

Your Heavenly Treasure
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"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also" (*Matthew 6:19-21*).

These words from the Lord's Sermon on the Mount are a part of a reading that we had this morning. Basically these words ask us to look for spiritual things, to seek the kingdom of God, knowing that all other things will then be added to us.

We're taught not to worry, not to have anxiety about natural things and so not to lay up treasures on earth, but to lay up treasures in heaven.

What kind of treasures is the Lord speaking about when He says, "Lay not up treasures on earth"? You can have some idea about these treasures from the things that are attacking them. First there are treasures that moths will attack. Moths attack things that are made of cloth-beautiful garments, carpets, and things of that nature which many, many people hold very dear. Think only of Achan (*Joshua 7*), the man who stole that most precious garment from Jericho, and hid it under his tent. It cost him and his entire family their lives. Garments spiritually, however, stand for truths from the Lord's Word. So, spiritually, some of the treasures that we are to acquire are truths from the Lord's Word.

The next items that are attacked are things that rust. Now, "things that rust" according to the Greek can also mean a worm or things that make things rotten. Such things could be made of wood such as one's house. But let us stay with the translation and think of the rusting object. Rusting objects are things made of iron or metal. In the Lord's day they were probably valuable tools-tools that people used to achieve their goals in their business and so forth. These were indeed treasures. Tools, spiritually, are an extension of the hand, and an extension of the hand helps us to come to power or be of use. So tools can be likened to doctrine-things that we use to fashion our spiritual life.

So we have garments that are truths, and things that rust which are doctrines. Finally there are things that thieves break through and steal. In the New Kings James Version it says, "thieves break in" because today that's what we think about--thieves breaking into a person's house. But the word "through" is more descriptive of how thieves operated in the Lord's day. Homes then were made of mud and you could break through a wall into a storeroom, the precious room where treasures were kept.

What kinds of treasures would thieves be after?

We think immediately of those special treasures spiritually represented by those things that the Wise Men gave to the Lord--gold and frankincense and myrrh. These treasures stand for celestial good, spiritual good and natural good--all the kinds of goods that we do. So we see that the treasures described by the Lord that are to be laid up in heaven are garments or truths, tools or doctrines, and goods of all nature. These are the treasures that we must acquire in our life.

But how do we acquire these treasures? How do we begin to build a heavenly treasury? As with natural treasures, we sometimes inherit them or acquire them from our parents who gift us with treasures. We also earn them through our own hard work.

This dual way of acquiring treasures is true also of our spiritual treasury. We begin to acquire treasures that will be stored up deep within our understanding to be quickened later as we regenerate. We begin this process at birth. Our mother and father give us spiritual treasures. They are those treasures that are described in the Writings as remains--remains of good and remains of truth. Think of these remains as a spiritual treasury being built for you by your parents. As mothers nurse and soothe and cuddle their babies, celestial angels are with them, gifting them with remains of good. These remains are different with different people because mothers are different and they behave differently with each child.

So each of us has at birth the beginnings of a unique spiritual treasury. This treasury is further developed as we begin to talk and walk. We start to put forms on the things that we are feeling, and those forms are called remains of truth. Think of the states of holiness we experience as infants learning the Lord's Prayer or watching tableaux at Christmas time. The angels with us at such times store these states of holiness as remains. Again they are different with each of us. These states build as we go through school and acquire more and more truths both from parents and now teachers. This treasury of truth is coupled with that treasury of good as our spiritual treasury grows, as parents, teachers and others gift us with these lovely states.

Truth comes in various forms. We first acquire truths. As noted, parents and teachers give them to us. We call them "acquired truths." The Writings call these acquired truths scientific. They are like the garments that moths destroy. As we acquire these treasures, we eventually accept them as true. They become accepted knowledge, which the Writings call cognitions. Cognitions or accepted knowledge becomes a second phase of the growth of our intellect, of our understanding. As we progress we learn how to use those knowledges. We learn doctrine. We become intelligent. So as we take what are meant by garments and turn them and fashion them with tools into doctrine, we have what is called "procedural knowledge" or what the Writings call intelligence. We know how to process truths to form doctrine that will lead us in our life.

We are building our understanding. We are learning how to see the distinction between falsity and truth, and evil and good. We are becoming rational. The "first

rational" represented by Ishmael, sees the difference between truth and falsity, while a second rational, represented by Isaac, knows the difference between good and evil. We are now processing knowledge for ourselves and now building that spiritual treasury in our understanding with our own truths, our own acquired treasures.

But we're not there yet. Our treasury is not yet spiritual. They are still natural things that we have built in our understanding.

But as our understanding is building this treasury, we find that the basis of what will become our new will is being formed in that understanding. We are first gifted with these remains and as they become second nature to us they become our conscience.

We develop that conscience early in life and then in adolescence we rework it for ourselves, so that we come to a point in our life where we live for ourselves from what we have acquired and accepted as good that is hurt if we do not follow it.

So we are building progressively this spiritual treasury, this storehouse within the recesses of our understanding. But they are not yet living. They are still natural. All good and evil people can build this treasury. All good and evil people can have these knowledges, this wealth. They can also have the natural wealth that corresponds to them. Both the good and evil can be rich in natural treasures of both kinds: the things of understanding and the things of material possession. But there comes a time when a person enters the spiritual world. Then we will find out whether that person has used those riches, has used that treasury for good, or whether that person has abused that spiritual treasury, has used it solely for selfish purposes.

In our third lesson this morning we heard how these treasures can be blessings or curses. They can either be things that are joyful to us and remain with us in heaven, or they can be curses that will be taken from us in the first stages after death. They will be either blessings or curses, according as to how we have laid these treasures up. Have we left them as natural treasures serving natural loves, or have we taken them out of the natural and made them a part of our spiritual life?

The Writings talk about elevating these treasures from the external memory into the spirit. They are elevated as a person takes intelligence and goes the next step in this sequence of knowledges, learns to apply that knowledge to life for good. "Applied" knowledge is wisdom. People can become wise very early in life, but the more they learn how to apply truth to life for good, that is, the more they practice that application, the wiser they become. In fact, if they are doing this they are living the goods that are represented by those treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

These treasures-treasures of remains, treasures of truths, treasures of life-continue throughout our life in this world. There are those who may not have inherited many riches but they can acquire them for themselves. We're told that remains of good become a part of a person's life, particularly in worship. States of

worship give states of holiness, states that can quicken the soul. Indeed, we can continue, as we approach the Lord, to build celestial goods in our life. And as we enter into the life of charity, showing real love to the neighbor, showing that which is represented by frankincense as opposed to the celestial of gold or expressions of love to the Lord in worship, as we enter into that love of the neighbor, we make that frankincense or that spiritual good our own. Then as we do our duties in this world, as we enter into the natural affairs of this world, as we do natural good, we acquire that which is represented by myrrh, or natural good.

Let us remember that when the Lord asks us to lay up treasures in heaven, He is talking about how we are going to live our life. He is telling us that we must elevate the treasures, and make them a part of our spirit, so that when we enter into the spiritual world we will continue to enjoy those treasures of life in accordance with the uses we seek to perform. When we put uses first and treasures second; then we have the right order. Then we are truly blessed. Then we are indeed seeking the kingdom of God, knowing full well that the Lord will add to us all things for which we have genuine spiritual need.

And so He teaches: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Amen.

Lessons: Isaiah 45: 1-7, 11-13, Matthew 6: 19-34; Divine Providence 217 (portion)

Divine Providence 217. [4] [We illustrate a] SECOND [point], that when advancements and riches are blessings, they are spiritual and eternal, and when they are curses, they are temporary and transient: Advancements and riches in heaven are like those in the world, for governments exist there, and so positions of responsibility and functions, and also business dealings and so riches, since the inhabitants live in societies and groups. The whole of heaven is divided into two kingdoms, one of which is called the celestial kingdom, the other the spiritual kingdom, and each kingdom is divided into innumerable societies, larger and smaller, all of which are arranged according to differences in their love and consequent wisdom, as are also all the inhabitants within them. Societies in the celestial kingdom are arranged according to differences in their celestial love, which is love toward the Lord, and societies in the spiritual kingdom according to differences in their spiritual love, which is love for the neighbor.

Because there are these societies, and because all who are in them were people in the world and so retain in them the loves that they had in the world - with the difference that they are then spiritual people and that their actual positions and riches are in the spiritual kingdom spiritual and in the celestial kingdom celestial - therefore those who possess more love and wisdom than others enjoy advancements and riches over others, and are people for whom advancements and riches were blessings in the world.

[5] It can be seen from this what spiritual advancements and riches are, that they are

adjuncts of the work and not of the person. The person who enjoys high position there indeed lives in magnificence and glory, as kings do on earth; but still they do not regard the position itself as anything, but instead the useful services in whose administration and performance they are engaged. They accept honors indeed, each the honors attached to his position, but they themselves attribute these not to themselves but to the uses they serve. And because all useful endeavors spring from the Lord, they attribute them to the Lord from whom they spring.

Of such a character, then, are spiritual advancements and riches, which are eternal.

[6] But the case is otherwise with people for whom advancements and riches in the world were curses. Because they attributed these to their own doing and not to the uses they served, and because they did not wish to be governed by the useful services but wished themselves to govern the services, which they regarded as useful to the extent that the services served to promote their honor and glory, therefore they are in hell and are lowly indentured servants there, held in contempt and living in misery. Consequently, because these advancements and riches perish, we call them temporary and transient.

Of these two kinds of people the Lord teaches the following:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, . . . your heart (is) also. (*Matthew 6:19-21*)