

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

July 28, 2024

I. Introduction

- A. **Matthew 6:24-25**, “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. When reading the Bible, it is easy to miss the significance of a phrase within a verse, or even a whole verse because there is nothing in it that grabs your attention. In fact, the phrase or verse may appear to be no more than a minor part of the larger subject. It may also be that its significance is not clear or easily understood, so you keep on reading.
1. Such a phrase or verse may be a statement, or it may be a truth within a story that on first reading seems incidental to the story. It may be a piece of information that helps you better understand how to apply the surrounding message. Or it may be a question – as it is here in **vs 25**.
 2. When you come upon such a phrase or verse, my recommendation is to pause and ponder rather than continue reading. If you don't have the time to pause and ponder, then take note of the phrase or verse and return at a later time to consider its significance.
 3. Regardless of when, pausing and pondering opens the door to gaining new insight, greater understanding, and seeing links between what you are reading and other parts of God's word.
 4. It is possible you have read this phrase at the end of **vs 25**, and without a pondering pause, continued on to **vs 26**. I understand doing this because your mind may be on the important teachings leading up to this phrase – like what we treasure, being single-minded, not serving two masters, and putting a stop to worry and anxiety over meeting daily needs. And yet, the question at the end of **vs 25** is an important, thought-provoking question.
 5. My point is, it is easy to miss the significance of this question, “Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” Therefore, it is for this reason that I am urging you to read with an eye that looks for these less obvious yet significant gems.

6. The question, “Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” is a rhetorical question, for its purpose is not to gain information from the reader, but to urge us to think about what matters more – the earthly and temporal or the spiritual and eternal? And that is what we are going to talk about today.

C. Pray

- II. What matters more, the earthly and temporal or the spiritual and eternal?
 - A. The question, “Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” is not an either/or question, but a comparison question. In other words, it is not asking which one matters – as if one of them doesn’t, but which one matters **more**.
 1. This is an important distinction, because an either/or view of the question will lead to wrong conclusions, irrational applications, and a spiritually unhealthy form of Christianity.
 2. However, understanding that this question is asking what is **more** important leads to a sensible balance between the earthly and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal.
 3. We can recognize that this is a comparison question from the wording of the question itself, “Is not life **more than** food, and the body **more than** clothing?”
 4. But we are also able to see this from the larger context of putting an end to worrying about our future well-being. For example, Jesus says in **vs 33**, “Seek first, not seek only, but seek first God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness.”
 - a. In other words, though we are to seek God’s kingdom and His righteousness **first** – in thought, word, and deed – we are not to seek it to the neglect of other important things. As Jesus says, each day has demands and challenges that need to be dealt with, and preferably in a sensible, responsible, and godly manner.
 - b. In other words, it isn’t **either** the spiritual **or** the earthly, it is the spiritual **and** the earthly. What Jesus doesn’t want us to do is to make the earthly more important than the spiritual.
 - c. And I add, let’s not waste brain cycles fretting about tomorrow, because that either distracts or deters us from keeping the spiritual an essential, integrated part of what we deal with each day.
 5. There is one more truth I want to state before moving on. Fretting, anxiety, and fear put the focus on self and make the well-being of self the most important issue in that moment.

- a. The reality is, fretting, anxiety, and fear are a form of self-focus that leads to selfish and therefore sinful choices and behavior.
 - b. In addition, in the war between God and the devil, when we are acting in a self-centered way by fretting, being anxious, or giving in to fear, we are joining the devil and fighting with him against God, rather than remaining on God's side against the devil.
 - c. And though this change of sides may be temporary, we are giving the devil the advantage in those moments, working against God's purposes in our world, and limiting the good we do for others.
 - d. The truth is, fretting, anxiety, and fear – even over such important things as food, shelter, and clothing – make us and our sense of well-being more important than God, God's reputation, the good He wants to do in our world, and the good we ought to be doing for those around us.
6. To summarize: there is something more important than food, shelter, and clothing, and that something is of a spiritual and eternal nature – which we will look at shortly.
- a. Without question, we still need food, shelter, and clothing, and we are to devote time and energy to meeting those needs.
 - b. Yet in our efforts to meet our earthly, temporal needs we are to keep what is more important, **more** important.

B. Examples of what matters more than food, clothing, shelter

1. To help us live accordingly, the Bible provides some clear examples of what matters more than food, shelter, and clothing.
 - a. But before looking at some examples, it seems important to point out that food, shelter, and clothing are merely representative examples of a host of common, everyday legitimate needs **and** acceptable wants that we can pursue.
 - b. Therefore, as we talk about this, I am encouraging you to think about how you keep, or fail to keep, the spiritual and eternal uppermost as you deal with and participate in the earthly and temporal activities in your life.
2. The **first** example of something that matters more than what is earthly and temporal comes from a statement in the Sermon on the Mount that we have already considered, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
 - a. The very wording of this statement makes it clear that the spiritual and eternal are more important than the earthly and temporal. In fact, this statement tells us that making and keeping the

- spiritual and eternal more important than the earthly and temporal is the way to ensure that our daily needs are met.
- b. Therefore, making God's kingdom and His righteousness more important than food, shelter, and clothing is wise because it brings God's blessings in ways that meet our earthly needs.
 - c. This truth is a principle of life that was first put into writing in **Deuteronomy 28** – a chapter which details the Blessings for godly choices and behavior, and the Curses for selfish and sinful choices and behavior. And the point of this principle is to show that righteousness has its desired rewards just as unrighteousness has its unwanted consequences.
3. The **second** example of something that matters more than what is earthly and temporal also comes from the Sermon on the Mount – but in a more general way. From **Matthew 5:4-6:24**, the emphasis is how we think, speak, and behave in relation to God and those around us.
- a. In relation to God, what we do for God and with God, we are to do for His sake and His pleasure, not for some earthly, temporal gain such as the praise and admiration of others for such religious things as our Bible knowledge, spiritual gift, or the Christian activities in which we engage.
 - b. In relation to those around us, we are to love them, and show our love by treating them in the same way we want to be treated – which includes turning the other cheek or going the extra mile with those who mistreat us, and doing good for our enemies when good needs to be done for them.
 - c. Therefore, it is important to do **all** that we do – both the earthly and spiritual, the temporal and eternal – in a way that pleases God, and remains within the boundaries of godliness, and demonstrates love for those effected by our choices and behavior.
 - d. God's prescribed way to consistently do this is to approach each day with the determination to make the spiritual and eternal **more** important than the earthly and temporal.
4. The **third** example of what matters more comes from the two great commandments.
- a. There are numerous commandments in the Law that deal with daily matters such as farming, business transactions, making agreements, loans, and debt repayment. Yet Jesus makes no reference to them when asked to name which commandment rises to the top and influences how we are to apply the rest. Instead,

when asked what is the greatest, most important commandment in the Law, [37] Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. [38] This is the great and foremost commandment. [39] The second is like (*or equal to*) it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. [40] On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (**Matthew 22:36-40**).

- b. The focus of these two commandments is love – love for God with a love that is equal to His worthiness to be loved, and love those around us with a love that is equal to the love we have for ourselves.
 - c. Therefore, everything else in the Law is to be done within the boundaries and under the influence of love – and this includes providing food, shelter, and clothing for ourselves and those under our care.
 - d. In other words, in our effort to meet our daily needs, deal with the challenges of everyday life, and negotiate our relationships with those around us, we are never to compromise or short-change loving God as He deserves to be loved and loving those around us with the same purpose and to the same degree that we love ourselves.
 - e. Therefore, according to **Matthew 22:36-40**, **love** is the answer to the question, “What matters more than food, shelter, and clothing?”
5. The **final** example comes from John 14. **John 14:21**, “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” **John 14:23**, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”
- a. It is not by pursuing food, shelter, and clothing like the unbelieving world pursues them that leads to being loved and indwelt by God. Rather it is by learning and studying how God wants us to live, and then putting forth a reasonable effort to live accordingly.
 - b. It is possible that after experiencing the love and indwelling presence of God, someone might risk forsaking His love and presence by resorting to selfish and sinful means in order to obtain enough food, shelter, and clothing to survive.
 - c. And it is probable that new Christians and spiritually immature Christians who have yet to experience the joy and intimacy of God

dwelling within would choose selfish and sinful means to obtain sufficient food, shelter, and clothing if that is what they believed they had to do to survive.

- d. However, no child of God has to resort to using ungodly means to survive, because God will take care of us – which is why I started this list with “**Seek first** His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things **will be added** to you.”

III. Conclusion

- A. “Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” I admit, it is easy to overlook this question. Yet if we will engage the question and ponder an answer that is worthy of the question, we will conclude that a godly life is more important than food, and a good use of our body is more important than clothing.
- B. Therefore, a proper pursuit of food, shelter, and clothing means doing so without allowing your pursuit such things to get in the way of or diminish your commitment to the spiritual and eternal things that matter more.
- C. Though it is true that both the godly and the ungodly can enjoy earthly blessings, it is also true that only the godly can experience and enjoy the provision and protection of God, the love of God, the comfort and grace of God, and the indwelling presence of God.
- D. Don Moen, "When It's All Been Said And Done": When it's all been said and done, there is just one thing that matters, did I do my best to live for truth? Did I live my life for you?
 1. When it's all been said and done, all my treasures will mean nothing, only what I've done for love's reward will stand the test of time.
 2. Lord, your mercy is so great that you look beyond our weakness and find purest gold in miry clay turning sinners into saints.
 3. And I will always sing your praise, here on earth and ever after, for you've shown me heavens, my true home, when it's all been said and done. You're my life when life is gone.