

Year 3, NT Lesson 6:

God's People Treasure Him

Lesson Highlights:

- ✓ **Scripture References:** Matthew 6:19-24; 13:44-46
- ✓ **Teaching Point:** God's people treasure Him above everything else.
- ✓ **Unit Memory Verse:** *Matthew 6:21* – For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Lesson

Overview

It's a hard lesson. Not because we have a hard time figuring out what Jesus meant, but because it goes against everything the world, Satan and our flesh would have us believe. You can't serve both God and money. We will always end up hating God when we do. The way we earn money and what we spend it on tells everyone...even strangers at the store...what we think about God and His kingdom. If we give up a lot for His kingdom, then it must be worth a lot. And if we won't give up anything for it, then everyone knows He's worth almost nothing. And why would they want something worthless? Pray with us that our kids begin turning their lives into living parables about our Savior's worth.

Story

Well, we're continuing in the book of **Matthew** this week...and will be until after Easter. That's because this book...like the books of **Mark, Luke and John**...tells us about Jesus. We learn about some of the details of His life like who His earthly parents are and about some of the things He did. But Matthew thought that something else was more important than that stuff. He wanted us to know what Jesus said. That's because Matthew knew that Jesus wasn't just some guy who did some cool things. Jesus came to start the most amazing thing of all...God's kingdom on earth. Jesus came to start gathering God's people. He told us how we can be a part of it...and what it's like in it. But He also told us some things about it that can be a little hard for us. That's because all of those things are exactly opposite of what we want to hear.

But Jesus came to tell us that if we want to be a part of His kingdom...if we want to know this amazing God...if we want to spend eternity with Him...if we want everything that is really good and powerful and strong...then we have to be a different kind of people. We have to be people who follow right after our Savior, Jesus Christ. When we watch His life and listen to Him, we learn about what ours is supposed to be like. We've talked about how we have to be people who pray because it shows that we don't know what we need. God does. We don't know the way to go. God does. We can't do this on our own. God has to help us. And last week we talked about the fact that we have to be people who forgive. And He means it. We **HAVE** to be people who forgive others... because we can't turn to God and beg Him to forgive us over and over for all of the sins we do...and then

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turn to someone else who has hurt us and tell them that we won't forgive them. It's hard to do sometimes because we are so hurt and angry. God's not saying that we should just "get over it." But He is telling us the truth. We must forgive.

Well, today Jesus is going to talk about another part of our lives that is also really, really important. Money...and how we spend it...and what we buy...and what we're willing to give up for Jesus. Let me start off by showing it to you like this. Let's say I told you that I hid a penny somewhere in this room...and whoever finds it gets a prize! Would you go search for it? (*see what they say*) How long would you look? Well, that kind of depends on what kind of prize, right? What if I said, "If you find it, you get to keep it!" Would you search all day for it? (*probably not*) No. We find pennies everywhere, don't we? People drop them and don't even bother to pick them up. But what if I said that if you find the penny you win a flat screen TV and a Wii? (*or other prize you think your kids would like*) Would you look then? (*I bet so*) Sure! I'd probably want to race you, too! We would do a lot if we really wanted that prize. Well, that's exactly what Jesus was trying to teach His disciples...and us. Let's open up our Bibles to **Matthew 6** and look at **vs. 19-21**.

Okay. In these verses Jesus gives us two commands...one is a "do not" and one is a "do this". What's the very first one? Don't...what? (*store up treasures on earth*) What do you think that means? (*see what they say*) Well, yeah...it basically means that we're not supposed to worry about how much "stuff" we have here. We're not supposed to spend all of our time trying to get the biggest and the best and the newest things. Why not? What did Jesus say would happen to all of that stuff? (*bugs eat it...things rust and wear out...people steal things from you*) In other words, it doesn't last, right? Everything we buy today turns into tomorrow's garbage, doesn't it? We don't keep things very long. They just don't last. So, instead we're supposed to store up treasure...where? (*in heaven*) Huh. Now, that's kind of cool to think about. Jesus is saying that what happens here on earth can cause something pretty amazing to happen in heaven...before we even get there! And what did Jesus say would happen to that stuff? (*nothing...bugs can't touch it...it won't wear out...no one can take it*) Wow! It lasts forever! That's pretty amazing. But how do you do that? Let's keep reading and we'll find out soon. Look at **vs. 24**.

Jesus gives us a picture of something...masters and servants. And He says that we have a choice: we can serve God or we can serve...what? (*money*) But we can't serve both because what will happen? (*love one and hate the other*) Yep. That's how God designed His world. If we love money and spend our lives wanting more of it and all the stuff it can get us...then Jesus says we're slaves to it. And because we are, we'll end up hating God. Why? Because He won't be bought. You can't come to Him like a rich man who wants to buy your way into heaven. He has to be ALL you want...more than anything else. He's worth everything. And when we stop chasing money and all of the stuff, we show that not only to God, but to our friends and our family and even strangers. They'll watch us and think, "What's wrong with her? Why doesn't she want to go get everything she can? Why is she spending time with God when she could be shopping and eating and playing like us? What's so special about God?" Jesus knew that this might be hard for His disciples...and us...to understand. So, He talked about it with them again, but this time He told it to them in two REALLY short stories. Let's read **Matthew 13:44-46**.

Two quick stories that say the same thing...the same thing Jesus was teaching earlier. In the first one, there's a man who is in another person's field. Maybe he's just walking along in it and sees something off to the side...something sparkly...gold! When he goes over to it, he starts digging around it...and the more he digs, the more there is! There's more there than he's ever seen anywhere! He soon realizes that he's found something he never could have dreamed of...more treasure than anyone else has. He'll be the richest man in the world...except...guess what? It's not his treasure because it's not his field. Whatever is found on this land belongs to the person who owns the land.

What should he do? Well, he knows exactly what to do. He covers up that treasure and goes back into town and starts selling everything he has. Everything! He sells his house, his cart, his animals, his clothes, his furniture, his food, his rugs...everything! And can you imagine what everyone around him thought as he did this? They would have thought he was crazy! When other people sell all they have it's because they don't have enough money for food or something. They're usually sad or angry or frustrated, but not this guy. Every time he sells something, he laughs out loud and seems happier and happier. That's because they don't understand. They have no idea that he's losing everything...so that he can have even more! He gives it all up, buys that field and then guess what? Now, he has land and a treasure! That's a pretty good trade, right?

The other story told the same kind of story. There was a man who bought and sold pearls. What are those? (*round, white jewel that grow in oysters...you may have to explain what that is*) Women wear them as jewelry, right? Well, most are pretty small. But this merchant searches and searches until he finds one that is different than every other pearl he's ever seen. He knows right away that this pearl is better than every other pearl. If he can have this, he'll have a greater treasure than anyone else! So, you know what he does? (*sells everything to buy it*) Right! And do you think he was sad about that? (*no*) No way! He was thrilled to do it! He wasn't giving up everything to beg on the streets. He was giving up just stuff...junk that he had...so that he could buy it all!

Jesus said right at the beginning of these two stories: **The kingdom of heaven is like...** And He meant it. This is what we have to remember when we think of all that Jesus is talking about when it comes to money and the stuff it can buy. He is telling us exactly what we think He is. Don't spend your life worrying about money. Don't spend all of your time focused on getting more and more and more. Don't try with all your might just to be rich so you can do whatever you want. Give that up...for the kingdom of heaven. But that makes us feel like Jesus doesn't care about us and just wants us to sit around with nothing. No! Jesus IS asking us to give up our stuff for Him...to love Him and treasure Him more than anything else on earth...but not so that we can just be poor forever. He's telling us that the kingdom of heaven makes all this earthly stuff look like junk in comparison! Sure, we have to be different than the world and use money differently and spend our time differently...but when we do, we get the treasure! It's worth it. It's worth everything...because He's worth everything.

The way we spend our money...and our time...and use our stuff...tells everyone whether or not this is true in us. When we use it the way He tells us then they start to see that we

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really mean it...Jesus is worth more than everything the world can give us. And when we spend it just like everyone else...and worry about it like everyone else...and work so hard just to get more of it like everyone else...then we show them that no matter what our words may say, we really don't think Jesus is much of a treasure. He's just something that's good to add on to our lives. Well, Jesus will not allow anyone into the kingdom who thinks like that. Those who belong to Him show it by loving Him more than anything else on earth...more than everything on earth combined. Pray with me that God would give us hearts like that...hearts that believe that Jesus is the highest treasure we could ever have.

Prayer Time

Before you pray, allow the kids time to share with you things that are happening in their lives. Be sure you write these down with their names for you to pray for as the week goes along. Ask individuals about how things went with the things they mentioned the previous week. Older kids can be asked if they will pray for another who mentions something. As the leader, begin by opening in prayer and thanking God for this lesson:

- Praise Jesus for giving us a kingdom far greater than anything we can have here.
- Ask God to give us hearts that are free from the love of money so that we can treasure His Son, Jesus, above all other things.

Pray for any specific requests named either by praying yourself or by opening it up to those who said they would pray.

Suggested Follow-up Activities

Teachers are free to choose the activities that they feel are best for their group. The idea is that as the children work and play, remind them of the truths they just learned.

Scripture Memory: Figure out your reward system for memorizing the Scriptures provided in this section. Give the children several opportunities to tell it to you in class. Play a memory game with the kids if you have time.

Craft: Hidden Treasure – Remind the kids that today we learned that God's people have to treasure Him above everything else. When we earn money, spend it and use our things in a way that honors Him, other people will see that He is the highest treasure we could ever have and is worth everything we have.

Give each child a copy of the pictures and have them color those as they'd like. Provide scissors and have them carefully cut along the dotted lines of the field picture. Next, provide them with either a piece of construction paper or cardstock and have them glue their field picture to it being careful to only put glue along the edges. They will then raise up their flap and glue the treasure chest below it.

Materials: craft pages; crayons or markers; scissors; cardstock or construction paper; stick glue

Craft: Treasures and Pearls – Remind the kids that today we learned that God’s people have to treasure Him above everything else. When we earn money, spend it and use our things in a way that honors Him, other people will see that He is the highest treasure we could ever have and is worth everything we have.

Give each child a shell and a small, plastic pearl. Have them glue the pearl into the middle of the shell.

Next, give them a small, clear container and allow them to put a few of the plastic gold coins inside. They can then take it over to a tub filled with dirt and put some dirt on top of the coins. If you’d like, they can then seal the lid on by putting glue around the edges before closing. (Alternately, small Ziplocs can be used.) They can then carefully shake around the dirt inside until they can find all of their coins.

Materials: sea shells; plastic pearls; liquid glue; small, clear containers with lids or snack sized Ziploc baggies; small, plastic gold coins; dirt; large tub; plastic spoons

Activity: What’s It Worth? – Remind the kids that today we learned that God’s people have to treasure Him above everything else. When we earn money, spend it and use our things in a way that honors Him, other people will see that He is the highest treasure we could ever have and is worth everything we have.

Would someone volunteer to help me? (*pick someone and have them stand near you*) I’m going to give you a dollar. You can keep it and take it home with you. Is that pretty cool? How many of you wish that you had one, too? (*see what the other kids say*) Yeah. We love money. We love what it can buy us, right? Well, what if I told you that I was willing to make you a trade? Let’s see what you think. (*pull out the smallest piece of candy*) Here you go. Let’s trade. (*reach for the dollar...he’ll probably say no*) No? You won’t trade it for this? Why not? (*see what he says*) So, it’s not worth it, right? That dollar means more to you than this piece of candy. What about two of those? (*pull out one more*) Will you trade now? (*probably not*) Hmm... okay what if I added this? (*pull out the single serving bag of candy*) Will you trade me now? (*see what he says...if he says no, talk about the fact that he still values the dollar more than that much candy and pull out the largest bag and see what he says...if you can finally get him to say yes, move on...if he refuses still, ask one of the other kids if they would have traded and move on...offer to let him keep the dollar or the individual candies and share the other candy with your class later*)

So, that dollar mattered a LOT to you. You wouldn’t trade it again and again...until finally we found something that mattered more. Jesus wanted us to understand that His kingdom was like this. We’re supposed to think of it like the best possible things we can get...so good that we’d be willing to sell anything to get it.

Materials: small, individually wrapped pieces of candy about the size of Hershey’s Kisses; an individual serving bag of candy like M&Ms; a large bag of individually wrapped candies; a bag to hold them all that the kids can’t see through