



The Nourishing Vocation Project

Engaging the Living Word

Matthew 6:19-21

What is this particular text?

- Teaching
- Part of the Sermon on the Mount
- Metaphor
 - Treasures = righteousness
 - Rust, moth, thieves = unrighteousness
- Theology

How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- Distinguishes between temporal and eternal values
- Distinguishes between human and divine righteousness
- Embedded among other teachings, it reveals what the reign of God is like
- A part of the summary of Jesus' teaching
- Illustrates Jesus preferential option for divine reversal
- Ups the ante on the Law

How can this text function in the church today?

- Invitation to consider and evaluate our values
- Call to ask ourselves what we value and why
- Call to ask how we might be moth, rust, and thieves for others
- A text both for personal devotion and reflection and corporate devotion and reflection

What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- Feels like a mirror
- Makes me uncomfortable
- Raises questions about my own values
- Helps me see how I need Jesus; I can't do this alone

What do you have to say to the text?

- Help me, Jesus
- This isn't as easy as it sounds
- It is easy to "see this problem" in others; not so easy to see it in myself
- My first response was "but ..."
- It can be a challenge to be "heavenly minded" and still of "earthly good"

What do you see through this text from the story itself?

- Not all values are equal
- Sometimes we need to shift our focus
- Sometimes where we invest our time and energy is destructive

What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)

- We might be the moths, rust, and thieves in someone else's life
- It is hard to honestly re-evaluate your values
- We can try to justify systemically bad practices by pretending that they are "for good"
- Churches/communities holding tightly to "treasures" of the past
- Churches/communities holding tightly to systems that harm others
- Crises of our current time
 - Systemic injustice
 - Systemic racism
 - Creation/climate justice
 - Growing economic disparity

What do you see within yourself?

- Personal treasures that are not worth treasuring
- Things that I value that are not life-giving for me or others
- "Rusty and moth-eaten" treasures"

What is the context – textual and historical?

- A part of the Sermon on the Mount
 - After teaching on prayer and fasting
 - Before teaching on the "eye is the lamp," serving two masters, and not worrying
 - Near the end of the Sermon on the Mount
- Similar to themes in Luke 12:33-34

What questions does this text raise for you?

- How do we store up treasures for ourselves?
- What is moth?
- What is rust?
- Who/what behavior is that of thieves?
- How are heart and treasure practically connected?

What words/themes seem of particular import?

- Store up
- Treasures
- Moth, rust, thieves
- Heaven
- Heart

What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?

- There is a treasure that will not be destroyed
- God's righteousness is not the same as earthly righteousness
- God's righteousness is eternal
- God's righteousness leads to life

What is the as-over-againstness of this text?

- Earthly righteousness is destructible



- We can be moth, rust, or thieves
- Some things that we value are destructible
- Our hearts are easily captivated by what we think is treasure

Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?

- Treasure
- The heart's true treasure
- The One who calls us to treasure righteousness

What have others said about this text?

- [“How does our faith matter for](#) how we use our money? And that’s not just the money we give, but the money we spend, where we spend, how we spend, the attitude with which we spend and receive. How does our faith impact that part of our lives?” – Rolf Jacobson, Professor of Old Testament and Alvin N. Rogness Chair in Scripture, Theology, and Ministry, Luther Seminary
- [Jesus “turns his attention to our relationship with material things,](#) instructing us that seeking treasure, in any form, will distract us from God. Our attention follows our treasure, and so we are to be careful what we store up.... All of Jesus’ instructions, including the Lord’s Prayer, have to do with fixing our attention on God. We’re not to get distracted by how other people see us, or the impression we’re making. We’re not to try to impress anyone with our spiritual lives, or our material goods. Jesus is calling us to a rare kind of focus on God, in all that we do.” – Mary Austin
- [The order of the clauses in verse 21 often strike readers as backwards.](#) Wouldn’t we rather say that our treasures are expressions of our hearts, rather than our hearts following our treasure? But Jesus expresses a more challenging truth for us — our hearts are easily swayed by treasure, and it therefore becomes all the more important that we seek and store the right treasure to begin with, for our hearts are sure to follow. – Scott Schauf

What will I teach or proclaim?

- Jesus is the true treasure
- Heavenward attention changes earthbound behavior
- Our hearts follow our treasures
- Practice righteousness
- What do you treasure?
- Your treasure, treasures you. Now what?

