

“Treasure”

BEYOND Sermon Series | Week Three | Newbreak Church

May 16th, 2021

This week is about how we steward our treasure. All of us have resources that help us provide for our families and even enjoy some luxuries beyond the essentials. Yet, there is a way to steward our “treasure” that goes beyond how it benefits us. This message answers the question: How do I develop a heart of generosity that will build the kingdom of God?

For more insights relating to this week’s sermon, see <https://newbreak.church/blog/>. We post a new blog every Sunday which coincides with the sermon passage or theme from that day.

Start Here

- Did you ever have a “piggy bank” (or something like it) as a child? What was the most you saved? What did you enjoy spending your money on as a kid?
- What was something that parents could have spent money on that would have meant a lot to you? For example: a summer camp, music lessons, sports activities, Nerf guns, etc. Why did you pick what you did?

Going Deeper Into the Message

Read: Matthew 6:19-24

Determine where I place my treasure.

Don’t store up treasures here **on earth**...Store your treasures **in heaven**... (Matthew 6:19-20, NLT)

Many have read this verse assuming it is speaking of possessions, making the meaning something like: if you steward your possessions well on earth, God will give you possessions in heaven. But it misses the point to take it that way. Certainly, all of what we steward, including our “treasure,” are tools toward a far more important task. For Jesus, *people* were the most important treasure.

New Testament scholar N.T. Wright comments on this passage:

“[Jesus] wanted his followers to establish heavenly treasure right now, treasure which they could enjoy in the present as well as the future, treasure that wasn’t subject to the problems that face all earthly hoards.”

Jesus taught us what was important to him...

... and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to [Jesus]. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, ¹⁹ and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come. . . Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” For Jesus, the greatest treasure is people. Imagine the faces of those in need and that’s who Jesus sees as heaven’s treasure. When we use our treasure as a tool to help others enter the kingdom of God, we are storing up “treasures in heaven.” (Luke 4:17–20, NIV)

Think about it this way. An important aspect of the Messiah’s mission was to liberate people from captivity to sin and the powers of darkness, which the systems of the world operate through. Using our “treasure” to empower ministries that lift people out of oppressive circumstances is one way we participate in Christ’s mission.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- How does thinking about people as heaven’s treasure influence your understanding of this passage? In this case, what does it look like to “store up treasure in heaven?”
- [Matthew 6:21 \(NLT\)](#) says: “Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.” To paraphrase: Where I invest, my heart will follow. How do you see a connection between our treasure and our heart?
- Discuss this quote from Robert Morris: “*There are resources and there are needs. What’s in the middle? We are.*” How does this call us to have a sense of responsibility and urgency concerning the issues we see in the world?

- Proverbs 11:24 (MSG) “The world of the generous gets larger and larger; the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller.” Things we acquire won’t make it into eternity, but the people we affect and influence for the kingdom of God will have an eternal impact. How do I want my generosity to help expand the family of God, make an everlasting difference, and build the body of Christ?

—ADDITIONAL INSIGHT—

WHY JESUS CARES SO MUCH ABOUT YOUR EYES

**This is an excerpt from the Newbreak blog associated with this week. Read the full blog post by going to newbreak.church/evil-eye/*

²² “The eye is the lamp of the body. **If your eyes are healthy**, your whole body will be full of light.²³ **But if your eyes are unhealthy**, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matthew 6:22-23, NIV)

Where the NIV says: "if your eyes are unhealthy" literally reads: "if your eye is evil" (translating the Greek adjective *ponēros* as "evil"). Here lies an elusive metaphor, at least for many modern readers. This stark metaphor is meant to classify the spiritual condition of a person. If someone’s eye was “evil” (as was a common idiom), it meant their outlook on the world would be darkened too.

Even within the Gospel of Matthew, there is an instance when the “evil eye” is deployed in a derogatory way toward those who are stingy or greedy. The latter part of Jesus’s parable about God’s grace in [Matthew 20:15](#) can be translated: “Or is your eye evil because I am generous?” The negative Greek adjective, *ponēros*, describes the eye literally as “evil” but more descriptively as envious. The Greek language of the New Testament draws on the even more primitive Hebrew. The Hebrew phrase, *raʿ ayin* (“evil eye”) has been rendered numerous ways in the Old Testament, including “stringy” and “miserly.” Matthew 6:22–23 contrasts the “evil eye” with the *haplous* eye, or what the NIV (above) translates as “healthy.” But there is one problem... the Greek adjective *haplous* simply does not mean “healthy.”

Ready to learn a little bit about the fun yet important task of translation? Let’s dig deeper!

Translators struggle to unravel *haplous* in a way that does justice to the word, especially in how it dynamically functions in Matthew 6:22. The majority of popular English translations render the word as “healthy” (NIV, NLT, ESV, CSB, NET). However, translating the Greek adjective *haplous* as “healthy” does not quite capture the meaning of the word, especially in context to what Jesus is saying. *Haplous* is the opposite of *dipulous*, meaning single (*haplous*) rather than double (*dipulous*).^[1] (The Greek word *dipulous* is where we get the English word [duplicity](#), which refers to a contradictory doubleness of thought or action. Or in more lay terms, being two-faced.)

So, in its most literal sense, *haplous* means “single,” especially in regards to singleness of purpose. But the context continues to mold the meaning.

Of course, simply rendering *haplous* as “single” (as [the KJV does](#)) might confuse the modern reader, who is likely to miss the metaphor. *Haplous* conveys more than a single word can say. That's because it reflects an entire spirituality that is blessed by God.

Haplous, when placed in its first-century Jewish context, most often describes a singularly focused simplicity. Yet, the close relative of *haplous* (*haplotēs*) clearly communicates the idea of generosity in certain contexts. Observe these passages. I'll **bold the English word** where the Greek word *haplotēs* is.

*... if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give **generously**; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.* (Romans 12:8, NIV)

*In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich **generosity**.* (2 Corinthians 8:2)

*You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your **generosity** will result in thanksgiving to God.* (2 Corinthians 9:11)

*Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your **generosity** in sharing with them and with everyone else.* (2 Corinthians 9:13)

With a range of potential meanings, the issue remains of how to best render the term *haplous*. Three options that best suit Matthew 6:22's usage: 1) translate *haplous* with the idea of generosity (emphasizing activity); 2) translate the adjective with the idea of whole-hearted devotion (emphasizing a posture of the heart), or 3) translate *haplous* with a phrase that brings out the double-meaning.

The third translation option is most appealing. Why? Because the context (what comes before and after) helps demonstrate that both meanings are equally at play.

[Verses 19–21](#) are about two kinds of treasure, which speaks to the contrast between being selfish versus generous with our stewardship. Then, [verse 24](#), following *after* the contrast of the two eyes, contrasts the two masters, where total devotion is the focus. Matthew shows us three contrasts (two treasures, two eyes, two masters), putting the two eyes at the center like a door hinge allowing for double-meaning.

Therefore, [Matthew 6:22-23](#) is meant to show us that a kingdom-minded disciple is *holistically devoted* and *deliberately generous*. Both parts of that are equally important!

Considering the context of where the contrast between the evil eye and the *haplous* eye comes in Matthew, there is no doubt that the call to wholeheartedness fits like a piece of an intricate puzzle.

The point of the three contrasts (two treasures, two eyes, two masters) found in [Matt 6:19–24](#) provokes the reader to identify where they stand in their loyalty to God and His kingdom. One of the primary themes of the sermon on the mount is being “perfect” ([Matt 5:48](#)), which is actually closer to our English concept of “wholeness.” Therefore, it would be consistent with Matthew’s record of Jesus’s message to have another adjective fueling the discussion of wholeness, leaning into the idiom of the eye. In light of this discussion, we can translate Matthew 6:22b, conveying the double-meaning this way:

*“Therefore, if your eye is **wholly devoted and generous**, your body will be full of light.”*

The condition of one’s eye reveals one’s ambition. Just as the eye affects the whole body, so ambition affects the rest of life. Think about the depth of the contrast between the two eyes. The person who has an “evil eye” sees the world through the lens of scarcity and self-preservation. The goal is to hoard as much as he can because you can’t trust what life circumstances will come your way tomorrow. Contrast this with the “wholly devoted and generous eye” (inspired by our study of *haplous*). This person sees the world through the lens of abundance and self-giving. The goal is to be content with what is needed, being generous with any excess, because life is not about an abundance of possessions ([Luke 12:15](#)).

The contrast between the “evil eye” and the *haplous* eye comes down to seeing the world through scarcity or generosity; through the lens of a spiritual orphan who has to look out for themselves or through the lens of a child of God who knows God is their Provider.

The argument of the whole passage ([Matthew 6:19–24](#)) goes like this: Desiring the wrong treasure leads to devotion to treasure that is fleeting. Devotion to wealth produces blindness of heart. The blindness of heart leads to serving the wrong master. Serving the wrong master, as [verses 25–34](#) flesh out, leads to a life of worry. Michael Green illuminates the point:

“The pursuit of wealth is like sea-water. The more you drink of it the thirstier you get. Whereas the pursuit of God makes one more-and-more satisfied.”

It is no mistake how this whole passage builds toward a climactic statement: “seek first His kingdom” ([Matthew 6:33](#)). Jesus encourages us to be totally kingdom-minded with no parallel priorities! And the issue of what kind of “eye” you have is all part of one’s personal assessment.

—TAKE ACTION—

Our Lead Pastor, Robert Wachs, wants to challenge us all to take action and be Kingdom Builders. He summarizes it this way:

1) Give Prayerfully

2) Give Regularly

3) Give Generously

While we highlight many incredible ministries throughout the year during our Kingdom Builders weekends, this week we are putting the spotlight on Child Hope. During this week's message, you heard more about what we do through Child Hope and how it builds the kingdom of God. To see more information and to give to this Kingdom Builders' project, go to: newbreak.church/kb

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

1. How are you going to think differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?
2. What is one thing you are going to change in your life in light of the sermon?
3. BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids?