

Cell notes, week beginning 9 January 2017

We love to guard our precious possessions closely. It's an old chestnut, but if your house was engulfed in flames, what (inanimate) thing or things would you risk your life to save?

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven

Appropriately, given the subject of our sermon on Sunday, Bible Gateway's verse for today for Monday was:

Matthew 6:19-21: 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'

What does Jesus mean when he says: 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also'?

Martin Luther famously spoke of the need for three conversions; conversion of the head, conversion of the heart, and conversion of the wallet. Is he right? And if so, why?

On Sunday Dave got people to take out their wallets, purses, phones, car keys etc and give them to someone else. For those who were there, how did it feel to pass something you value on to someone else? How would you have reacted to a prompting from God to let the person keep the item that you passed over to them?

Jesus refers here to the way earthly wealth is subject to theft or decay. Is it better to part with our valuables than to let them deteriorate and be subject to theft? Some valuable items can of course appreciate in value if we hang on to them. Should our attitude to such things be any different?

What other influences are there in our lives that urge us to hold on to our wealth?

Think of someone you know who is mean spirited. Then think of someone you know who is generous. Which of them seems happier in life? Which of them would you choose to spend time with? Which of them is overall the wealthier, not just financially? Which would you prefer to be like?

Read Acts 2: 42-47 and 4: 32-35

These were exciting times for the church, which rapidly established Christ's body on earth. Part of their radicalism was pooling resources: and notice how 'there was no needy person among them'. It's easy to think of that being the recipients of people's generosity: but it also applied to those who were generous! Can you think of other scriptures that suggest God turns generosity on its head so that it's a benefit rather than a sacrifice?

Is there a danger though that we may become generous only in the expectation that we shall receive blessing for it? If so, is that really generosity?

It's not generally part of our culture these days to have 'everything in common' in the way described here. Short of selling our homes and living in one big commune, how can we apply these verses to our lives today?

APPLICATION

- God is not against wealth, but wants our lives to be centred on Him not material things
- God has a heart for the poor and for those subject to injustice: there are numerous scriptures in which God makes clear his heart for the poor, such as Matthew 25:31-46.
- In what ways can we conquer our love of material wealth and walk closer with God?