

**Which Kingdom Reigns Supreme  
Over Your Wealth**  
~Matthew 6:19-24

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Some of you have gotten it. Some of you are getting it. Some of you hope to one day get it. Some have to make tough decisions to decide if they will get it. Some might face rejection and loss of status at home if they get it. Many of us already have it even though we didn't do anything to get it. So we may not appreciate what we have compared to those who want it.

What is it? Canadian citizenship. Some of you have gotten it after emigrating from another country. Some of you are in the process of getting it. Some of you hope to apply for it after you have met all the requirements.

But those of us who were born in Canada automatically have it. We may not appreciate what we have. We may not even know what our obligations are as Canadian citizens. For example, people born in Canada, do you know the oath new applicants have to take before they receive their citizenship? I wonder how many of us would agree to this oath if we had to say it yearly.

Here's the oath: "I swear (or affirm) That I will be faithful And bear true allegiance To Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second Queen of Canada Her Heirs and Successors And that I will faithfully observe The laws of Canada And fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen." Did you know, citizens born in Canada, that you owe true allegiance to the queen and her successors? Did you know that we are supposed to faithfully observe Canadian laws and fulfill your duties? There's also a quiz about Canada that applicants have to take before they can be accepted. I wonder how we would do on that quiz.

It's no small thing to pack up and move to a different country. But there is one reality that can make the decision a little easier. That something is called dual citizenship. Many countries, including Canada, allow citizens to have dual citizenship. This can make exit and entry into the different countries easier. You still get to identify with your homeland and your new adopted land. You can also experience the protection offered by governments of each land.

But there are about 50 countries who do not allow their citizens to carry dual citizenship. These include the Bahamas, China, Cuba, Ethiopia, Haiti, India and Japan. If you come from a country that does not allow dual citizenship, they will immediately revoke your citizenship if you become a Canadian citizen. So you have to make a choice. Will you choose to become a Canadian, and lose your home country's citizenship? What must be a challenging decision to make!

Now many of us never had to make a choice about our national citizenship, but all of us have a choice to make about our spiritual citizenship. The Bible talks about two kingdoms in the spiritual realm. The kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, or the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of this world. By their nature, they cannot mix. It's either one or the other. God rules the kingdom of heaven. Satan is prince over the kingdom of darkness.

The kingdom of heaven brings God's good news. It brings hope, healing, salvation, renewal and restoration. It brings strength for the broken-hearted, liberty for the captives, freedom for the prisoners. It brings the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit. Jesus reigns supreme in this kingdom. His subjects joyfully live out their lives advancing and announcing His reign. One day He will return to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. His is the kingdom of light.

The devil's kingdom tries to rival the kingdom of heaven. He is called the god of this world in 2 Corinthians 4:4. He has some measure of reign on earth. He somehow had some ownership over the earth's kingdoms when he displayed them to Jesus during the temptation. The devil's kingdom fights against the kingdom of heaven. It does not want any advance of God's work or worship. Many people don't know that they live in the kingdom of darkness.

It might take the form of our own little kingdom. We think we are the rulers. No one is going to tell us what to do. We will do what we want when we want. We view our wealth as ours and ours alone. So we will spend it solely on what we want to spend. Or, the kingdom of darkness can take the form of the kingdom of money. The pursuit of money and all it promises can capture our loyalty.

Any true Christian has been brought into the kingdom of heaven. But there can be times when we let our loyalties get divided. Or we might become complacent citizens who have forgotten the benefits of the kingdom. We might even think we can live as dual citizens. **But there is no dual citizenship in the spiritual realm.** So we (Christians) must ask for God's help to check our loyalty and address any allegiance weaknesses.

That's what we will do today in the second message on the use of our wealth and resources. We said last week that the way we handle our money can be a barometer of our spiritual health. It can also reveal where our loyalties lie. Jesus Himself provides us with ways to check our loyalty to His kingdom through the area of wealth. We're going to look at three tests of loyalty and then ask for God's help to make any adjustments we might need to make. I pray that God will

reignite in us if needed that passion of loyalty for Him, His kingdom and His purposes. Jesus is talking in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:19-24 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup> “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, <sup>23</sup> 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!

<sup>24</sup> “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.<sup>[b]</sup>

**How can we test whether our loyalties lie with the kingdom of God or the kingdom of money? Test 1 - Look at what kind of treasure you’re stockpiling.** In verses 19-21, Jesus commands His listeners to evaluate their treasure. Take a look at what you’re stockpiling or storing. Will it last or will it one day be gone?

He uses examples of treasures from the ancient world that his listeners could easily relate to. Most people have two kinds of treasure – Clothes and precious metals. Remember, there were no banks where ordinary people could store treasure with greater security. They would try to protect these treasures by burying them in a strong box; maybe in the floor of their house or somewhere on their property. Or they might keep their clothes in some sort of closet or special area away from plain sight. Yet though these treasures were valuable they were still vulnerable. No matter how much they tried to protect their clothes, moths could get in and eat the fabric. Especially in warmer climates, moths thrive all year. So they were a constant threat. Or if your treasure was a precious metal like gold, it was vulnerable to rust and a loss of value. Some Bible versions may translate verse 20 like this: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and worm destroy...” The sense is that rust or a worm eats away at the treasure. So the day you dig up your strong box, you open it only to discover that your treasure has been ruined.

Now we have more ability today to protect our clothes from moths. We don’t really keep precious metals in our homes. Many people keep their money in the bank for greater security. But these treasures are still vulnerable. A business or personal financial crisis can drain our treasure. A down turned economy or a market crash can ravage our savings. We might even keep our earthly treasures to our very last breath. But upon dying, we can’t take them with us. It won’t last into the next life.

How different compared to treasure stored up in heaven. Such treasure is both valuable and invulnerable. It cannot be destroyed or stolen. It is preserved in the kingdom of heaven. It will one day be visible for all to see and for us to enjoy. But what is treasure stored in heaven? I believe such treasure includes investing in the lives of others; living obediently to the Lord; showing kindness to others; sacrificing time, skill or wealth to benefit of others; and contributing the spread of the Gospel. Then when the kingdom of heaven becomes visible, we will see the people impacted by our investment and good works. We will get to share eternal life with them. We will hear about how the good news came to them or how our gift encouraged them.

But how can where we're storing up treasure reveal our true citizenship loyalty? Look at what Jesus says in verse 21. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." So whether we stockpile earthy or heavenly treasure, it reveals our heart loyalties. It can unveil who we serve as king. It can reveal who really is our king – Jesus, ourselves, an image we're trying to maintain; some status that we're trying to project; or the purposes of God?

How else can we test whether our loyalties rest with the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of the world? **Test 2 – Check if your spiritual eyes are focused on good or bad.** Verse 22 and 23 at first seem out of place here. Jesus talks about treasure and then seems to switch to a discussion about eye health. He calls the eye "the lamp of the body." This could mean that it reveals the light in the body, but more probably it's a light that helps the body to find its way. So there is a spiritual kind of seeing in addition to what we see physically. A healthy or sound eye spiritually is focused on the things of God. A good eye then leads to a body full of light or fully devoted to the things of God.

But if our eye is bad; if our spiritual eyes focus on darkness and living in that kingdom, then our whole body or life will be dark. Notice Jesus' exclamation. I'm at the end of vs. 23, "If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness." Now how can light be darkness? Maybe He means that when our spiritual eyes focus on darkness, we may think we live in the light. We may think that we're doing right. But in fact, what we think is light is actually darkness. So we're deceived and live in a great darkness.

Applied to wealth and treasures, Jesus may mean that a person with a good eyes sees the value of storing up treasure in heaven. They see the great value of the Lord's purposes. So they give their wealth generously to help and benefit others. But a person with a bad eye is blinded to the value of storing up treasure in heaven. Instead, they get consumed with storing up earthly treasures and think that by doing so they are actually living in light. Tim Keller write

this: “Money’s spiritual power lies in its ability to make us think it can give us far more than it can. . . . the only true solution to the power of money over you is to see yourself rich in Christ. . . Riches on earth bring some short-lived status, but we are children of the King of the universe forever. Riches on earth bring some security, but “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purposes.” Romans 8:28. Riches on earth bring power, but we will rule with Christ. 2 Timothy 2:12) Christ has paid the only debt that could destroy us (Luke 7:42-43) which makes all other debts inconsequential. In Christ you are truly rich. When we focus on this reality, our lives will be filled with light.

**Test 3 – Evaluate which master you currently serve.** Verse 24. “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” I was trying to figure out what Jesus was getting at here. Some of you work more than one job. Therefore, you have at least 2 bosses. You may like one boss but not like the other. You may like one job better than the other. You may like both jobs and both bosses. But, commentators point out that employment is quite different than slavery.

Jesus seems to be pointing out this very obvious fact. Slaves were required to be totally committed to one master. You can’t serve two masters. He claims you will inevitably love one and hate the other or be devoted to one and despise the other. You may pay more attention and ignore the other. Jesus makes no room in serving two masters. So though we may think that we can have the best of both worlds by serving God on Sundays, and serving money on all the other days, we actually can’t do it. We will serve only one with devotion and love. Even were we to claim that we will serve the Lord first while serving money only partially, the end result is still a divided loyalty. There is no dual citizenship in the spiritual realm. Jesus teaches this not because He is greedy or wants all our money for Himself, but for our spiritual benefit. He warns us against thinking we can pull this off. “You can’t do it.” He says. You must choose your king.

Choosing Jesus as our king does not mean necessarily that we give away all our wealth. We still need wealth to live on. Jesus promises in the next verses that God knows we need food and clothes and will provide. But it is saying that if wealth becomes our idol or our number one desire, then we have a problem. So, here are the three tests to evaluate our loyalty to our king. Look where you’re stockpiling treasure. Look at the health of your spiritual perception. Examine if you’ve drifted into trying to serve two masters.

One way we can store up treasures in heaven is to keep focused on the things of God as our master, and by giving to support the ministries of SVBC. Did you know that in giving some of your wealth to SVBC, you support God's work in St Albert and around the world? Because you give, you enable our staff to engage in full time ministry in this community. A couple of weeks ago, a homeless man dropped into our church on a Thursday evening. Some of you helped him that night. Then the next day, Pastor Serge spent the morning helping him with some very deep and practical needs. If you didn't give, we wouldn't have a pastor of care who could spend time with someone like that.

Because you give, our youth pastor can spend time getting to know young people in grades 7-12 and young adults. He builds relationships with them. He senses their needs and their potential. He gets them to grow together as a group and shares the gospel with them to back up what you're teaching them. He teaches them about building a Christian community and what it looks like to have Jesus at the center.

Because you give, Holly can spend time ministering to the children God brings here. She thinks carefully about each one and seeks ways to address their individual needs so they can experience church as a loving and encouraging place to be. Your giving enables Sean to encourage young and old musicians to glorify God with their gifts. He involves many to use their gifts for the community as we worship. All this focus on lives and ministry stores up treasure in heaven.

Your giving also maintains this facility. Ministry happens here. Other community groups use it to impact lives. Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon meet here to offer support to families affected by alcoholism. Stop Abuse in Families ministers to those recovering from domestic violence and abuse. The morning and after school care provides a faith based focus to kids every school day. They also meet all day when school is out.

But your giving enables even more ministry out there. Your giving provides missionary support to the Magwoods who serve in the Send Canada office; our own Tiffany Neufeld who serves in Japan, Yuri Nakano who also serves in Japan and who we will hear from next week, The Schusters who serve in East Asia, Nelson Wolf with Salaam ministries to Muslims, the Bowers with Power to Change and the Siewerts with Faith at Home. So think about people all over the world who hear the good news because of your gifts.

Then there's the Project Jesus for Children in Central and South America, Chain of Love in Brazil, HART with Katya who we heard from today, Operation Christmas Child, White Cross to help the hospitals in Cameroon, Compassion Centers in Honduras. Your giving supports the Northern Canadian Evangelical Mission and its ministry to Indigenous people. It

also supports the ministry of Kindred House to street workers in the sex trade in downtown Edmonton; the Pregnancy Care Center to women and families dealing with unwanted or unplanned pregnancies and the Mustard Seed. The more you give away wisely to ministries and programs that help people spiritually and physically, the more your money becomes the real wealth of changed lives in others. We will likely never cease discovering the treasures stored in heaven through these ministries.

**Since the kingdom of heaven does not allow dual citizenship, we (Christians) must ask for God's help to check our loyalty and address any allegiance weaknesses.** Which kingdom reigns supreme over my wealth?

If God has revealed to you that you are living with Jesus as your king over your life and wealth, then rejoice. You have accepted one of the keys to the kingdom. You experience the blessing that comes with giving your wealth away for your own spiritual benefit and the benefit of others.

If God reveals that some of your wealth is under the kingdom of heaven but you've reserved other parts for the kingdom of the earth, confess that and ask Him how He wants you to change. I remember as a student excusing my need to let the Lord reign over my wealth because I claimed I didn't have any. But I did have some to actually go to school and live. So I needed to repent of that and learn to tithe on the little I had.

Then when we got married, I soon learned that Lori was much better than I was at managing the month to month finances. She got us on track to a regular giving to the Lord. Our lifestyle adjusted accordingly. We can testify the Lord's faithfulness and the joy of seeing others benefit through our giving.

If God reveals that you have never really thought about bringing your wealth under Jesus' reign, will you acknowledge that to God? Then ask Him to show you the first step in making this right.

Maybe you have seen today for the first that there is a light and a darkness. You've been living in darkness but today you've seen the kingdom of heaven and its light. Or maybe you've been trying to live as a dual citizen. But today, you've discovered that's not possible. Will you make that choice today to believe in Jesus Christ and what he said and what he did? Will you revoke your citizenship in the kingdom of heaven and call out to God to bring you into His kingdom? Anyone who calls out in faith upon Christ will be saved and brought into the kingdom.

In the kingdom of heaven, God is for us. He promises to provide for us. He invites us to grow and learn the joy of putting wealth in its proper place – not as our god but as His provision. Tim Keller writes, "The only true solution to the

power of money over you is to see yourself rich in Christ.” So let us recognize the spiritual wealth we have in Him. Then we can look at our material wealth with healthy spiritual eyes and use it to His glory.