**November 17th 2024 Twenty Fifth Sunday after Trinity**

**Text: Matthew 6:19-23** 0747

**Theme: An Incorruptible Inheritance!**

May the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ ever grant unto you peace and contentment that we may have our hearts fixed on things above. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it has always been fascinating to me to listen to and observe the manner and thought of a person who was raised by parents who lived during the Great Depression. Those times were hard; it was a time when employment was scarce, and if one were lucky enough to find work the pay was little and did not meet the needs of a family; it was a time when people would stand for hours in bread lines to receive food for their family, not a week’s worth of food, but what could be easily eaten in a meal was forced to last for several meals; It was a time of scraping the bottom of the barrel for most people. My grandmother was one of those people, and her mantra on life, as taught to her by her parents, was: “waste not, want not.” Anytime we would visit her and have dinner with her she would demand that everyone eat every piece of food on their plate, any leftovers were carefully wrapped up to be eaten for the following meals. Not a thing was wasted; empty coffee cans could be used for planters; the concept of disposable diapers was foreign, rather cloth diapers were used, washed, and re-used; she was so frugal , and against waste, that she would only have one small bag of trash each week. She drove the same car for years and years, unwilling to spend money for a new one.

Now I do not say these things in a disparaging way toward those who are like my grandmother, but to show that those who lived during the Great Depression, or were raised by parents who lived through it, understand and comprehend better than most how frail and fragile the possessions of this world are. We hear in Proverbs: *“Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” (Prov. 23:5)* The writer endeavors to show unto us that the things of this world are fleeting, they are temporary. Yet as the generations pass on and we become further and further removed from the time of the Great Depression, passages like this one in Proverbs are not as easily understood. For example, how many of us can truly understand what it is like to leave the dinner table still hungry? How many of us have experienced the helplessness which comes from being unable to work and provide food for our families? Now to be sure many of us have experienced difficult financial times in our lives, some have not, but none on the scale of those times. It is for this reason that I believe there is a spiritual danger posed to us in our day. Everything is so readily available to us all the time, that we can hardly fathom going to the kitchen to find there is no food there. There is a special danger posed to us, especially the younger members and generations because we have never been faced with that level of destitution. I believe Satan has begun to use the prosperity and blessing of God upon us and our country as a temptation to worldliness. We are in danger of falling prey to the devices of our adversary, because he whispers to our flesh: *“thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” (Luke 12:19)* It is because of this very danger that Jesus uttered the words of our text this morning, to remind us of the truth concerning the riches and comforts of this life, and to affix our hearts on more certain and lasting treasure. Our text for today is found in the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew beginning at verse nineteen.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O most merciful and loving Lord, our Father in heaven, we give Thee most hearty thanks for Thine innumerable gifts. We are indeed unworthy of them, yet Thou openest Thine hand daily and givest to us abundantly all that we need to sustain this life. We implore Thee to keep us from falling prey to our adversary the devil, who endeavors to cause us to set our affections on these things rather than on Thy forgiveness and salvation. Teach us to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven where there are no thieves, nor corruption. Set our affections on these things, dear Lord, that they may be the treasure of our hearts even now, in this life, and afterward bring us to the incorruptible inheritance promised unto us through faith in Thy Son Jesus Christ, who went to the cross to purchase our inheritance for us. Grant all these things for His sake. Amen.

Guided by the Spirit of God let us learn first that an incorruptible treasure is:

1. **Found in the heart.** We read verses nineteen through twenty one of our text: **read verses here.** When men stumble and fall into sin, many times it is due to their flesh convincing them that what they currently have is always theirs. For example, in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were deceived into believing that they had always the fruit of all the other trees in the garden, but the fruit of the forbidden tree could be a further pleasure, a greater paradise. They had been deceived by Satan because he used what they had against them. “It has always been there, and it will always be there.” That is often the thought of many who fall prey to Satan. It is against this that Jesus warns in our text. When He tells us not to lay up treasures for ourselves on earth, He is not saying that we should never have any savings or possessions of any kind, but rather that we should not set our heart upon them. For whatever your heart is set upon that is your treasure. If a man’s heart is fixed on riches and possessions, then his treasure and delight is in them. He has no room left for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus has said that we cannot serve God and mammon. One cannot have his treasure on earth and in heaven. No, it is one or the other, never both. For our heart will be fixed upon only one.

Thus our Lord tells us to rather lay up treasures in heaven, for in heaven these things cannot be lost. Despite the lies of Satan the things we enjoy in this world are not everlasting. Though we may have abundant bread today, there may be no bread tomorrow; though we may have family, good looks, a beautiful car, or whatever, they can all be gone tomorrow. They are fleeting and frail. Here today and gone tomorrow. Even if we were able to keep them our entire lives, we cannot take them with us when we die. As Paul said: *“for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out.” (1 Tim. 6:7)* It may seem like the things of this world are eternal because we have never been without them, but we are warned not to be deceived into putting our trust in them because they are only temporary. Yet there is a treasure which cannot be taken away, it cannot wear out. That treasure is in heaven. Many would postulate that Jesus is teaching a merit of works here, but that certainly is not the case. What is it that Jesus warns against? In short, idolatry; against making gods out of the things of the world. Over against idolatry is the worship of the true God. Jesus compares the treasure on earth with the treasure in heaven because whatever our hearts trust in is our God. If our hearts trust in riches, we worship money, if our hearts trust in Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of God we worship the true God. And what is the treasure? Peter says: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” (1 Pet. 1:3-4)* You see Peter ties faith and our inheritance together showing that the inheritance is simply those things promised in the Gospel. It is not some storehouse of gold in heaven, nor a reward for good works, but grace. We will be granted, we will inherit, the completed redemption promised in Jesus, and this through faith, or trust, in Jesus Christ and forgiveness through His name and for His sake. Jesus is teaching nothing but the pure Gospel here. Believe and be given treasure in heaven, believe not and your treasure will be taken from you. Thus our Lord continues and says that an incorruptible treasure which is found in the heart is:

1. **Reserved eternally.** We read verses twenty one through twenty three of our text: **Read verses here.** The final two verses of our text seem to be disconnected with the thought of Jesus, as if He had switched to a different topic here. Yet if these last two verses are taken in connection and in the correct understanding of what has gone before, they fall right in line. Thus Jesus in preaching treasure in heaven through faith in Him, was at the same time teaching the inner light or darkness based on faith or unbelief. Therefore if Thy heart is fixed on things of this world and lacks the light of the Gospel then the eternal reservation is darkness. But if Thy heart is fixed in faith on the treasure of heaven then the eternal reservation is light. You see this world is nothing but a preamble to eternity. Whether one believes in something beyond this life does not change the reality of it. This teaching is nothing but a further elaboration on what He had already taught. If the eye of a man is single, Jesus says, then his body is full of light. What Jesus is saying is that if our treasure is found in heaven through faith then we are led by the light of God to the light of eternal glory. Listen again to Peter’s words: *“to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, RESERVED in heaven for you.” (1 Pet. 1:4)* There is a reservation made in heaven for all those who believe the Gospel. They are to receive the inheritance, the treasure, which is laid up for them in heaven. This treasure cannot be corrupted, it cannot be stolen, it cannot be lost, for there sin and evil are gone, and only the light of God’s righteousness shines there. No darkness will be found. This is our treasure, dear Christians, it is waiting and reserved for us in heaven. We did not earn it, we do not deserve it in any way, but God has granted it to us for the sake of His Son Jesus. We have it because He purchased it for us. Through faith our hearts are now fixed on heavenly and incorruptible treasure. Yet our text is a warning to us, a warning to guard our hearts lest they fall into temptation and the snare of the devil to pry this from our heart and replace it with a heart fixed on the things of this world.

For this reason Jesus closes our text with a grave picture. If the eye, which is designed to allow light into the body, becomes evil it ceases to bring light in, but shuts it out entirely. Thus the whole body becomes darkened. This happens when a man has fixed his heart on the things of this earth. While the example given is on the treasure of this world, on the mammon, it applies to everything. If your heart is fixed on wealth, power, honor, respect; if it is fixed on your appearance, your good looks, clothing; if your heart is fixed on your car, your house, your friends; if your heart is fixed on your wife, your husband, your kids, then your body is full of darkness, for you have made an idol and are worshipping it in your heart. Those who worship these idols also have made a reservation, a reservation to destruction. Hear the words of Jude: *“woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots on your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is RESERVED the blackness of darkness forever.” (Jude 11-13)* Because of their unbelieving and adulterous heart they have made a reservation in the darkness of hell forever. These reservations are eternal, they are without end. Let each of us thank God our Savior for rescuing us from the reservation of darkness which we all deserve, coming into the world to make it possible for us to receive an incorruptible treasure. Let us guard our hearts dear Christians, as did Moses who did choose: *“Rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” (Heb. 11:25)*

I believe that the generations and young people of today are faced with a temptation of Satan directed at us with the end goal being to cause our hearts to be fixed on the comfort and relative ease of our day. It is his goal to set up an idol for us to worship as did the Israelites of old. It is imperative then for us to heed the warning given by our Lord in our text, and be reminded time and again of the danger which threatens us. Our only Shield and Buckler is God almighty. Only He can give us what is necessary to withstand the temptations of Satan to idolatry. Therefore Paul says: *“wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (Eph. 6:13)* Our gracious God has given us His armor to withstand the wicked one, and that is His Word. Contained in the Scriptures we find all that we need for our salvation, and all that we need for our preservation. One of those is to heed the warnings given like unto our text. We are warned to not affix our hearts on the fleeting things of this world, but rather on the forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ. What we have today may be gone tomorrow, but our treasure in heaven is sure, certain, and eternal. The faith given us through the Gospel affixes our hearts on the treasure of heaven, this is abiding, this is strong and unfailing, and will never pass away, as we sing: *Now I have a firm foundation which holds my anchor ever sure; it was laid before the world’s creation in Christ my Savior’s wounds secure; foundation which unmoved shall stay when heaven and earth shall pass away.” (TLH #385:1)* Amen.