

Describe briefly resurrection narrative from Matt 28  
They were seeking the living among the dead... Their hearts were dull  
the yea?

I once saw a cartoon where a man was being mugged  
and he screamed in fear to the robber, "Take my life but  
not my money." I think there is a spiritual lesson that  
can teach us. Our money, our talents, our status, our  
families can become more important to us than anything  
else. The popularity and success of your son or daughter  
may be more important to you than his or her salvation.  
So when the robber, who is in reality ~~the devil~~ the  
Prince of Darkness, comes to take our treasures we are  
more ready and willing to forfeit the eternal life the  
Risen Christ offers to us and our loved ones than we are  
willing to forfeit our status, or the status and popularity  
of those we love. We would rather have our sons and daugh-  
ters enjoy popularity and status on this earth that may  
damn them than risk ridicule or death for the kingdom of  
heaven.

Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures  
on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves  
break in and steal." If Christ is risen indeed, if our  
celebration of his resurrection this morning has any mean-  
ing at all for you then the word of Christ is authoritative.  
What he commands, we will obey. What he teaches, we will  
believe. And if we're going to believe and obey what he

says, we will, first, have to understand what he says. We can't obey a command if we don't understand it.

What, then, did Jesus mean when he spoke of earthly things and treasures on earth. When Jesus refers to "earth" he is not talking about the planet between Venus and Mars. He's not talking about the dirt under our finger-nails. He is referring to everything that can be reduced to earth, air, fire, and water. He is talking about everything that we can only see, touch, taste, and enjoy in this present world, and at the present moment.

For some of us it is really hard to believe or find any value in any quality of life that goes beyond the present, physical, material world. We want our pleasures and treasures here and now. We don't want to lay-a-way anything; especially <sup>for</sup> anything so speculative as heaven. So, in short, our Lord is talking about all the things, persons, and pleasures of this world when he talks of earthly things.

And our Lord's command is blunt and bold with regard to these earthly things. He states the command negatively then he states it positively. Negatively, ~~then~~, he says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal."

What does he mean by this? First of all we must avoid interpreting this only with respect to money. A lot of people have done that, especially poor people. They interpret this passage as if Jesus had only rich people in mind. He had them in mind, of course, but he had all other people in mind as well. He doesn't say, "Do not lay up for yourselves money", but, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures". Treasures have to do with far more than money. It includes money but it includes everything else we treasure as well. It means something much more important.

We all have treasures in some shape or form. It may not be money. It may be books or furniture or antiques. Poor people need to heed what Jesus says just as much as the rich. Our treasure may be a husband, wife or children. It may be some gift or family heir-loom which has little worth or monetary value but we treasure it. To some people there treasure is their house or land. No matter what it is, or how small it is, if it is everything to you, that is your treasure. Treasures on earth are not only money, but love of popularity, the love of position, the love of status. It may even be your intelligence or your beauty or your sex-appeal. In short, it is everything which

will one day die, rot, be lost, fade away, and rust. Treasures on earth never last. Your children grow up. Your husband or wife will die. Your fortune will go to someone else. This is what Jesus means by "treasures on earth."

Now how do people lay up for themselves treasures on earth? It may mean hoarding your money in rare cases. Every once in a while I read in the paper about some poor person who has lived in poverty, in some slum house, malnourished, bare and dirty, who has died. And then some-  
*This poor person had*  
 one discovers<sup>a</sup> a hoard of money, thousands of dollars, or stocks worth, perhaps, millions of dollars.

But what Jesus says here surely has a wider and more profound reference. Our Lord's injunction means avoiding anything that centers on this world only. It applies to people who may not have money and who may not even be interested in money and possessions. These people can still be thoroughly worldly and earth-bound. A person can lay up treasures on earth by joining the right organizations and clubs where he will become well known and highly thought of. Status seekers are people who are storing up for themselves treasures on earth.

Religious people can lay up for themselves treasures



on earth just as easily as non-churched people. You may have a worldly desire for a church office or <sup>proud</sup> ~~an inordinate~~ desire for power <sup>and to control everything</sup> within the church. Ministers can be very adept at storing up earthly treasures. And a lot of time they are <sup>aided</sup> in this by their congregation which sincerely loves <sup>them</sup> ~~him~~. <sup>There have been</sup> ~~a few~~ ministers who have been ruined by their congregations. <sup>They</sup> ~~he~~ tends almost unconsciously to be controlled by the desire to have ~~this~~ people's good opinion and praise, and the moment that happens a man is laying up treasures on earth. His chief concern then becomes to <sup>say and do things for which he will be praised and com-</sup> ~~increase numbers and money~~ <sup>mented</sup> at the cost of watering down the Gospel and the Christian faith so as not to offend anyone.

But let's look at what Jesus said more positively now.

He stated his command both negatively and positively. Positively he says, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal."

Does this mean that we can <sup>pay</sup> ~~earn~~ our <sup>way into heaven?</sup> ~~salvation~~ Some people think that if they give so much money to the church they will be storing up treasures in heaven. God will overlook their sins because of all the money they give, <sup>even though they don't care for the fellowship of God's people.</sup> and he will let them into heaven when they die. In Pitts-

burgh there is a huge Presbyterian Church near the campus  
of Pittsburgh seminary. It's the East Liberty Presbyterian  
 church. It's nick-name is "Mellon's fire-escape". Andrew  
 Mellon gave millions and millions of dollars to build this  
 church and gave it an endowment of something like fifty  
 million dollars. No one has to give anything to meet the  
 budget. The church doesn't even need members. And, as I  
 understand, it's nearly empty on Sunday morning. "Mellon's  
 fire-escape". It got it's nick-name because so many people  
 were sure that Andrew Mellon thought this treasure would  
 keep him out of hell and get him into heaven.

Some people may not have money to give but they think  
think they will store up treasures in heaven by trying  
as they should, of course  
real hard to be good. They will try to live according to  
in order to earn their way to heaven.  
 the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments. People  
 who think this way and are sincere end up in one of two  
 ways. They either become terribly self-righteous prudes  
 who have fooled themselves into thinking they have <sup>really</sup> met  
 all of God's demands. Or else they fall into absolute  
They cannot repay their debt of sin.  
 despair when they realise "Not the labors of my hands can  
 fulfil thy law's commands."

Jesus does not teach here that we can earn our salva-  
tion; that we can carefully lay up for ourselves enough  
 good works to get us into heaven. No. The man or woman

who lays up for himself or herself treasures in heaven is already saved in the only way anyone is saved, through the death of Christ for their sins upon the cross received by faith. <sup>P</sup> The saved man or woman or young person has a new heart and new treasures. Paul wrote, if any man be in Christ he is a new creation; old things are passed away and behold, all things are become new." A new creation and new treasures. ~~■~~ In the prophet Jeremiah we read this promise from God, "I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts;" And again in the prophet Ezekiel we read, "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." God gives to those he saves a new heart which finds its treasures, not on earth, but in heaven.

Robert Burns, the Scottish poet, wrote these famous lines a <sup>two</sup> couple hundred years ago,

My heart's in the highlands, my heart is not here,  
My heart's in the highlands, a' chasing the deer.

He wrote that because he was <sup>an adopted son of the highlands living in the lowlands.</sup> ~~a highlander.~~ A child

of God knows that his home is in heaven and not on earth.

His heart is also in the highlands <sup>of heaven</sup>! That's his native country. That's where his treasures are <sup>stored.</sup> ~~kept up.~~ Paul writes, "If then we have been raised to new life with Christ, Then seek the things which are above; where Christ is."



And again he writes, God, who is rich in mercy, on his kindness with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our sins, made us alive together with Christ and raised us up with him and made us sit with him in the heavenly places. "Has he made you alive? Has he raised you up?"

But how do we actually do this in practice? How can

we be more diligent in our efforts to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Well, here is <sup>where</sup> ~~where~~ the fact of the resurrection of Christ should help us. If we really believe he has been raised from the dead and sits on the right hand of his father in heaven, and if we love him with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, as he has commanded us, then our hearts <sup>will</sup> ~~should~~ naturally be there with him. He will be our priceless treasure.

I think ~~so~~ if we take an honest look ourselves, at our lives, at our possessions, at our age and health we know that all our earthly treasures will be lost one day.

Not only ours <sup>also the treasures of</sup> ~~but~~ those we love. <sup>The</sup> ~~The~~ great genius becomes senile. <sup>The</sup> ~~The~~ high-school home-coming queen grows old and wrinkled. <sup>The great athlete grows old and has a heart-attack</sup> We don't like to think about it but all whom we love will die. All our earthly treasures will be lost, stolen, or buried in a grave.

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past;  
Only what's done for Christ will last."

We need to get it firmly in our heads that if we <sup>have been</sup> ~~are~~ <sup>raised with</sup> ~~to new life~~ Christ ~~then~~ we are pilgrims. This world is not our home..

That is what enable the saints to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven. God called Abraham to leave his native land and he responded. He told Moses to leave the



courts of Pharaoh to wander in the desert with the Israelites for forty years. What made Abraham ready to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac? What made all these people prepared to do the things they did? It was because they desired "a better country, that is, an heavenly" in the words of the book of Hebrews.

If we really love our sons and daughters your chief concern will be for their salvation, that they love Christ, that they have treasure in heaven, that they value him above everything else. If your main concern is for their popularity, their status, their grades, their jobs and affluence then you are doing them a damnable dis-service. ~~no lasting good.~~ You're merely storing up your treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy them.

And if you really love yourself the way God wants you to love yourself you will be more concerned about the things that are going to last forever and not for the things which you will have for only a couple more years. It's not selfish to store up treasures in heaven. It's merely obedience. Jesus commands us to do this.

And so I <sup>draw near the end of</sup> ~~conclude~~ this sermon with a couple questions. Where is your heart on this Easter morning? Do you really believe in your hearts that Christ is risen? Your heart is like the needle of a compass which always points North.

Your heart always points to where your treasure is.

Where is your heart now? What have you been thinking about for the last twenty minutes or so? Where has your heart been?

Where was your heart when we sang our opening hymn?

Where was your heart when we prayed the confession of sin? Where was it when I was reading the Scripture Lesson? Was your heart in your home thinking about dinner or on the golf course on tennis courts? Was your heart <sup>Or was it Thinking about your new Easter pinny?</sup> in your easter basket filled with candy? And where is

your heart in relationship to Christ's church? Is your <sup>merely</sup> great concern<sup>^</sup> that the doors of this building be painted and the bell rung; that there is a ~~large~~ balance in the checking account and that no <sup>Church-member</sup> ~~one~~ is ever offended by the demands of Christ? If it is then your heart is taken up with earthly things. What difference does it really make if the doors are unpainted, the bell unring, the financial reserves heaped up, if men and women and children are not being confronted with the claims of the Risen Christ; If men and women and children are not being saved? If their hearts are not being pointed to Jesus Christ as their priceless treasure?

And, finally, where will your heart be tomorrow, or

a year from now, or ten thousand years from now? Will it  
be rotting in decay with all your earthly treasures, or  
will it be with the Risen Christ in heaven?

AMEN