

The Gospel of Matthew

Title: Where is your Heart?

Text: Matthew 6:16-24

Proposition: Fasting, gathering and storing are all an indicator of where your heart is.

Aim: To expose where our heart truly is. Don't "follow your heart" because your heart can lead you astray. We will see in our text, that where our treasures are, that's where our heart is and who we truly are.

POINT 1 - FASTING AND WHY IT'S BIBLICAL

Just as Jesus commands we give, pray and now fast, He does so in the terms of not being like the hypocrites. They gave to be seen of men. They prayed aloud at the right place to be heard by men. And they fast, by neglecting their appearance to be seen by men for their fasting. They want everyone to know how spiritual they are. For the third time, Jesus said they have their reward. And that is the praise of men. So if you are looking to impress men with your giving, praying and fasting, your reward is just that.

Why fast? Fasting is mentioned over 30X in the NT. When Jesus says "when you fast" indicates that fasting is a normal and acceptable part of the Christian life. He assumed His followers will fast on certain occasions, but no set time is given. Several reasons are given for fasting:

MOURNING - The disciples of John the Baptist asked why His disciples didn't fast like the Pharisees. Jesus answered in Matthew 9:15 "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast." Fasting never is seen in Scripture as a sign of some heightened spiritual awareness or mystical event. Fasting is appropriate in the age because Christ is physically absent from the earth, but it's appropriate as a response to trials, struggles and testing.

Fasting in times of mourning, trials or struggles replaces the need with Scripture reading, prayer and seeking God. Many of you have fasted seeking God's will for particular troubles or testing in your life. You have "abstained" from certain things in order to see God and seek Him.

TROUBLE, DANGER - King Jehoshaphat proclaimed a national fast when they were threatened with an attack from the Moabites and the Ammonites. 2 Chronicles 20:1-4 "Now it came about after this that the sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon, together with some of the Meunites, came to make war against Jehoshaphat. Then some came and reported to Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, out of Aram and behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar (that is Engedi)." Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to seek help from the Lord; they even came from all the cities of Judah to seek the Lord."

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As the exiles were about to leave Babylon for an adventurous return to Jerusalem, Ezra declared a fast, Ezra 8:21 *“Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions.”* Vs. 23 *“So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter.”*

Application: Why fast today in our modern, know it all culture? When you’re faced with a task in ministry or life, you should seek God’s will concerning that. Fasting, will bring you to a place of seeking God for His will in your life.

POINT 2 - PROPERLY STORING TREASURE

The word store or lay up means *“to accumulate, to amass”* and has the idea of stacking or hoarding up horizontally. This is illustrated perfectly in the parable Jesus told in Luke 12:16-21 *“All I do, since I have no place to store my crops? Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.’”* But God said to him, *‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’* So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” It’s also clear from the passage in Matthew 19:21 *“Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me. But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.’”*

To be clear, it’s not the possessions, wealth or accumulation of things that’s sinful. Often times the accumulation of wealth and possessions became our idol. It becomes a barrier between you and the total lordship of Christ. You want to hang on and control the things materially, and use God as some sort of crutch. Both the OT and the NT acknowledge the right to own animals, land and have wealth. The idea is not to “amass or store” up these things.

The context of where the moth and rust destroy was very familiar. Clothing was a huge indicator in ancient times of wealth. Rich people often had golden threads woven into their clothing. But the best clothes were made of wool, which moths loved to eat, but even the wealthiest of people had trouble keeping their clothes from being destroyed. Wealth was also held in grain. And in the parallel we alluded to earlier, the man needed more barns to store his grain. The Greek word for rust literally means *“an eating”* and it can be taken to mean the grain was eaten by mice, worms and insects. No matter how many barns you have rodents will get to them.

Nothing on this earth is completely free of the possibility of destruction. You can have a safe that is fully secured, and yet, a thief can break in and steal. I think James 4:4 comes into play here *“You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore*

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whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." The imperative language James uses here leaves no ambiguity as to where your heart is. John MacArthur notes in his commentary *"Jesus is not saying that if we put our treasure in the right place our heart will then be in the right place, but the location of our treasure indicates where our heart already is."*

POINT 3 - YOU CANNOT HAVE TWO MASTERS

Our Lord Jesus closes this section by addressing the eye and how it affects the body. The eye being the lamp, if it's clear, then this represents a single minded devotion to God. If we let in things that are eternal, holy and righteous, then our whole body will be full of light. James 1:5 is indicative of God being generous in allowing truth and light to enter, *"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."*

If the eye is bad (evil as the AV says) which literally means *"diseased, evil, bad"* then the whole body is full of darkness. *If our hearts are encumbered with material concerns they become "blind" to spiritual concerns.*¹ We can assume today that what you allow in your heart, that's what you become. If you allow holy, righteous, godly thinking in your life, then your body is full of light. The word "bad" or "evil" can be translated "evil eye". Often times we have used the statement that a person gave us the "evil eye." Its root meaning is "stingy, hostile, selfish." Deuteronomy 15:9 gives us this great warning, *"Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart."* In fact, we must never let Proverbs 4:23 drift too far from our thinking, *"Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life."* Proverbs 28:22 sums it up perfectly, *"A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth, And does not know that want will come upon him."* The person who is material minded, has a bad heart. It's the eye that sees, desires and covets. He has become spiritually blind.

Vs. 23 is seemingly an oxymoron. Yet, it means that the man who thinks he has light, his own version of that light, is really in utter darkness. What he thinks to be light is darkness because he is deceived. And the statement of "how great is the darkness" is alarming. You can't have a version of truth that you like or even create.

The Greek word for master here is *kyrios* which does have a range of meaning depending on the context, but in general is *"to whom a person or thing belongs."* In short, you either belong to Christ or not. I know that seems to be a sobering thought, because many of us want to belong to both kingdoms. The kingdom of this world and its pleasures, but the crutch of God when things don't go so well.

We can conclude today by taking what Jesus said in vs. 24, not as many options, but as two ways. Just as you are on the road to life or death, there's no two masters in your life. You are bound to the world and its ways (satan) or God and His way. In no way does our text speak that its evil to have

¹ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; pp. 414

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wealth and possessions, but the key to the text is wealth and material things are your idol. In fact, you don't even have to be wealthy to be material minded. But over and over again in the NT we find that it is not simply difficult, but impossible to have two masters.

You cannot say that Christ is Lord of your life, and yet be consumed with the things of this world. The light coming in you think is light, but in reality its darkness. You are deceived. Galatians 6:7-8 define this perfectly, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

We cannot claim Christ as Lord if our allegiance is to anything or anyone else, including ourselves. And when we know God's will, and when we know God's will, and resist obeying, we give evidence that our loyalty is other than Him. We can no more serve two masters at the same time than we can walk in the same direction at the same time.²

In closing, our giving, prayed and fasting is all for God and not to be seen by men nor seek man's recognition. And our life is either for Him or against Him. Our master is in heaven or on earth. We put our hope and trust in what we can see or we place it in a living hope. Either way today you will serve one of two masters. Joshua 24:15 "And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

² The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; pp. 415