. The less darkness, the more truth you see, understand, and are able to apply in your daily life.
 - b. It is also true that the more darkness you drive out and keep out, the more you enter into that spiritual state wherein you know and experience true inward peace and a settled joy – regardless of the circumstances, and an interaction with God that is as real and personal, yet exceedingly more fulfilling than any of your earthly relationships, experiences, or possessions.
2. For example, in whatever way and to whatever degree you (1) treat relationships as disposable, (2) or justify unfaithfulness in marriage – and that includes looking at pornography, (3) or support divorce where there has been no adultery – or (*according to me*) no ongoing physical abuse of the spouse and children, (4) or believe it is okay in certain situations to break your word, (5) or justify returning evil for evil – even in small ways, (6) or hate an enemy, **in that way and to that degree** you bring darkness into your heart and mind, which in turn significantly effects your beliefs, values, and ways of thinking.
3. However, embracing darkness goes well beyond these things. **Consider:** in whatever way and to whatever degree you seek the praise and admiration of others more than the praise and admiration of God, or you spend time being anxious and worried about your future, or you try to trust in God and wealth for your present security and future well-being, or you believe you need worldly diversions to help you feel better after a hard, challenging day, in that way and to that degree you bring darkness into your heart and mind – a darkness that gets in the way of seeing truth that is there for you to see.
4. In whatever way and to whatever degree you use anger and control to compel those around you to behave the way you want, or you use sarcasm and cutting remarks to send messages that ought to be said kindly and respectfully, or you hold on to resentment and bitterness, or you feel sorry for yourself when life doesn't go the way you want, or you are easily offended, or you avoid resolving conflicts, in that way and to that degree you bring darkness into your heart and mind, thus limiting your ability to live a godly life and love those around you as you ought.

5. The reality is, darkness, in whatever amount or to whatever degree, feeds double-mindedness, and double-mindedness is the enemy of godliness, for it (1) negatively effects your mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health, (2) it prevents you from trusting God even close to how He deserves being trusted, (3) and it feeds a love of self that exceeds and takes priority over whatever love you have for God and those around you.
6. As I stated earlier, double-mindedness is a common reality among believers. It doesn't have to be, but it is. So why is it so easy and common for us to be double-minded?
 - a. It is easy because the devil, if he cannot have your whole mind, will work very hard at getting you to be double-minded.
 - b. It is easy because of the influence of the world around you – a world that treats the light of God's truth as foolishness or something to be despised, and which offers numerous ungodly, self-serving options for living what it claims is a better life.
 - c. And as if those two enemies were not enough, your old, sinful nature wars against the light of God's truth, for it wants moments of pleasure, certain possessions, and ways of life that can only be had in the darkness.

III. Conclusion

- A. In all probability, you are double-minded – to some degree. For me, the issue is not “am I double-minded,” but what do I want to be. Do I want to knowingly and therefore willingly remain double-minded? Do I want to have God and self-centeredness at the same time? Are there worldly pleasures that I know feed the darkness within that I am unwilling to give up? What do I want?
- B. And so I ask, what do you want? You may never gain godly perfection, but if your goal is to be perfect, you can get close to that in this life. But you have to want it.
- C. From here, Jesus goes on to say, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.” And though He finishes with “You cannot serve God and wealth,” I will finish with, “You cannot serve light and darkness, and you cannot experience the abundant life while knowingly holding on to the pleasures and benefits of darkness.”