

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: HEARTS AND TREASURES****HEARTS AND TREASURES - posted by pastorfrin, on: 2008/6/30 20:23**

HEARTS AND TREASURES

Alexander Maclaren

‘For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’—MATT. vi. 21.

‘Your treasure’ is probably not the same as your neighbour’s. It is yours, whether you possess it or not, because you love it. For what our Lord means here by ‘treasure’ is not merely money, or material good, but whatever each man thinks best, that which he most eagerly strives to attain, that which he most dreads to lose, that which, if he has, he thinks he will be blessed, that which, if he has it not, he knows he is discontented.

Now, if that is the meaning of ‘treasure,’ then this great saying of our text is, as a matter of course, true. For what in each case makes the treasure is precisely the going out of the heart to grapple it, and it is just because the heart is there that a thing is the treasure.

Now, I need not do more than remind you, I suppose, that in Scripture ‘heart’ means a great deal more than it does in our modern usage, for we employ it as an expression for the affections, whereas the Bible takes it as including the whole inner man. For instance, we read, ‘As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he’; and of ‘the thoughts and intents of the heart.’ So then the affections, as with us, but also thoughts, purposes, volitions, are all included in the word; and as one passage of Scripture says, ‘Out of it are the issues of life.’ It is the central reservoir, the central personality, the indivisible unit of the thinking, willing, feeling, loving person which I call ‘myself.’ So what Christ says is that where a man’s treasure lies, not merely his affections will twine round it, but his whole self will be, as it were, implicated and intertwined with it, so as that what befalls it will befall him.

Now, further, notice that this saying, so obviously true, is introduced by a ‘for,’ and that it is the broad basis on which rest the obligation and the wisdom of the double counsel which has preceded, on the one hand, the warning against choosing perishable and uncertain good for our treasure, and mixing ourselves up with that, and on the other the loving counsel to choose for ourselves the wealth which is perpetual, unperishable, and certain.

So I think we may look at these words from a threefold point of view, and see in them a mirror that will show us ourselves, a dissuasive and a persuasive. Let us take these three aspects.

I. Here, then, is a mirror that a man may hold up before himself, and find out something about himself by it.

For, like other general statements of the same sort, you can turn this saying round about, and take it the other way, and not only say, as the text says, ‘where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,’ but, ‘where your heart is, there is your treasure.’ A man’s real god is the thing that he counts best, and for which he works most earnestly, and which, as I said, he most longs to have, and trembles to think he will lose. That is his god, and his treasure, whatever his professions may be. Where your heart is, there is your treasure.

Now, of course, for the larger part of the lives of all of us, there are certain lines laid down by our circumstances, our trades, our various duties, on which the train of our thoughts and efforts must run. But the question is, When I am set free from the constraint of my daily avocations and pressing duties, and am at liberty to go as I like, where do I go? When the weight is taken off the sapling in the nursery garden, which has been hung on it to turn it into a weeping-tree, its elastic stem springs to the erect position. Where do I spring to when the weights are taken off? The mother bird will hover over her nest. Where her treasure is, there is her maternal instinct. The needle follows the drawing of the pole-star; the sunflower turns to the sun. ‘Being let go, they went to their own company.’ Where do you go? The reins laid upon the horse’s neck, it will trot straight home to its stable; ‘the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,’ and our instincts are not less sure than theirs. You go ‘home’ when you are left to yourselves; where do you go?

We call ourselves Christians. If our treasure is in Christ, our hearts will turn to Him. And what does that mean? ‘Hearts,

‘as I said, mean thoughts. Now, can you and I say, ‘In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul’? Does there come stealing into my mind often and often the blessed contemplation of my wealth in Jesus Christ? The river of thought brings down, in its continual flow, much mire and sand. Does it bring any gold? Do I think about Christ, and find it to be my refreshment to do so? An old mystic said, ‘If I can tell how often I have thought of God today, I have not thought of Him often enough.’ ‘Where your treasure is, there will your thoughts be also.’

The heart means love. Where do my affections turn when I am set free? The heart means the will. Is my will all saturated with, and so made pliant by, the will and commandment of Jesus Christ? If He is my treasure, then thoughts, affection, obedience will all turn to Him, and the current of my being, whatever may be the surface-ripple—ay, or the surface-storm—will be ever sliding surely, though it may be silently, towards Himself. Ah! brethren, if we would be honest with ourselves and look into this mirror, we should have cause to be ashamed, some of us, of our very profession of being Christians, and all of us to feel that we have far too much heaped up for ourselves other treasures and forgotten our true wealth, and we should all have to pray, ‘Unite my heart to fear Thy name.’ The Assyrians had a superstition that a demon, if he saw his own reflection in a mirror, would fly. I think if some of us professing Christians saw ourselves, as the looking-glass of my text might give us to see ourselves, we should shudderingly depart from that self, and seek to have a better self formed within us. ‘Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’

Continued:

Re: HEARTS AND TREASURES - posted by pastorfrin, on: 2008/7/1 18:31

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‘For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’—MATT. vi. 21.

II. Now let me ask you to look at this saying, in the connection in which our Lord adduced it, as being a dissuasive.

He applies it to both branches of His previous advice. He had just said, ‘Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.’ These are very primitive methods of depriving men of their treasures, arguing a comparatively simple state of society. The moth is that which destroys wealth in garments, which was a great part of ancient Eastern wealth. Rust rather means corrosion, or corruption, and applies to the other great kind of primitive wealth, in food and the stores of the harvest. And the thieves who dig through the mud walls of the house, and carry away the owners’ little hoard of gold and silver, point also to a primitive condition of society. But whatever may be the special force of these different words, they suggest to us this, that all that is here has its own particular and special enemy which wars against its permanence. There are bacteria of all sorts, every vegetable has its own kind. Every growth has to fear the gnawing of some foe. And so every treasure that I can gather into my heart, excepting one, is threatened by some kind of danger.

No man can have lived as long in a great commercial community, as some of us have done, without knowing that there are a great many besides professional and so-called thieves in it, that take away the gold and silver. How many instances I can look back upon, of lords of the exchange and magnates of trade, who carved their names, as they thought, in imperishable marble on the doors of their warehouses, and then became bankrupt and fugitive, and were lost sight of. We all know the uncertainty of riches.

And are the other kinds of treasure that we cleave to more reliable? Have they not their moths and their rusts? Is it pleasure? Well, I say nothing about the diseases that fill the bones of many a young man who flings himself into dissipation; but I remind you of just this one thing, that all that pleasure tends to become flat, stale, and unprofitable. That which the poet said of his own class, that it ‘begins in gladness, and thereof cometh in the end despondency and madness,’ is true of every delight of sense, ay! and of more than sense, of taste and of intellect. As the Book of Proverbs has it, ‘the end of that mirth is heaviness.’

Brethren, the moth and the rust claim as their prey all treasures except one. Is it love-pure, blessed, soul-filling, soul-resting as it is? Yes, and on a hundred walls in any city there hangs, and in a thousand hearts there hangs, that great picture

where the feeble form of Love is trying to repel from entrance into the rose-covered portal of the home the inevitable and mighty shrouded form of Death. Is it culture? 'Whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away.' The last illuminator and teacher, which is Death, antiquates and brushes aside, as of no use in the new conditions, most of the knowledge which men, wisely in a measure, but foolishly if exclusively, have sought to acquire for themselves here below.

And when the moth and the rust come, and the separating, bony fingers of the skeleton Death filch away at last your treasure, what about you who are wrapped up with it, implicated in it; so grown into it, and it into you, that to wrench you from it opens your veins, and you bleed to death? There is a pathetic inscription in one of the rural churches of this country, in which two parents record the death of their only child, and add, 'All our hopes were in this frail bark, and the shipwreck is total.' I have heard of a man that might have been saved from a foundering ship, but he lashed his money-bags round him, and he sank along with them. 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,' pierced by all the wounds, gnawed by all the moths, rotted by all the corruption that affects it, and when the thief, the last great thief of all, comes, you will only have to say, 'They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?' And the answer out of the waste places of an echoing universe will be, 'Nothing! Nothing!'

III. Now, lastly, let me show you the persuasive in my text.

'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,' therefore, says Christ, 'lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.' If my treasure is in heaven it is secure. And oh! brethren, we need for our blessedness, we need for our rest, we need for our peace and joy, to know that the thing which we count best shall never be taken away from us, and we cannot have that certainty in regard to any treasure except the treasure that is in God. All outward things which we say we possess are incompletely possessed, because they remain outside us. However intertwined with them, we are separate from them, and we are just so much intertwined with them that the separation from them is agony, even if it is not death. What we need is to be so incorporated with, and infused into, what is our treasure, that we are quite sure that as long as we last it will last, and that nothing can rend it from us. 'I bear all my goods with me,' said the old heathen. We should be able to say more than that. I carry all my good in me, because my good is God, who is in the heavens, and though in the heavens, dwells in the hearts that love Him. Then in all changes, 'life, or death, or things present or things to come, height or depth, or any other creature,' we can afford to smile on, and say: 'You cannot take my wealth from me, for I am in God, and God is in me.'

Further, if our hearts are in heaven, then heaven will be in our hearts, and here we shall know the joy and the peace that come from 'sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,' even whilst on earth. There is no blessedness, no stable repose, no victorious independence of the buffets and blows of life, except this, that my heart is lifted above them all, and, I was going to say, is inhaled and sucked into the life of Jesus Christ. Then if my heart is where my treasure is, and He is my treasure, 'my life is hid with Christ in God.' If my heart is in heaven, heaven is in my heart.

Further, my text is a promise as well as a statement of a present fact. Where your treasure now is there will your whole self one day be. A man who has by God's grace, through faith and love and the wise use of things temporal, chosen God his chief good, and possessed in some degree the good which he has chosen, even Jesus Christ in his heart, that man bears in himself the pledge and the foretaste of eternal life. So the old psalmist found out, who lived in a time when that future world was shrouded in far thicker clouds of darkness than it is to us, for when he had risen to the height of saying, 'My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever,' he immediately sprang to this assurance—an assurance of faith before it was a fact certified by Revelation—'Thou wilt guide me by Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.' The possession of Christ for our treasure, which possession always follows on our estimating Him as such, and desiring to have Him, that possession bears in its bosom the germ of the assurance that, whatever befalls my physical life, I shall not be less immortal than my treasure, and that where my heart to-day, by aspiration and desire and faith and love, has built its nest, thither I shall follow in His own time. They that have laid up treasure in heaven will at last be brought to the enjoyment of the treasure that they have laid up, and to the possession of 'the inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.'

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