

**Matthew in Biblical Perspective:  
A Royal Manifesto of the Kingdom from the King –  
The Seventh Commandment: Do Not Be an Idolater**

**Matthew 6:19-24**

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*September 5, 2010 – Morning Sermon*

We continue our study in the Sermon on the Mount looking at the seventh commandment which is do not be an idolater. We will be turning to a number of passages in this study so have your Bible ready to look at some key texts. Matthew 6:19- 24 says

*19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*

The grass withers and the flower fades. The Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this text be preached for you.

I have an invitation for you and with the invitation is a need for you to make a decision. The invitation is to slavery but the decision is not whether or not you'll be a slave because you will be one. The question is who will be your master? You will be a slave. You will serve something or somebody so that's really not the invitation. The invitation is who is your master? If the grace of the Lord Jesus has come upon you then God has set you free from death and you can choose everyday for Jesus Christ to be your master and to know the joy of living in and for Him, the Lord of glory. As I was thinking about the study on the Sermon of the Mount, what is it that keeps us from knowing the joy of the Lord in our Christian life? What is it that keeps us from clarity of the world that Christ is our Lord and Savior or the clarity of our witness? What is it that keeps us from drawing people to Christ by the way that we live? What is it that causes our joy to be diminished or diluted or our witness to be shielded or shadowed? Instead of our lives

drawing people to Christ, our lives actually become an occasion for people to deny Christ.

Jesus is tackling that in the Sermon on the Mount. First of all He tells us the blessings of the Gospel that saves us and transforms us in the section on the beatitudes. Then He calls us to the Gospel ministry of being salt and light. Then He says that the way you live your life ought to be in such a manner that as the people who don't know the Lord look at you, they will glorify God for your good works. In other words, they'll see your joy, your witness, and want to know more about this God who has made a difference in your life. Having said that Jesus says "let's set about this" and He goes to this third section in the Sermon on the Mount. He says "I'm going to give you a perfect righteousness when I save you but when I give you this righteousness I'm going to call you to a life of 'exceeding righteousness' where your righteousness will exceed the righteousness of the religious people so that you can understand this righteousness that the Gospel calls you to in which the Gospel gives you a perfect righteousness whereby you are saved and the Gospel calls you to a life of righteousness in thanksgiving to the Lord so that you can understand it."

Now Jesus who has gone up on the Mount to give this sermon now brings them to a mountain He came down from to give the Law to Moses and He says "Here's the Gospel use of the Law." This isn't exhaustive but He takes five of the commandments and He develops them for us so that we can see the magnificent depth, breadth and height of Gospel embracing of the Law of God to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself. He says don't just murder but pursue life and marriage isn't simply don't commit adultery but its committing purity and enjoying Biblical sexuality within marriage. Beyond that truth is more than truth but truth is spoken in love and we don't bear false witness. By the way, when people sin against us we don't enact our own courts against them we embrace them, call them in love, redemption and forgiveness and we turn the other cheek. So He gives us this idea of what it means to love our enemies and the enemies of God to make them the friends of God through the way that we reach them in love. That's the exceeding righteousness.

Now, what keeps us from doing that? So Jesus goes from those five commandments to five more commandments about how to practice that righteousness. How do you practice that exceeding righteousness and what keeps you from practicing it in a way that it will glorify your Father that is in heaven? The first thing we looked at was the sixth commandment which was don't be a hypocrite. Don't play a part. Don't be an actor playing a part for the applause of men in your religion. Be a son of the living God who loves the Father and live from the heart to your Father. He gave three areas – mercy, prayer and fasting.

Some people when they do mercy like to call parades and blow trumpets and call attention to all the mercy they do so that their mercy ministry becomes a prop to draw people to themselves. Then in their prayer life they take their prayer life and they go public with it to get attention. They go public with their fasting also and He says "I don't want you to be like that. Yes there's a place for public mercy, public fasting and public prayer but I want the depth and breadth of your life to be with Me. I want you to do mercy in a way that your right hand doesn't know what your left hand is doing. I want you to pray in your closet that the depth of your prayer life is not going public with your private prayers. The depth of your prayer life is a secret closet where you come and speak to Me, your Father, because I know what you need. I love to have that conversation with you, your fasting as you're drawing near to Me and you're setting aside food or drink to spend time with Me alone and then I want you to know that is done in secret. You anoint yourself, wash yourself so that people won't even know you're fasting. You don't call attention to yourself."

What is the second thing that gets in the way of our practicing righteousness? He is going to give five of them. Here's the second one found in the seventh commandment and this became clearer to me in my study on this during this past week. The seventh commandment is don't be an idolater. Just like Christians who have been liberated from being a hypocrite to being a believer can still fall back into hypocrisy so we who have been liberated from idolatry to serve and worship the true and living God can fall back into idolatry very easily and subtly and the Lord knows this. I have been studying in my quiet time the Ten Commandments and amazingly I saw something where right now everyone is wondering about these new atheists that are so bold and aggressive. Interestingly the Bible doesn't concern itself a lot with atheism and the reason why is give me fifteen minutes with any atheist and I'll show you they have a god. It won't take many questions. They have a god. I promise you that. They have something they serve, worship and enslaved to.

Atheism is not the deal. The deal that traps us is idolatry and the Law of God knows it. So how does the Law of God start off? It doesn't say now don't fall into the trap of not having any gods. He says you shall have no other gods before Me. God knows what our problem is. Our heart is an incessant idol factory. We'll not only take sin and make it an idol but we'll take good things from God and make it idols, like marriage, spouses, children, recreation, work and things like that. He says don't make for yourself any graven images. He knows that our basic problem is one of idolatry. That's exactly what Jesus is getting to in this text.

It's in three paragraphs. Let's take an overview of the text. Matthew 6:19-21 says 19 *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* Notice how

Jesus isn't talking a lot about how much treasure you have. Us, preachers, like to get on people by saying you have too much treasure and yet Jesus doesn't really go after that. Jesus doesn't ask us how much treasure we have He is asking where your treasure chest is. Where are you putting the treasure I let you have? Do you know why He does that? It is because where you are putting your treasure is where your heart is and where it will go. That's what will direct you and your life.

So Jesus says you have two treasure chests. So you have treasure chests in which you put everything into that which are temporary and perishable, moths corrupt it, rust destroys it and thieves break in and steal it. There's another treasure chest and that has things that are everlasting, like worship and evangelism and the souls of men and women and lost nations, lost people and liberating people from their sins with the Gospel of grace. That treasure lasts but worldly treasures are sandcastles. In just one wave and they're gone. Jesus directs us in the matter of where are treasure chest is. I'm not going to ask you how much money you have I'm just going to ask you where are you putting it because where you are putting it has your heart. Where your treasure is there where your treasure is also. Mr. Cheely and I have an argument about this every year. Faith promise mission's time is coming up. Tom will tell me if we get their heart right their treasure will go there. I say "No, where you put your treasure, your heart will go there. Where your treasure is there is where your heart will be also."

In the second paragraph of the text He says you not only have two treasure chests but let me tell you how you choose your treasure chest, it's how you have a perspective on life. Matthew 6:22-23 says **22** *"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"* So how do you choose your treasure chest? You choose it by your perspective on life and what counts. Now if you have a clean eye then you get light. If you have a blind eye then you have nothing but darkness. How great is the darkness if what you call light is darkness so that you're thinking in the wrong direction. You're probably getting the idea that Jesus is using some very common language to the Jewish people when He's talking to them. He uses 'heart', 'eye', meaning the mind and your 'master', 'master/slave' which is the third paragraph.

Here's the third paragraph. Matthew 6:24 says **24** *"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. You can try but you can't."*

Don't take this slave/master thing and go over here to 21<sup>st</sup> century capitalism of employer/employee. He uses very pointed language when using master/slave. You can have two employers. You can have two jobs but you can't have but one

master if you're a slave by definition. You can't serve God and mammon. You can't tip your hat to Jesus Sunday at 11am and go serve the gods of this world the rest of the week. You can't do it. He won't accept it and it will rob you of your joy. It will rob you of your witness and it will rob us of a trophy of grace of drawing people to the fountain of grace because what they will see is just someone living like them with a little bit of religion.

So how is it that we can keep from falling into that trap of idolatry in our lives? He has given us what I call a profile of idolatry. The profile of idolatry is making the decision for the wrong treasure chest in life. What is going to be the place where you invest the treasures of your life? Jesus is focusing on money because that's the one that Satan uses. We have other treasures in our life. There's power, children, and all kinds of things we treasure in our life. Now what are we investing in? This is the key right here. If we get this one settled then when your children walk up to you and say "I think God is calling me to be a missionary" then you won't have a heart attack because you have already put them in the treasure chest of the Kingdom. When someone comes up to you and says "Would you really pray about helping this missionary out?" you've already made this decision. The question isn't what but what's God going to do through me here? So this is the big question right now that solves all the other things of faith promise giving, or mission giving or short term mission giving or being a witness at my work or not or how I'll raise my family. This is the big decision. I've got all kinds of treasures in my life. I have experiences, money, relationships and all kinds of things that are treasures in my life.

The question is, am I going to put them in the treasure chest of the Kingdom or in this world that is passing away with its lusts? Where am I going to put them? In the profile of idolatry the choice has always been the wrong one. Paul knows this. I Timothy 6:17-19 says

*17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches (heard of recession and inflation?), but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works (use what He has given you to be rich in good works), to be generous and ready to share, 19 thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*

You can have a bank account with two zeros or ten zeros and still make it your idol. The issue isn't how much is there but where are you with it and it with you. That stuff isn't going to satisfy your life, that idolatry isn't going to be your life, so don't invest in it.

I don't care if it's a one dollar bill or a five dollar bill or a ten dollar bill or a hundred dollar bill, a piece of money is amoral. It's not moral. It's not immoral. It is amoral so what has He just warned you against? The love of money is the root

of all sorts of evil and you can have a little of it and be in love with it or you can have a lot of it to be in love with it. The other day someone called me and said "Pastor, I have a big question." I said, "What is it?" They said, "I heard a sermon and we walked away from it saying we have too much money and too much house according to that sermon." I said, "Really?" They said, "Yeah, so what do we do?" I said, "Go back and ask the preacher how many square feet is holy? Go ask the preacher how many zeros in the bank account qualifies you to be holy." As preachers we love to take the short cut and tell you just get a small house and a small bank account and then you're holy. You can still have idolatry with a small house and a small bank account. The question is does the house have you and does the money have you and what are you using your house for? What are you using your money for? What are you doing with it or is it doing you? That's the question.

I'd give anything in the world if I could just tell you a house of 800 square feet is holy or that a bank account with two zeros is holy and anything above that is unholy but I can't do that. I have met people with a lot that didn't have them because they just used it for Jesus. I've met people with a little that it had them and I have met people with a little that used it for Jesus, like the widow with her mite. I've met people with a lot that it had them. I wish it was that easy but it's not that easy. The real question is where is your treasure chest? Is what God has give you like your children, your family, your house, your money, His or are you putting it in this world and that's what you live for? You are not a child of today. You are a child of the King and an eternity has been given to you. Therefore don't live and be used up for what is only passing away. Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. Get the right treasure chest.

Secondly, in the profile of idolatry the treasure chest that you have really reflects your perspective on life. How do you view life? I love this passage. It has been so convicting to me and I'd like to share it with you because I've gotten about all the conviction I can handle from it. It is a passage from Isaiah 44. I need to have the right life style that I have the right treasure chest for what God has given me and that is the Kingdom of God. Don't put your hope in the things or money of this world. I have been a pastor for many years now and I have done many funerals. I have yet to see a luggage rack on the hearse or a U-haul on the hearse. So you come in with nothing and you are going out with nothing. Now what do you do with the some things He gives you while you're here? That will be on your perspective.

I have two good friends that are sightless. They cannot see and I asked them what it is like to live in the dark and how do you deal with that? But for some of us we let the god of this world blind us with the things of this world and we make idolatrous decisions because we call the darkness light and the light darkness. We think that will satisfy our soul when actually it's only the Lord who can do that. Look what it says in Isaiah 44. He says there is no God like Him and then He

talks about the folly of false gods. This text is a little bit long but I really want to look at this with you. Isaiah 44:9-20 says

*9 All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. Their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. 10 Who fashions a god or casts an idol that is profitable for nothing? 11 Behold, all his companions shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are only human. Let them all assemble, let them stand forth. They shall be terrified; they shall be put to shame together. 12 The ironsmith takes a cutting tool and works it over the coals. He fashions it with hammers and works it with his strong arm. He becomes hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water and is faint. 13 The carpenter stretches a line; he marks it out with a pencil. He shapes it with planes and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. 14 He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. 15 Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it. 16 Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!" 17 And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!" 18 They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand. 19 No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" 20 He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"*

This is the folly of idolatry. We look to something to satisfy our soul and life and to make our life and in reality it's empty. This text is Jesus giving us a summation of the whole book of the Bible. Which book of the Bible is He giving a summation of? It's Ecclesiastes. Here is the life of idolatry – eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow I die. The message of Ecclesiastes is when you live for only that which is under the sun you have committed folly and it is nothing but vanity. "Vanity" is an interesting word. The word vanity means emptiness. Ecclesiastes says "All is vanity" repeatedly.

I want to try and illustrate for you what vanity is and this is the best one I know for it. When I was a kid I used to go to the local fair every year. I would save up two quarters. One quarter got me into a show that I couldn't wait to go see. It was a big round wooden barrel in which there were four to ten motorcycles going around and around. Back then we had real motorcycles which were Triumphs

and these riders would go around those circles, up onto a ramp and literally ride on the wall of the barrel with that centrifugal force riding at each other around and around. The noise was so great for a ten year old that I just loved it. Right before I got there I had another quarter that I would spend on a small little stand. When I would put that quarter down this lady would take out a funnel. She would put that funnel in a stainless steel barrel like machine and magic started to wrap around it which made it look like angel hair getting bigger and bigger. I would say "Keep going." She would smile at me and keep going and then she would give it to me and take my quarter. I would take it and bite it. I just bought .25 cents worth of sugar coated air and it was gone.

Satan does this all the time. Some of you think that this year football is going to make your life. I live in an idolatrous state. I said it in the early service and a man got mad at me and said "Do you not like football?" I said, "I love football." It's a game! If you don't have it next week I'll live. Some of us have idolatry of technology. By the way, the man who came out and got mad, I said, "Bingo, I struck home didn't I?" We have our idols and they sneak in so quickly. They become more important than worship, than evangelism and the Kingdom of God. We actually think that's going to make our life. Maybe its technology or maybe its God's good gifts like our wife or husband or children or maybe it's the thought of I need another husband or wife so I'll willingly sacrifice my family on the altar of the idolatry of sexual immorality.

The fact is we have a wrong perspective. Who can satisfy my soul? It is not bowing down to the blocks of wood of this world but Jesus Christ can and will. I have met many people who have the idols of this world and those who make money an idol never have enough. I have met people who have made Jesus Christ the Master and Lord of their life and whether they had little or much they walked into eternity with the joy of their soul. For the Lord does satisfy, He alone satisfies the soul. We have the wrong perspective so we have the wrong treasure chest. Our treasure chest reveals our perspective and our perspective reveals who are master is which is the third point.

So thirdly, our life style reflects our life view and our life view reflects our life love (our master). I want to look at Luke 12 here. We are going to look at anxiety in our next study where we're not to be a worry wart. Don't be an idolater. Don't be a hypocrite and don't be a worry wart. It's interesting when Luke deals with Jesus' statement about anxiety he puts in front of it a parable that's parallel to this text on the Sermon on the Mount. The passage in Luke on anxiety begins in Luke 12:22 but I want to start earlier in the chapter. Luke 12:13-15 says *13 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" 15 And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."* Let me fill that in. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul? He goes on to say in Luke 12:16-21

*16 And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, 17 and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' 18 And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared (not only will they not go with you), whose will they be?' 21 So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."*

One might say "Oh pastor, my things will be my children's." Would you like to see a study on second generation wealth? I know right now we're all upset because there's a death tax and I think we ought to be upset about it because taxing things twice is immoral. The fact is the stuff we leave behind we leave behind and what happens to it has no control in our life. It doesn't satisfy the soul or bring us to eternity. Who is the master? This is why I hate with a passion this word of faith prosperity gospel that says Jesus died on the cross to give us money which Jesus is telling me that I'm to get free of.

Jesus says it's not my life. I utter despise this prosperity gospel that we have mechanized and television is full of it and churches are full of it. There are pulpits preaching that Jesus died to get us more money which can't satisfy. Jesus died to set us free from our sin that we might know Him and He alone makes life. The Psalmist says "I have set my eyes continually upon the Lord."

When I was 16 my dad and mom taught me how to drive. Really it was my daddy because my mother wouldn't get in the car with me. We would come home from church on Sunday night and Wednesday night and we would get off the main highway where it was four blocks home and they would let me drive the rest of the way home. It was an adventure. Part of my problem was that I kept looking at the lines of the road and my daddy said, "Son, don't look at the lines, look straight ahead. I'll you look out here and set your eyes out here then you can go straight but if you look down you're going to be everywhere and you're going to have a wreck. So look straight or I'm going to whip you." So I learned to look straight and that worked until I dated Cindy. It was the most dangerous moment in my life when I started dating Cindy because she was sitting to my side. I kept looking to the side at her and the next thing you know I'm about to have a wreck. I had to set my mind to look out ahead. Don't be distracted. Honey, you were an idol but you weren't a block of wood, that's for sure.

So here are our life takeaways. The life takeaway is you cannot serve God and Mammon (money). This isn't two employers you can work for. It isn't something you can mix together. You have to make a choice today. God by His grace has worked in your life. He gives you the ability so make a decision. If you want the right treasure chest then you need the right perspective. If you want the right

perspective then you have to have your heart in the right place. So today who is your master? I'm not asking you how much money you have and how big your house is. I'm asking you who has you? You can only have one master. You can have two employers but only one master. So who is your master?

The first point under this takeaway is the issue is not how much treasure you have but what is your treasure chest? That's really the answer. I don't have time to go over this but read Exodus 35:21 when you have a chance. When they built the temple for the Lord for the cause of the worship of God, it says the people brought joyfully from their heart what God has given to them because the Lord has their heart. That's why I love the tithe every week because it reminds me God owns not simply everything that He gave to me but He owns me. My treasure chest will reveal my life view which will reveal my life love. God, help me to love You and not money.

Secondly, is the issue is not how much treasure you have but does the treasure have you or does the Lord have you? Harry how can I know this? It's very simple. If you're sick and you go to the doctor he will ask you some diagnostic questions. He will give some diagnostic instruments so maybe I can share what I think are some good diagnostic instruments. What has my heart? Who has my heart? Go take a look at your check book. Go take a look at your calendar and you'll find out who has your heart. Thirdly and finally, the issue is not are you a slave because you are one and I am one but the issue is who is your master? You cannot serve God and mammon and where your treasure is there your heart will be. Your treasure chest indicates your master and captivates you to the master. I want to tell you of a glorious Master whose name is God. He is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and He is glorious. He has loved you so much He has given to you His Son who died on the cross to set you free and He will never let you go. He will make you His treasure forever. Come to Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, I know there are things that have captured my affections, my allegiance and my adoration. Wherever I have fallen back into idolatry please forgive me and help me do what the Psalmist says "To set the Lord continually before my heart." Who can satisfy my soul but You. Your Son was trampled on the cross to raise me up to life. He is my Master. My Savior is my Lord. So you not only have what the world would serve and worship, idolatry, whether I eat or drink, my technology, my family, and my children. Dear Jesus, I bring everything to You. Here's my house, my life, and my children. You're my Master. I'm Your slave because I love You who first loved me, in Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

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