I invite you to open your Bibles to this morning's scripture text, which can be found in the book of Matthew chapter 6, verses 19-24. This can be found on page 685 in your pew Bibles. We continue in our series today "Respectable Sins". Today's text encourages us to serve God to have a truly satisfied spirit.

The Word of God

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, 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. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money.

This is the Word of God for the people of God

When a person loves earthly things so much that he can't get along without them, he opens himself to much suffering, both physical and mental. Some people, for example, have taken foolish risks to keep their riches intact. They have died rushing into burning houses or were killed because they stubbornly resisted armed robbers. Apparently, they felt that without their material possessions life would not be worthwhile.

Others, when forced to part with their wealth, have been thrown into agonizing despair, even to the point of suicide. In 1975, six armed gunmen broke into the deposit boxes in a London bank and stole valuables worth more than $7 million. One lady, whose jewelry was appraised at $500,000, wailed, "Everything I had was in there. My whole life was in that box." What a sad commentary on her values!

What is it about human nature, with our spirit that never seems to be satisfied? So dis-satisfied that our coveting heart makes us continually look at the pasture on the other side of the fence? Why is the grass always greener there? Here we stand, on "this side" of the fence, in a green pasture, receiving blessings from God, all of our needs being provided from the amazing favor of our Father in Heaven, and yet, we continually seek more. More money, more stuff, bigger house, newer car, the latest phone, faster computer, more, more, more!

This isn't anything new. We shouldn't think that our desire for more is some weird aberration that has only recently appeared on the scene. It's always been the problem of man ever since the fall of Adam. If it was something that was only going to afflict people of this century, then Jesus would not have had to warn Christians of every age about it as he does here, in the sermon on the mount.

He sets it before us because it's a *problem*, it's a *heart problem* that we are all susceptible to. We choose to serve our possessions, our wealth, our property, or as the bible calls it, our mammon. (mam-o-nas') The word that Jesus uses here mammon, (mam-o-nas') is actually an Aramaic word, and it doesn't just mean money, it means anything of earthly value. Property in general, money in particular, possessions. *NT:3126 mamonas (mam-o-nas') – possession's, wealth, or property*

So what would that include? Cars, houses, 401K's, clothing, horses, LEGO's, XBOX or Play Stations, anything. Of course, it will include what's in your wallet or in your bank account, but its far broader than that. It's all of those earthly things that we decide that we're going to spend our lives accumulating. Those things that are important to us in an earthly sense.

Please understand, this is very important; it's not the possessions themselves that Jesus is condemning. Jesus is not saying money is bad, possessions are bad; what he is condemning however, is a wrong heart attitude towards those things, those possessions. Now Jesus wanted us to know it is simply impossible for us to serve two masters, whole heartedly. One or the other of those masters will eventually rule in our hearts.

That's one of the primary lessons of the rich young ruler. Do you remember what happened to the rich young ruler in the book of Luke in chapter 16? He came running to Christ, and he asked him an incredibly good question, he asked him how to be saved. He acknowledged that Jesus was a good teacher, Jesus asked him the question why do you call me good? Jesus tells him no one is good except God.

Jesus wasn't saying "I'm not good," Jesus was saying something far more important than that, he was telling him "I am God." That's why you can call me good. So he came running to Christ, asking him how to be saved, and Jesus said well you know the commandments. The rich young ruler makes this huge claim, well I've kept them all since my youth, no heart idols here Jesus, no divided loyalties. But when Jesus said to him, you still lack one thing, sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow me. What did he say? We read that when he heard this he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. He went away sorrowful.

We look at that and we say oh wow! Wow! Here we have the Messiah! The Lord of Glory! He says, sell what you have and come follow me, and we are thinking to ourselves, what wouldn't I have given, to follow Jesus for three years in his ministry. To be there while Jesus did all of his miracles, to be present while he preached those sermons. To actually be sitting there at his feet when he gave his sermon on the mount. That would have been amazing wouldn't it?

Yet, I put it to you that thousands of American's make exactly the same choice. They turn away from Jesus sorrowing, because they have many possessions. The rich young ruler didn't realize it and neither do the thousands of American's realize it either, that their real master is not God, their real master is mammon. They wont part with their idol even if it means not going to heaven.

In our decision to serve our mammon, we will continually have a spirit that is dis-satisfied and seeking more. This is a very dangerous thing, so dangerous, that Jesus talked more about money than any other subject.

Let's talk about money. Jesus says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:19–21)

Jesus spoke more about money than he did about heaven, and hell. Money is a *big deal* to Jesus. There must be something really *dangerous* about money. He said, "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24).

My guess is a lot of rich people object immediately, saying something like: "No, it says the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Money is not bad." Excuse me? It is harder "for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," period, not a rich man who loves his money. It is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

Money is dangerous. If you have it and depend on it, it will kill you. If you don't have it and crave it, it will kill you. Money can kill us, because it reveals our hearts. Where your *heart is*, comes out. My question is: What does it mean to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven rather than treasures here on earth? Let's see if we can get some help from Jesus. In his demand that we lay up treasures in heaven.

Here is a story to be told. (pew bibles 737) We're in Luke 12:16-21 where a man's crops have produced much more than expected. He said, "What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?" (Luke 12:17). His answer? "I will tear down my barns and build larger ones" (Luke 12:18).

That is what I will do with all my accumulated wealth here at the end of the year when the stock market is going through the roof. What will you do with all your extra money, mr. rich man? He's going to build bigger barns.

Then he says to himself, "Well, self, let's relax and eat and be merry for you have goods stored up for years to come." You fool. "This night your soul is required of you" (Luke 12:20). Then comes this crucial sentence in verse 21. "So is the one — meaning fool — who lays up treasure for himself and is not *rich toward God*" (Luke 12:21).

What in the world does that mean? "*Rich toward God*." I struggled with that for years. Surely it doesn't mean give God lots of money. He doesn't need any money. He has the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10). No, being rich *toward God* doesn't mean to *enrich God*. I think it means *count God as your riches*. Rich toward God means, if you are looking about for where to be rich, focus on God. He is your great reward. He is your riches. Therefore, laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven would be living in such a way as to maximize God as your treasure. Handle your money in such a way as to show that God, and not money, is your treasure.

Here is another word from Jesus about money. Matt 6:24 He says, "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"

What does it mean to serve money? I think that will shed light on what it means to serve God. If you ask professing Christians who they serve, what do you think their response will be? "As for me and my household we will serve…. THE LORD!"

I doubt any of them will openly admit, "As for me and my house, we will serve… Money! We will serve money ok? Money is going to be our god, our master, that's who we are going to serve!" Nobody would do that. If they did everyone around them would ask them "what!? Are you joking?! Are you kidding?!" As for me and my household we are going to serve money?! Nobody would say that.

But here is the really odd thing, millions, and I mean that sincerely, millions of professing Christians are actually doing *exactly* that. They and their households are serving money! Of course, they wouldn't openly admit or say it, but if you were to examine their lives, that would be the conclusion that you would have to draw.

All of the major decisions that they make in their lives; where they live, where they work, where they studied in school, the circles of their friends, what they say and what they don't say. All of those decisions, the vast majority of their day to day decisions, revolves around accumulating and holding onto money.

How do you serve money? You don't do what money says. Money is not talking to you, like a little dollar bill with a mouth on it saying do this or do that. To serve money means to calculate all of your behaviors, all of your life, do what you do, to maximize what money can give you. Always asking what can I do to maximize the benefits that can come to you from money. That would be serving money. I think most people would probably agree with that.

So, if we were to ask them, where is your treasure, where is your heart? We would have to conclude, *here* on earth. That their real treasure is their possessions.

So, what does it mean to serve God? Don't bring in an alien meaning from outside this comparison. If you just stick with the comparison, serving God would mean doing everything you do, calculating all your behavior to maximize the pleasures you can get from God, all the benefits you can get from God in Christ. All that God can be for you, not what money can be for you.

You cannot serve God and money that way. Those are mutually exclusive. Either you are angling to make God your treasure in everything or you are angling to make money your treasure in everything. So, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven means to calculate all your behavior to maximize the benefits that you get from God, the benefits you have in God through Jesus Christ.

There is one more amazing comparison about serving God, not money. Let's look at Luke 12:32–34. It goes like this,

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Luke 12:32–34)

There's a connection between laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven (which we've already looked at) and sell your possessions and provide yourselves with purses or moneybags that don't grow old. You are to provide yourselves with moneybags and treasures that never fail, and you are to give to the needy.

Jesus is saying: The second command is how you do the first. Sell your possessions and give to the needy, and thus provide for yourselves treasures in heaven.

I think the answer here of how you provide for yourselves treasures in heaven is that you take your money and you show your freedom from it. It is not your God. It is not your treasure. You love people, and you want people to love God, so you are displaying the love of God to them by sharing more and more of what you have. And in doing that, your joy in God, your treasuring of him, increases.

Jesus gives us a motive for that kind of lifestyle in verse 32, "Fear not, little flock." We tend to be afraid. We think if we give this much to the church or if this much to a ministry that cares for the poor, we may not have enough. Jesus says, "Fear not, little flock." And if he calls us a flock, what is he? God is our Shepherd. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's . . . " — so now we have a Father and we have a Shepherd — "good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Now he is a King.

Jesus piles up pictures of God to take away our fear of giving and of laying up treasures in heaven. He is a Shepherd. He is a Father. He is a King. Shepherds know everything the sheep need to live, and provide for them. Fathers take incredible care with their children. Kings have authority and power to get it done. God is all of that for you.

So don't be afraid. Be lavish, generous, cheerful givers. Treat God as your treasure above all treasures, and then show how much he is your treasure by giving and giving and giving to those in need.

"Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5–6). Therefore, among all the people on the planet, may Christians be the most lavish, generous, free givers, at great risk to themselves.

Heavenly Father,

Thank you, Father, for your Love, for your grace, and for your favor

upon our lives as you take such great care of us, your children.

Thank you Lord for sending us our Savior Jesus, to be our Shepherd,

Who knows what we need, and provides for us everything required to

Have a fully satisfied heart and spirit as we serve him.

Forgive us when we have put our worldly possessions first in our life,

Making them the center of our desires rather than serving you.

Give us the strength to turn away from the idol of mammon in our heart,

And to serve you, the one true king reigning supreme in our hearts.

May our witness to the world reveal You to be our real treasure,

in heaven, as we lavishly give to those in need.

Above all, May you have all the Glory, all the Honor, and all the praise,

In the precious name of Jesus Christ our Savior we pray,

Amen.