

The True Discipleship Broadcast-1983-03 True Discipleship

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the importance of prioritizing spiritual treasures over material wealth in true discipleship.

Duration: 24:41

Scripture: Matthew 6:19

Topics: "True Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon on Matthew chapter 6, verses 19 through 34, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not placing too much value on earthly treasures. Instead, he encourages listeners to focus on investing in the work of the Lord and trusting God for their future needs. The speaker shares his personal experience of finding joy in using his money for God's purposes rather than accumulating wealth for himself. He also highlights the concept of laying up treasures in heaven by investing in eternal things and living a life of sacrificial service for the Lord. The sermon concludes with a reminder of God's care and provision for all creatures, emphasizing the need for diligence in daily work while trusting in God's logistics to provide for our needs.

Transcript

Matthew chapter 6, verses 19-34, and I think I'll read the passage again, because that will give us a review. Matthew chapter 6, verse 19. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The lamp of the body is the eye, if therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither show nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they neither toil nor spin.

Yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothed the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we wear? For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

What this passage teaches is that you and I should work hard for our current needs and the needs of our family. We have one. Put everything above that in the work of the Lord and trust God for the future.

You see, that's where the life of faith comes in. Trusting God. We all say, well, we live, we walk by faith and not by sight.

But I want to tell you, if you can see it in a bank balance, you're not walking by sight. Actually, if you just come to the Word of God and accept it literally, there's a terrific joy in it, a terrific release of the Spirit. It's really wonderful when God performs that miracle in your life and releases the tension of the grasping hand.

Instinctively we feel that fulfillment lies in accumulation. Jesus says it lies in renunciation. I can honestly tell you I've never enjoyed any money I had in a savings bank account.

But I've enjoyed it fabulously when I saw it go to work for the Lord. When I saw it invested in souls, I really enjoyed it then. Do not lay up for yourself and say, what are treasures on earth? Everybody has to decide in his own mind.

What this is really saying, what the Lord is really saying here is, don't be providing for your long-term distant future. Let me just say here, he's not talking about current needs in this passage of Scripture. Not talking about current needs.

And I think I can show that to you before we finish. He's talking about Bill McDonald thinking, okay Bill, now you can travel around among the assemblies and they minister to you and you're taken care of. Well, what's going to happen to you when you're 85 and you're arthritic and you're rheumatic and you have a few other physical ailments and you're not able to move around? Who's going to take care of you then? Oh, I better start laying aside money.

That's what he's talking about. I better start laying aside money for that dim, indistinct future. And he says, don't do it.

And before we get through, I think I can explain to you why we shouldn't do it. He's not talking about current needs. He's not talking about providing for your needs and the needs of your family today.

So there you have it. Moth, one nervous breakdown. Rust, a nervous breakdown.

That's the corrosion of metal. And thieves break in and steal. How do you lay up treasure in heaven? By sending it on before.

By investing in the things of God. By investing in the things of eternity. Possibly be tremendously poor on earth and tremendously rich in heaven.

Have tremendous treasures in heaven. There's a sister here in the Oakland area and she has lived a life of sacrificial service for the Lord. She has supported missionaries more than people would ever know or ever believe.

And one day she said to me, I wouldn't swap my mail for anybody in the world. Meaning the letters she gets from missionaries telling of how gifts got there at the right time and in the right amount and how it was really ordained of the Lord that she should give it at that time. And she said, I wouldn't swap my mail for anybody else in the world.

Her treasures are in heaven. She doesn't have very much on this earth. There's another woman here.

She can't talk. She's got a stroke. She's completely incapacitated.

And when she was still well, she said to me one day, the dentist tells me I should have work done on my teeth. And she was an old woman then. And I said, are you going to have it done? She said, I'm not going to put gold in my teeth to have it covered by a few shovelfuls of earth.

She had a different way of investing her money. Now, these people teach you tremendous lessons, don't they? And she has nothing today. But God has taken care of her.

She's never lacked. She put it to work for the Lord while she could. It says, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

This is a tremendous insight. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. If your treasure is on earth, your heart's on earth.

If your treasure's in heaven, your heart's in heaven. That's really rather searching to me. I'm not sure that I want my heart to be in a safe deposit box at Wells Fargo.

But that's what it says. If that's where my treasure is, that's where my heart is. And it's really true.

And our speech really is an indication of that, what we talk about, the things we value. It comes out in our speech. It's wonderful to meet somebody who's already living in heaven because all his treasure is there.

Now, you'd think when you come to verse 22 that Jesus has changed the subject, wouldn't you? Start talking about the eye and about a lamp and all that. But it's the same subject. There's no change in thought at all.

And this is one of the intriguing delights in studying the Word of God, to see the continuity, the flow of thought, even when it seems to be disrupted. Jesus says the lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

First of all, from the physical standpoint, the eye is the means by which light gets into your body. Now, I don't understand the mechanics of it, but in some marvelous way the light comes through the lens, and there must be a projection machine back here and a screen because the image has to be projected somewhere. Well, I can't explain that, but I know that it's true that the lamp of the body is the eye.

He said if your eye is good, that means on the physical plane, if your eye is healthy, your whole being will be flooded with illumination. In other words, you won't go stumbling along and falling into every ditch that comes along. You'll see where you're going on the physical plane.

But the spiritual application is, if your eye is good, that is if your eye is healthy, if you're laying up treasures in heaven, not on earth, your whole body will be flooded with illumination. You'll never lack the guidance of God. I believe that, too.

I believe there are dividends that you clip when you lay up treasures in heaven, not on earth. And one of the dividends is clarity of guidance, and another is illumination in the Word of God. I believe people who follow the Word of God literally like this see more in the Bible than other people do.

I believe there are passages in the Bible that can be blank to me if I'm refusing to obey the Word of God in these things. Amazing, isn't it? What a teacher the Lord Jesus was. What a master he was, a teacher.

If your eye is good, that is if your eye is healthy, the healthy eye is the eye that's not looking for security in this world, but seeking to lay up treasures in heaven. And he said, if that's your case, your body will be full of light. That means your life will be full of light spiritually.

But he says if your eye is bad. At the physical level, that means if your eye is diseased or if it's blind. He says your whole body will be full of darkness.

Well, we know that's true physically. If you're blind, you don't see. But spiritually, it means if I'm trying to live for two worlds, if I'm trying to lay up treasures on earth and treasures in heaven at the same time, that's a bad eye.

It's an eye that doesn't take literally the words of the Lord Jesus. It's a diseased eye. And he says if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

Well, I believe that. There is such a thing as spiritual darkness. I go to the word of God, and it doesn't speak to me.

I pray, and the sky is abraded. I can't seem to get clear guidance from the Lord. There's something in the way.

Well, he says if your eye is bad, that's just what will happen. And he says if the light that's in you is darkness, how great is that darkness. And that says to me that if the Lord Jesus has spoken to me about this laying up treasures on earth, and I know that's what he said, but I refuse it.

And I think, well, you've got to be prudent. You've got to use common sense. Everybody's doing it.

And I have all these reasons why Jesus' words don't mean what they say. How great is that darkness? He says that the darkness of a person who's known the light and rejected it is worse than a person who's never known it. Do you believe that? Light rejected is light denied.

And it happened in the case of Israel, didn't it? The judicial hardening that came upon the nation of Israel. Well, that happens with us as Christians too. The important thing in spiritual things is not your intelligence quotient.

It's your obedience quotient. That determines how fast you'll grow and how well you'll do in the things of God. Your obedience quotient, whether you have a heart to obey the word of God.

And I think the last part of verse 23 says that if God has given me light on this and I do not walk in that light, then a greater darkness will envelop me. And I've seen that. I know a man and I visited him, let's say, 20 years ago.

And he's laying up treasures and there's no question about it. It's a gold box. He had some kind of spiritual lingo that he reeled off to me at that time.

Something ostensibly he had just got fresh from the word of God. I met him 20 years later and you know what he said? Exactly the same thing. There had been no progression.

There had been no growth in his life spiritually. He was still reeling off the same lingo he had 20 years before. I think the light that was in him was darkness.

And how great is that darkness. I hope that doesn't happen to us. I think that's a pathetic thing.

Okay. Verse 24. You think, oh, Jesus has surely changed the subject now.

Talking about masses. No, he hasn't. It's just like a diamond that he turns around and you see the truth from a different aspect or in a different prism.

It says, no one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

And of course, that's absolutely true. It's true in a natural sense that some of you have worked in offices. It's not a good thing, for instance, to have a secretary working for two bosses.

Is it? Bad thing. There has to be somebody in charge. Because at five o'clock those two men might want a letter out and they both might want it out immediately.

And who's he going to do it for? He's got to pick. It's a case of divided loyalty. And Jesus said that's true with people.

You can't live for money and wealth and material things and for Jesus at the same time. You've got to make a choice. He won't stand for divided loyalty.

You cannot serve God and mammon. Bill, I really appreciate your message today. And I know that this is a very controversial subject that you're dealing with.

Now, I've been with you long enough to know that you cannot bring this subject up without stepping on some toes. And I've heard a number of objections or honest questions that people have in regard to this whole area of faith in God and not trusting in riches. And it seems to me that it would be a profitable time to take some time right now to answer some of these questions.

Now, you mentioned that we cannot serve God and mammon or money. I know that some are thinking, well, why work at all? I should just sit around and read the Bible and trust God for my needs. What do you think about this whole area? Well, I can see how you might draw that conclusion.

But then you turn over to 1 and 2 Thessalonians, you know, and you read, if any man won't work, he won't eat. And the whole emphasis of the Word of God is that we should be earnest and diligent in our daily work, that work is a blessing from God, and that he holds us responsible to scratch around like that sparrow for the provision of our daily needs. See, the argument is from birds and flowers to human beings.

And God's tremendous care, just think of the logistics problem that God has. The Pentagon thinks they have a logistics problem when an army moves out into battle. You know, they have to keep the lines of communication and supplies going.

Think of God's problem with this world, with all the birds, the fish, the men, the animals, the snakes, the whole thing. And he provides for them. And I should worry? He'll provide for me.

But he's given me hands, he's given me feet, and he expects me to use them for the provision of my daily needs, but not to lay up a nest egg for the future. Bill, I think there are various reasons why people set aside money as a nest egg. For instance, there's the topic of health insurance.

Oftentimes people are concerned that their health will wear out as they get older, and they set aside money in case they do get sick. What's your whole attitude towards health insurance for yourself? I've just trusted God up until now. About three or four years ago, I started having a bleeding problem at night.

The third night it was so bad I knew my game was up that I had to do something about it. I went to the doctor and he said to me, Do you have Medicare? And I said, I'm not old enough yet to have Medicare. He said, Do you have health insurance? And I said, No.

He said, You better drop dead. The most comforting doctor I ever had. But the Lord provided.

I didn't even, in that case, I didn't even have to go to the hospital because I didn't have all of that. I didn't go to the hospital. When I got through, my total bill was \$250, which I didn't particularly sweat.

Bill, do you feel that if all the Christians put the money that they are now saving for the proverbial rainy day into the work of the Lord, that it would have an impact in world evangelism? Well, just think what would happen. After all, the Lord Jesus is concerned with world evangelism, isn't he? Just think what would happen if the Christian church today were to take Matthew 6, verses 19 through 34 and apply them literally. The world could be evangelized in our generation.

No problem at all. But you see, what we do is we take a passage of Scripture like this and we say, He couldn't mean that. He knows I have to live, doesn't he? Somebody said that to Spurgeon once.

I have to live, don't I? Spurgeon said, I don't grant that. We have to obey God. The Lord knew what he was talking about when he uttered these words.

We think we know better. And we are born men and die grocers as a result. You know? Born men and die grocers.

We scarcely rise above flesh and blood. And for all practical purposes, there's very little difference between the average Christian and the average unsaved neighbor. They're all living for the same thing.

But that wasn't the way the Lord Jesus intended it to be. Bill, there's another question that I'm sure many of our listeners have, and that's to do with the verse that's found in 1 Timothy 5, verse 8. It says, If anyone provide not for his own, and especially those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel or an unbeliever. In the context, isn't it talking about bringing in your mother-in-law or something? I'm glad you brought that verse up.

I think the context is more about widows in the assembly, isn't it? Yeah, widows. I'm really awfully glad you brought that. Let's all turn to that, because that verse had to come up sooner or later, and I was waiting for it to come.

Okay. A verse must be taken in its context. Go back to verse 3. Honor widows who are really widows.

But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents so this is good and acceptable before God. Now she who is really a widow and left alone trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.

And these things command that they may be blameless. Question. Is Paul talking about a pension fund for widows, or is he talking about relieving their current necessities? Answer.

See, the whole context there is current necessities. They had a fund in the local church to take care of widows who were widows indeed. And it was their present, it was their grocery billet, a safe way today that the passage is talking about.

Bill, I know that that's just one of the verses that is used in this whole discussion on discipleship. I think there's another verse as well that people often bring up, and that's in Philippians chapter 4 and verse 8. Do you want to comment on that one? Paul says, I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. And here in the United States we read that verse and we can see this abounding Christian with a vast estate and two Cadillacs and all of the modern accoutrements and hot and cold folding doors and all the rest.

What they don't realize is that Paul was writing from prison. And he said, I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. In prison.

Well, that's a far cry from the materialism of the church in the 20th century. Bill, there's just one other verse I'd like to bring up before we end our broadcast today. And that's found in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 14.

2 Corinthians 12, 14. Why don't you read it for us and then make comments on that? Now for the third time I'm ready to come to you and I will not be burdensome to you for I do not seek yours but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents but the parents for the children.

Say, do you have it? Parents should spend their lives laying up for the children. First of all, Paul is speaking in irony here. Secondly, he's not talking about parents laying up an inheritance for the children in the future.

He's talking about current needs. He's saying, I'm not receiving fellowship from you saints in Corinth. After all, I'm your father and you're my children in the faith.

And the parents take care of the children. The words lay up are a little bit confusing there, I confess. But the whole context has to do with Paul's current needs and how they were to be met.

And he would not take fellowship from the church in Corinth. Well, that's all the time that we have left for questions today. I hope that my questions have answered some of the very questions that you had in your minds today.

I want to thank you, Bill, for joining us for that question and answer period.

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