

**The Sermon on the Mount**  
**Session V**  
**A Christian's Loyalty & Trust**  
**Matthew 6:19-34**

We are rapidly moving now through our study. In this session we are going to conclude the sixth chapter of Matthew, verses 19-34. As we open this section I want to take a moment and draw us back to how this fits in with what we have just previously studied. The great thing about our structured studies is that they allow us to really focus in on a text and over the course of time, methodically explore God's message to us, verse by verse.

The problem with these more detailed studies is that we can often lose perspective on how the broader message fits together from week to week. For example, it is easy to see that Jesus shifted gears in chapter five when he concluded the Beatitudes and moved into the Salt & Light metaphors. Yet in the larger picture we should see that the personal characteristics Christ laid out in the Beatitudes are vital resources for any believer's public witness, which is in view in the Salt & Light metaphors.

In this session we are going to look at Matthew 6:19-34. We will divide this larger passage into two primary sections. We will further subdivide the first section into the three metaphors presented. However, we cannot lose perspective of how this passage fits into Jesus' larger message!!

In the previous session, v.1-18, Jesus' heart-focus was on the personal motivation of our acts of worship. Effectively we saw Christ speaking to how we are to conduct our private worship of God. In this session, v.19-34, we are going to hear Christ speak about how he expects his followers to conduct their lives in the world, in effect our public lives. AS we will see, our public lives are to be characterized by a complete and total dependence upon God. Our proper, godly motivation for private worship now moves into the public realm of how we are to live within this larger community of the world.<sup>1</sup>

In making his point, Jesus is going to begin by using a series of three metaphors which demonstrate the proper heart-focus we are to have. The message of these metaphors, v.19-24, will serve as the basis for the message of total trust, in the second half of this session which is seen in v.25-34.<sup>2</sup>

We will begin with a reading of all three metaphors in v.19-24 together with the opening phrase of v.25 so we can better see the form and structure Jesus used. So, as we read this larger passage, be on the look-out for form and structure points. Just as before, these will help us in our effort to truly understand the message of Jesus.

**Matthew 6:19-25(a):** (remember to look for form and structure as we read)

## Form & Structure:

*What structure patterns do you see in this large passage? Do you see a pattern to v.19-24?? Can you identify, from the opening of v.25, why it is said to build upon the foundation of v.19-24??*

1. First, notice that Jesus is going to use metaphors to illustrate the importance of living every day in complete and total dependence upon God. As he discusses these metaphors, he uses an **assertion & contrast** pattern in v.19-24 to address **three sets of "twos"**:
  - A. two treasures
  - B. two bodily conditions
  - C. two masters.
2. Notice in v.25(a) that Jesus employs his now familiar pattern of speaking in the **1<sup>st</sup> person, singular** to demonstrate his **authority!** I love to see the various translations render certain texts. Here is just a sampling of a few popular evangelical translations:
  - A. NIV & ESV: *"Therefore I tell you,,,"*
  - B. NASB: *"For this reason I say to you,,,"*
  - C. HCSB: *"This is why I tell you,,,"*
  - D. NLT: *"That is why I tell you,,,"*

The actual word for word translation of the Greek text here is: *"Therefore, this I say to you,,,"* I tend to think that the translations that include the relative pronoun "this" or "that" are truer to the original language and more clearly demonstrate that what Jesus is about to say (v.25-34) is based upon what he has just said (v.19-24).

So, let's get into the Scripture:

### v.19-24:

#### 1. Two Treasures – v.19-21:

*So, what is the big picture message here in this first metaphor??*

Earlier we said that the form / structure Christ uses in this section of the sermon is an "assertion – contrast" form. That is to say that he is making an assertion or broad instruction on the subject; then he is following that assertion up with a contrasting statement.

*What is the assertion statement here and what is the contrast??*

In each of these Matthew employs different Greek grammar to drive how the point. In this passage he uses what we call "Imperative of Command". Look at the opening of v.19 & 20.

Jesus is not making a suggestion, he is giving an order!! Effectively, “don’t do this,,,”,,  
“instead do this,,,”

Specifically here commanding his followers regarding earthly possessions. In doing so, he contrasts the difference between the *temporal nature* of "*treasures of this earth*" as opposed to the *incorruptible or eternal nature* of "*treasures laid up in heaven*".

*What is Jesus prohibiting here? Are Christians not to obtain and enjoy earthly possessions?*

In order for us to properly apply these verses we must understand exactly what Jesus is *prohibiting*. Perhaps it is best to begin by determining what Jesus is "*not prohibiting*":<sup>3</sup>

- A. **First**, Scripture does not ban or forbid possessions or any aspect of private property.
- B. **Secondly**, Scripture does not ban "saving for a rainy day". In fact it actually praises the ant for storing summer food and indicts the believer who does not do likewise for his family.
- C. **Third**, nowhere does Scripture teach that we are to despise the good things of this earth. Instead, we are to enjoy God's provision for us!!

*So, what then is Jesus forbidding his followers from doing?* (Remember the overall theme of the sermon)

Recall that the overall theme of the sermon is a "*heart-focus*" theme. Additionally, note that we said this set of passages draw their public life context from the teaching of the private life context of v.1-18 and the thrust of that passage was centered around the true **motivation of our worship**.

As such, the **heart-focus / true internal motivation** of how we live in regards to earthly treasures is in view. Jesus is not prohibiting his followers from having / enjoying the physical provisions of the earth that would have him contradicting Scripture. Instead he is prohibiting the *selfish ambition* which so often accompanies our pursuit of possessions!! **It is this human, self-centered drive for the accumulation of wealth that Christ is prohibiting!!**

2. **Two Conditions – v.22-23:**

*What is the assertion statement here and what is the contrast??*

The opening statement in v.22 is the assertion: "*The eye is the lamp of the body.*" The contrast is between a sighted person and a blind person in v.22(b) and 23(a-b).

*Is the message here really about the difference between those who can see and those who cannot??*

Of course not, these are metaphors. Metaphors are stories about something that is representative or symbolic of something else. In this case Jesus is using the example of blindness to drive home his point. We all can understand the serious disability blindness is. This is true of our present age, but just think about how much more true it would have been in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. An inability to see places the person at a serious disadvantage in being able to navigate through life.

***But there is a larger picture here. What is it? What is Jesus using this metaphor on blindness to represent?***

Remember the over-arching message of the sermon – HEART-FOCUS. When a person is “heart-blind” they are truly in a bad place. The metaphor here is being used to reference our *spiritual sightedness*. Recall the assertion: ***“The eye is the lamp of the body.”*** Our eyes inform our entire body in order to guide us through this world. Likewise, our *spiritual “eyes”* inform our hearts in such a way as to influence every decision we make!!

***In your translations, how does Jesus refer to the two conditions of the eye?***

Looking back across some of the translations we looked at above I see words like: ***“healthy & unhealthy”***; ***“clear & bad”***; ***“good & bad”***. The actual adjectives used here are ἀπλοῦς and πονηρὸς (*haplous & ponheros*). The second term is really pretty easy; πονηρὸς literally means “of bad quality” or “evil”. We saw a form of this term used in v.13 of the Model Prayer as a noun – *“the evil one”*.

The first term, ἀπλοῦς is a bit tougher. It is also an adjective. Translations which render it “healthy”; “good”; or “clear” are valid translations. However, I would contend to you that this term was first used in the LXX (Greek Old Testament) to refer to ***“singleness of purpose”***.<sup>4</sup> Using this meaning as our guide, then Jesus is saying that the person whose life is guided by the singular focus God’s purposes for his life and the eternal, incorruptible nature of the things of God,,,, this is analogous to the sighted person. This is the person who is guided through this world by an “eye” that is “singularly focused” on what is most important!!

3. **Two Masters – v.24:**

***What is the assertion statement here and what is the contrast??***

This one is pretty easy to see: The assertion is in v.24(a) – “*No one can serve two masters,,,*” The contrast is presented in the balance of v.24 where Jesus illustrates how our devotions will be directed to one master or the other.

*So, what is the big picture message here in this metaphor??*

There are several things I want us to grasp in this metaphor:

A. **Core of the three metaphors:**

This metaphor lies at the core behind the previous two. If our hearts are devoted to God, then our focus upon where to lay up treasure and where to fix our eyes will be answered.<sup>5</sup>

B. **Cultural context:**

In our culture when we think of “*masters*”, we most often think of our bosses at work. This is NOT the context of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. In their time, the reference to master carried the connotation of a slave owner. It is very possible in our time for a person to have multiple jobs and do well. However, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century slave – owner context, this was impossible.<sup>6</sup>

C. **Semitic idiom:**

Jesus presents the contrast in a very polar or extreme way: “*love vs. hate*”. Once again we need to step into the 1<sup>st</sup> century Semitic culture of the Jews to properly grasp this point. (Remember, Jesus is speaking to a Jewish audience.) In this culture it was common to express *strong preference* in this manner. Neither point is to be taken absolutely. For one to *hate* one alternative and *love* the other was their way of expressing strong preference.<sup>7</sup>

**Sidebar:** Interestingly, this idiomatic method of communication also helps us with another passage that is often difficult for us:

**Luke 14:26**

***26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.***

On the surface, a literal interpretation of this verse would seem to contradict the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment in Exodus 20:12 and Christ’s affirmation of this command in Mark 7:9-13. However, we know that Scripture is God’s word to us and as such it is as perfect as He is. Therefore it is impossible for there to be an actual contradiction in the entire body of Scripture.

Here in Luke, Jesus is employing the same Semitic idiomatic method of communication as he does in our target passage. The meaning is to one of primary devotion. Do we place God above all other relationships in our lives?? If He is not our first love, then we are not truly His disciple.

D. **Money:**

*Give me your thoughts on this term at the end of v.24.*

Various translations employ different terms here. Some use the term “*money*”. Some use the term “*mammon*”. Others use the term “*wealth*”. The actual term in the Greek text is the term μαμωνᾶ (*mamona*). This is not a Greek word, it is actually an Aramaic term.

Originally this term meant “*something in which one puts confidence*”. As we have discussed, all languages change over time and in regards to *mammon*, it because of man’s tendency to place confidence in stored up riches, this term came to refer to “*all material possessions*”.<sup>8</sup> So the message is that we cannot be a slave to the material possessions of this world and God. We can only have one true master!! Money or wealth are not to be hated, they just cannot be our first priority. That place is reserved for God!!

As we close this metaphor, I wanted to leave you with an excellent example of the proper perspective Jesus is teaching here. This quote comes from the great scholar and commentator Matthew Henry (1662-1714). He returned home one evening to find that his home had been burglarized. These were the words he wrote in his diary regarding that event:

*Lord, I thank you  
That I have never been robbed before;  
That although they took my money, they spared my life;  
That although they took everything, it wasn't very much;  
That it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.*

#### **v.25-31:**

We will now turn to the final ten verses of chapter six. As we noted in the beginning of this session, Jesus employs his now familiar pattern of speaking in the *1<sup>st</sup> person, singular* to demonstrate his **authority!** It is literally translated: “*Therefore, this I say to you,,,*” He is the Son, part of the Trinity Godhead. As such, unlike the rabbis or any other pastor or teacher, Jesus has absolute authority to speak the truth!! The truth he now speaks in v.25-34 is **based upon** what he has just said in v.19-24.

It is only when we truly grasp the differences expressed between the two types of treasures; the two spiritual conditions; and which of the two masters we will choose to serve that we will be able to comprehend how to place our complete and total trust in God for everything in our lives.

#### ***Matthew 6:25-34***

The section headings in our Bibles refer to this passage in various ways. ***Tell me how your Bible labels this section.***

The most common heading for this section has something to do with “*worry*” or “*anxiety*”. This is a fitting description because the verb μεριμνάω (*merimnaw*) appears six times in these ten verses. This verb literally does mean the act of “*worrying*” or “*having anxiety*” over something.

However, one of the authors I am using in the development of this course really does an excellent job in hitting the heart of the message of the two major sections of 6:19-34. D.A.

Carson labels the three metaphors of v.19-24 as Christian *trust & loyalty*. In these he contends that the message of Jesus in v.25-34 represent a message of *uncompromised trust* that **all believers should have and that it can only result when we have the type of loyal, heart-felt devotion to the Lord that is expressed in the previous metaphors.**

*There is a prohibition and contrast in this passage. What are they?*

- A. The prohibition (expressed as an imperative of prohibition) is seen in the first portion of v.25 regarding a *prohibition to not worry*.
- B. The contrast is seen all the way down in v.33 regarding a command to believers to *seek first God's kingdom and righteousness*.
- C. All the points between v.25 and v.33 are an expansion around the subject of worry.

We have so many things in this world that we face:

- 1. Job security,, or even finding a job.
- 2. Paying our bills.
- 3. Providing the necessities for our families: food, shelter, clothing, transportation.
- 4. Providing more than necessities for our families: vacations, gifts, recreation.
- 5. Education for our children....

I think we get the picture..... We could loosely tie these things up into a broader bucket labeled "*life needs and lifestyle goals*". Jesus simplifies the issue by reducing the alternatives to two, then places them into contrast with one another. The first is the prohibition, the second is the contrast. *Either we are going to be caught up in a cycle of worry or anxiety over these things (which he is prohibiting), or we are going to trust God with all the things of this earth just as we have trusted Him with our salvation (as we see in the contrast statement)!!*

**v.25-31:**

**A. The Prohibition:**

*Re-read v.25-31 and tell what Jesus is forbidding and what he is not forbidding.*

Thought practices are in mind here. Consider this: In order to worry about something, we have to first think about it. *So, is Jesus telling us not to think about things, just wake up each day in a new world and skip through life with no considerations???*

Of course not; that would be silly to think so and inconsistent with the body of Scripture. We've already discussed that Scripture praises the ant for his work in storing up food for winter. More importantly, there are numerous places in both the Old and New Testaments where God explains to us the roles of every member of the family unit. These are commonly referred to as "Household Duty Codes". In each of them, every family member has specific responsibilities. In order to carry these out, we have to contemplate them and plan.

*So, if not “thought”, what then is Jesus prohibiting??*

The answer is in regard to the “type” of thought. Jesus is prohibiting the act of anxious thought, or worrying!! God created us with complex minds and the ability to engage in complex thought. He expects us to use these capabilities. Yet like so many other things, it is not “what we do” but “how we do, what we do”.

As we go about our lives, we have roles and duties to perform. We are gifted with great mental capacity to think through these things and chart our course. But as we do, must do so in an environment of complete trust in God.

**B. Incompatibility w/ Christian faith:**

In v.25-30 Jesus demonstrates to us the futility of worry. *He uses two structure devices commonly seen in literature to this day, can you tell spot them??*

These are two comparative devices which were very common in Jewish literature. The first one is seen at the end of v.26 and is referred to as “*greater to lesser*”: “*Are you not of more value than they?*” The second one is seen in v.30 and is referred to as “*lesser to greater*”: “*But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you,,,*”

Then we finally see, at the end of v.30, that Jesus makes it plainly clear that this type of thought / behavior is incompatible with our Christian faith: “*,,,O you of little faith?*”

This is an extremely difficult area for most of us. *Discuss the most common areas in which we struggle here and the proper application of this to our lives.*

I do not want to over-simplify a very important and complex issue; but for the sake of space, let’s examine three general types of people:<sup>9</sup>

1. The first person is that care-free individual who doesn’t let anything bother him. He doesn’t worry about “tomorrow” or take life matters too seriously. We refer to these folks as “*happy-go-lucky*” type people.
2. The second person is the exact opposite. He literally frets over everything. Even the smallest matters are burdensome to him because he thinks every scenario into the extreme.
3. The third person is that “balanced” person. He doesn’t “worry about everything” nor does he approach life in a “happy-go-lucky” or “care-free” manner. **But what does he do when he wakes up to a monstrous challenge or life-altering illness??**



*Now, imagine each of these people sitting in a church and hearing the preacher deliver a sermon on this passage in Mt. 6:25-34. How will each likely react??*

- The first guy will likely feel vindicated about his care-free lifestyle.
- The second guy will probably feel as if the pastor spoke directly to him and chastised him. He will now have something else to worry about!!
- The third guy, the one who is “balanced” but is facing a huge trial or challenge could actually become bitter at the sermon. He could well think something like: *“Easy to say until you get faced with real challenge!!”*

This is complex and every person is different, so it is extremely hard to quantify this in a short space. These three examples are just a generalization of the myriad of potential responses. However, for us to truly interpret this passage and apply it to our lives requires a great deal of *pastoral awareness!!*<sup>10</sup>

The *first person* needs to hear a message of discipline, self-sacrifice, and possibly the need for hard work. The *second person* needs to hear a message of God’s great providence for His creation and that he is actually the object of great love from the Creator of the universe!! The *third person* needs a close, loving friend to come along-side him and minister to him. He needs a true friend who will pray with him, cry with him, support him, and physically stand with him.<sup>11</sup>

From a pastoral / application perspective, consider a couple of propositions:<sup>12</sup>

1. There is a sense in which worry is not only good, but its absence is actually irresponsible.
2. There is also a sense in which worry is not only evil, but its presence signifies unbelief and disobedience.

*What do you think about these propositions? Can you think of some examples?*

The first proposition can be expressed by the type of “worry” or concern that a believer might have to be faithful and useful in the service of the Lord.<sup>13</sup> In one sense, I experienced this type of concern for about seven years as I was pursuing my seminary education. I knew that the Lord had called me to a higher education for some purpose. I knew that to date I had not been called to preach. I had no idea where He intended to use me. Yet I spent a tremendous amount of time and money in pursuit of the training. Yet this was without a clear path of where it was leading, I had concern about whether I had properly interpreted His calling. It wasn’t until after I completed my second degree that God chose to reveal to me the place where I was to serve.

The second proposition is one that we all likely grasp well. There are times when our worry is harmful and even disobedient. This passage teaches that our material needs are not valid reasons for worry. God is sovereign and provides for His creation in accordance with His will. No matter how legitimate our physical needs may be, they are not valid reasons for worry. Instead they do become valid reasons for heightened and continual prayer.<sup>14</sup>

*So, after this discussion, what are your thoughts on "worry"??*

I would like to bring out two things that need to be discussed at this point:

1. **Pastoral awareness:** We've mentioned this several times already, but its importance here cannot be overemphasized. Jesus is giving us a "general principle" here. While it is clearly valid, we absolutely must consider the individual case before us prior to pulling "*the worry passage*" out like a sword. Some circumstances call for us to admonish a brother for worrying. Others call for compassion and a prayerful heart of support in difficult times.
2. **"Bad things", and "good people":** Despite Mt.6:25-34, the centuries bear witness to Christians who get cancer, suffer and die. Christians have been persecuted and wrongly put to death. Christians have been severely impoverished, unclad, and starved to death. It would be wrong for us to mistake this lesson on "*worry*" and assume that it means that as believers "*we will never have a bad day*". Evil exists in this world. The problem of evil is for another class. But for our purposes, we must remember that Jesus is here teaching on *how we deal with adversity* **NOT** *that we will never experience it!!*

**v.33-34:**

Let's move quickly into the close of this passage. Most teachers see v. 33 as the crux of the passage. We already noted that v.33 is the contrast statement of the passage. Jesus began this discussion in v.25 with an imperative prohibition command for his followers to not worry. Now he closes the passage by contrasting that assertion with another command verb. This time, instead of telling us what **NOT** to do, Jesus is commanding us on what he wants us to **DO**!!

*What is our command here??*

It's quite simple. We are to "*seek*" the kingdom of God. Our focus is not things of this world, we are to trust God for what we need and continuously seek the righteousness of God.

*There is one other aspect of this "seeking" Jesus notes, what is it??*

Note the position of seeking God in our lives: **first**!! We do not just "seek" God, we are to "seek first" His kingdom.

## Literature Cited

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<sup>2</sup> D. A. Carson. *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World An Exposition of Matthew 5 -10*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books. 1987, 80.

<sup>3</sup> Stott. 155-56.

<sup>4</sup> Carson. 84-5.

<sup>5</sup> Stott. 158-59.

<sup>6</sup> Hagner, Donald A. *Word biblical commentary: Matthew 1-13*. Vol. 33A. Texas: Word Inc., 1995, 158-59.

<sup>7</sup> Carson. 86.

<sup>8</sup> Carson. 86.

<sup>9</sup> Carson. 88.

<sup>10</sup> Carson. 89.

<sup>11</sup> Carson. 89.

<sup>12</sup> Carson. 90.

<sup>13</sup> Carson. 91.

<sup>14</sup> Carson. 91.