

GLENKIRK CHURCH



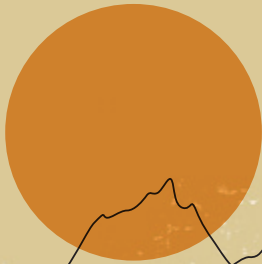
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

OCTOBER 23 - 27, 2023

Re-Formed:

Sermon on the Mount



Sermon Series 9/3 - 11/26

MONDAY

Read **Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 12:13-21, 32-34**

Reforming Our Wealth—The Heart of the Matter

Jesus' teaching about wealth in the Sermon on the Mount begins with a reminder that one's attitude toward wealth is an indicator of the nature of one's spiritual health. Jesus warned His disciples about the transient nature of riches. Riches stored up on earth are subject to reduction and loss.

One common symbol of wealth in Jesus' day was expensive clothing, which Jesus notes is subject to be eaten by moths. Clothing and other forms of wealth are also subject to loss from thieves. Considering such risks, Jesus warned His followers not to store up treasures on earth for themselves.

Instead, Jesus urged His followers to store up riches in heaven, noting that such riches are not subject to the same kinds of loss. Rather, riches stored up in heaven have a permanence to them—they are not subject to destruction by moths and other vermin or loss to thieves.

What are we to make of such teaching in an age when most of us have pensions and/or retirement accounts? Do Jesus' instructions mean it is wrong to save for the future? As always, Jesus' teaching must be interpreted considering the rest of Scripture where riches are often presented as the reward for wisdom, hard work, and faithfulness (see

Proverbs 8:18, 10:4, 28:19-20). The crux of Jesus' message to His disciples is in verse 21: *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* Jesus is not opposed to wealth per se, but He wanted His disciples to know its proper use.

So, what does it mean to *"store up for yourselves riches in heaven"* (Matthew 6:19)? We glimpse a clue in the parallel passage in Luke's Gospel where Jesus stated, *"Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys"* (Luke 12:33).

Using one's wealth to be generous to others, especially the needy, is one way of building lasting wealth. Proverbs 19:7 states, *"Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and He will reward them for what they have done."* This is also the primary point of the parable Jesus told in Luke 12:13-21 and explains why the location of one's treasure reflects one's heart.

QUESTIONS

To what extent are you storing up treasure in heaven? Where is your heart regarding wealth?

PRAYERS

For LaCasa Church/ECO

May the Lord be the one who builds La Casa Church and provides the help needed. Pray for at least ten volunteers to gather regularly to pray for God's will to be done through the ministry. Pray also for two volunteers to help with media and sound, and two more volunteers to support the worship team during Sunday services.

TUESDAY

Read **Matthew 6:22-23; Luke 11:33-36**

Reforming Our Wealth—Healthy Eyes

Jesus' statement in today's text about healthy and unhealthy eyes may at first glance seem to have nothing to do with yesterday's teaching about wealth and generosity. However, upon closer inspection, today's teaching very clearly affirms the same message as the verses that precede it.

Yesterday's teaching ended with the statement, "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Matthew 6:21). In Jesus' context, the heart was the organ that best represented the will of a person. It was the locus of desire, understanding, and trust which could be bent toward good or evil. The heart was the core of the whole person.

In a similar way, the eyes were seen as the organ through which light entered the body and the inner person was reflected to the outside world. This similar function of the heart and eyes is noted in one of the Proverbs' penman's warnings to his son: "*My son, give me your heart and let your eyes delight in my ways*" (Proverbs 23:26).

In today's teaching, Jesus warned His disciples about both healthy and unhealthy eyes. The footnotes in the NIV note that healthy and unhealthy can also be translated as "generous" and "stingy"

respectively. Taking this cue from Jesus' context, His teaching affirms that one who has generous eyes will be full of light while one who has stingy eyes will be full of darkness.

This truth had been affirmed nearly a millennium earlier in two Hebrew proverbs: "*The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor*" (Proverbs 22:9); and "*The stingy are eager to get rich and are unaware that poverty awaits them*" (Proverbs 28:22). Jesus' message to His followers was that generosity is essential to a well-lived life and that its opposite—stinginess—was a recipe for a life of unhappiness.

Summarizing today's teaching, we could say that generous eyes—i.e., eyes that perceive the needs of others and find ways to help them—reflect a healthy and satisfying perspective on life whereas stingy eyes—i.e., eyes that focus only on one's own needs and wants—reflect an unhealthy and dissatisfying perspective on life.

QUESTIONS

When our son was young, he suffered from a "lazy eye" condition and was prescribed exercises to train both eyes to work together. The exercises worked and his vision improved. What exercises can we do to train our eyes to be generous?

PRAYERS

For LaCasa Church/ECO

Pray Psalm 27:1 for protection, wisdom, and encouragement for Gio, Indra, and the children, as well as for the leadership team members and their families.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:1-15**

Reforming Our Wealth—One True Master

Jesus' teaching in today's text includes several bold statements about allegiance as Jesus warned His followers about the impossibility of divided loyalty. The first statement presents a simple but challenging truth: "No one can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24a). Such a statement may seem old-fashioned in today's world where many people hold down two or more jobs and juggle the responsibilities of each reasonably well. But in the Roman world of Jesus' day, "masters" must be understood in terms of slavery as "owners" rather than "employers." The truth that no one can serve two masters survives today in the common business practice of ensuring that employees report to only one supervisor, even if they support multiple departments and colleagues in an organization.

Jesus expanded on this first statement by explaining the difficult choices people face when confronted with two masters: "Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (v. 24b). Notice that Jesus leaves no room for middle ground between these alternatives: love or hate, be devoted to or despise. A slave doing the bidding of one master meant she or he was not available to serve another master. The impossibility of divided allegiance between two masters would have been self-evident to Jesus' audience.

Having established the impossibility of serving two masters, Jesus then turned back to the topic at hand: "You cannot serve both God and money" (v. 24c). Jesus was challenging His followers to recognize that money can easily become a master that challenges God's authority in one's life. We all need money to live but Jesus does not want His followers to live for money. We need to choose whom we will serve, God or money.

The advantages of serving God rather than money are clear: God loves and cares for His followers; God calls His followers to live for a higher purpose; God bestows many blessings on His followers; and God wants His followers to bless others. Money, an impersonal medium of exchange, can do none of these things. Following God as one's master means undivided loyalty to Him, trusting Him to guide us in our use of money for His purposes.

QUESTIONS

To what extent is your daily life consumed with the desire to get rich or the fear of losing money? What steps can you take to ensure money does not become your master?

PRAYERS

For LaCasa Church/ECO

Soon La Casa Church plans to start small discipleship groups. Pray that new people may be reached through these groups, that every new person and all the group members may be edified, that all will grow in the footsteps of Jesus.

THURSDAY

Read **Matthew 6:25-30; Luke 12:22-28**

Reforming Our Wealth—Living Worry Free

Following Jesus' warning to His followers about the impossibility of serving both God and money, Jesus turns to the futility of worrying about one's life. Jesus stated the fundamental teaching very clearly: *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear"* (Matthew 6:25). Having commanded His followers, *"Do not worry,"* He then proceeded to provide several reasons why they should not worry.

The first reason not to worry about food, drink, or clothing is that such things do not define life. Yes, in one sense they are all necessities of life. However, there is so much more to life than the quantity and quality of such things. Life lived to its fullest is about loving God and loving others—the essential relationships of life. Food, drink, and clothing are necessary, but they do not define who we are.

A second reason not to worry about these necessities of life is that God, whom Jesus identifies as *"your heavenly Father,"* knows that His followers need such things and is happy to provide them. Jesus argued from the lesser to the greater in His teaching about the birds and the flowers of the field. If God feeds the birds of the air and *"clothes"* the flowers of the field, will He not also take care of His

followers who are much more valuable than the birds and flowers? What kind of *"heavenly Father"* would God be if He did not prioritize caring for His children over caring for the flora and fauna?

The final reason Jesus gave to His followers not to worry is simply the futility of worrying. *"Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life"* (v. 27)? The answer to this rhetorical question is obviously, "No." Since worrying does not have any positive effects (in fact, constant worrying has been shown to take a heavy toll on people's emotional and physical health), there is no value in worrying. Jesus concluded His comments with a sharp rebuke to His followers: *"... you of little faith"* (v. 30). Ultimately, worrying reveals a lack of faith and perhaps a lack of understanding that God truly is our heavenly Father.

QUESTIONS

All of us are tempted to worry about that which we cannot control. What worries you the most? How can you increase your faith?

PRAYERS

For LaCasa Church/ECO

Soon La Casa Church plans to start small discipleship groups. Pray that new people may be reached through these groups, that every new person and all the group members may be edified, that all will grow in the footsteps of Jesus.

FRIDAY

Read **Matthew 6:31-34; Luke 12:29-31**

Reforming Our Wealth—Living for God

Jesus concluded His teaching about His followers' perspective on wealth by reminding them of the futility of worrying and pointing them toward what should be the primary focus of their lives. Jesus noted that when it comes to food, drink, and clothing, "*the pagans run after all these things*" (Matthew 6:32).

As true as that was in Jesus' day, how much more so is it true today. The food and beverage industry in the USA generates about \$1.5 trillion in annual revenue and the fashion industry adds another \$344 billion. It is not an overstatement to say that American society is consumed with these life necessities. For a point of reference, the \$1.844 trillion of revenue generated by these two industries in the USA is more than the national gross domestic product of all but 11 countries in the world!

Instead of focusing on food, drink, and clothing, Jesus urged His followers to "*seek first [God's] kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*" (v. 33). What does it mean to seek first God's kingdom? Fundamentally, it is an outward rather than an inward focus in life. It means focusing on God's purpose not only or primarily for us, but for those around us. As we have seen this week, it means being generous to the needy, sharing freely what God has given to us.

Seeking God's kingdom also means seeing investments in relationships as more important than financial investments. This could even include investing financially in others—helping alleviate their needs, helping them to find Jesus, and/or helping them connect with those who can help them grow spiritually.

God's grace is experienced in both giving and receiving generosity. Having lived for many years on a donation-based income, I appreciate the generosity of others who allowed my family and me to invest in the lives of others. Having supported missionaries and ministries, I also know the grace of giving. Seeking God's kingdom means recognizing that the value of generosity far outweighs the value of accumulation.

Jesus concluded His teaching by stating, "*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own*" (v. 34). The wisdom of this perspective is both liberating and empowering.

QUESTIONS

How are you seeking and investing in God's kingdom? How will you let your tomorrows worry about themselves?

PRAYERS

For LaCasa Church/ECO

Pray for the financial resources that are needed by the beginning of 2024. Specifically, pray for the support of the worship leader of La Casa Church (\$15,000 out of \$29,000).



Glenkirk Church | 1700 Palopinto Ave, Glendora, CA 91741 | 626.914.4833
GlenkirkChurch.org |  **@GlenkirkChurch** |  **Facebook: GlenkirkChurch**