

INTRODUCTION

Our main text for this Treasure Truth series is found in Matthew 6, where Jesus warned us not to hoard stuff down here on earth. Instead, He told us to lay up treasures in the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the movie series, "Pirates of the Caribbean", Captain Jack Sparrow had an unusual compass. It didn't point North. He explains it to Elizabeth. Jack says, "True enough, this compass does not point North." Elizabeth says, "Where does it point?" Jack replies, "It points to the thing you want the most in this world." In one movie it points to the Black Pearl. In another movie, it pointed to a bottle of rum Jack wanted, and then it pointed to the Fountain of Youth. If you had Jack Sparrow's compass in your hand today, what would it point to? Jesus said that treasure has the same effect on your heart. He said, "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also." Your treasure has a magnetic attraction to your heart.

It is part of our fallen human nature to grab and hold onto stuff. As kids we stuff our toy boxes with as many as we can get. Then we grow up and keep accumulating more and more stuff. We love our stuff. That's really the reason you have a house, so you can fill it with stuff. Someone once said your house is just a pile of stuff with a roof on it.

And one of our favorite things to do with our stuff is to store it. There are over 58,000 self-storage facilities in the U.S. (The country with the next highest number of units is Australia with 1,000). This represents over a 2.5 billion square feet of space for people store their stuff. Americans pay \$12 billion a year for someone to store our extra stuff. And do you know what's happening to a lot of that stuff? Moth, rust, and thieves are getting to a lot of it.

Then when we die, we leave all this stuff behind for our children to fight over. Wars are fought over stuff. Marriages break apart arguing over who gets the stuff.

Treasure Truth is where Jesus tells us to de-clutter our lives. If you have excess stuff, give it away, or sell it and give the money to poor people. Or sell it and give the money to spread the Gospel. That's how you store up treasures in heaven.

Before we read our five keys for unlocking God's Treasure Truth, let me give you the background of this passage. David became the greatest King in the history of Israel. One day he was looking at the beautiful palace he lived in. Then he thought about how God's house was still the same tent, a tabernacle, Moses had built. He said, "What's wrong with this picture? God deserves a better house than I have." So he planned to build a Temple. God told David he couldn't build the temple because he had too much blood on his hands. David was a warrior King. So David accepted God's restriction, and decided that his son Solomon would build the Temple. But David would raise all the money for the building of the Temple. With that background let's read the five keys and look at our scripture.

1. God owns everything; He allows me to manage some of His wealth.
2. I can't take treasure with me to heaven; but I can send it on ahead.
3. My heart abides where I invest God's money.

4. I honor God when I give back to Him the first and the best.
5. The antidote for materialism is the joyful cycle of giving to receive to give even more.

1 Chronicles 29:1-5. "Then King David said to the whole assembly: 'My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the Lord God. With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God—gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble—all of these in large quantities. Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple: three thousand talents [113 tons] of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents [214 tons] of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. Now, who is willing to consecrate themselves today to the Lord?'"

It was time to collect the offering. Notice David didn't say, "Who will give your money?" He said, "Who will consecrate, dedicate themselves to God today?" Treasure Truth is not about giving money; it's about being consecrated to God. The people gave generously.

Then in verses 10-13, David offered a powerful prayer of thanksgiving: "David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, 'Praise be to you, O Lord, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.'"

vs. 14-18. "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. O Lord, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you."

Most of you know a couple of things about Chick-fil-A. First, they make great chicken sandwiches. Second, it was started by Truett Cathey, who is a committed follower of Jesus Christ. From the beginning, he led his company to embrace Christian principles about financial management. The cows are pretty effective with their message to eat more chicken because last year Chick-fil-A sold \$6 billion worth of chicken sandwiches.

Ed and Sandy King owned two of the Chick-fil-A franchises in Tyler. They have been two of the most generous people in the community. Ed went to heaven this past year. Recently Sandy was kind enough to give me a framed scripture that is displayed in the Chick-fil-A Corporate Office in Atlanta. Recognize it? It's David's prayer we just read from 1 Chronicles 29.

These financial principles aren't ancient history, they work today in Christian business and they work in your family and financial life. Let's use King David as a case study of man who understood God's Economy. He did three things to illustrate God's Treasure Truth.

1. DAVID'S DESIRE WAS TO KNOW AND FOLLOW GOD'S HEART

In both the Old and New Testaments, David was called a man after God's own heart. Paul was reviewing Old Testament history when he said, "After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'" (Acts 13:22)

God wanted a permanent place of worship in Jerusalem, and that became the focus of David's life. He wanted to follow God's desires.

Our heart represents the control center of our lives. It's where we make choices. From an early age, David decided he wanted his heart to be aligned with God's heart. What God wanted, David wanted. That's why David could say, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." That doesn't mean you just say, "Praise the Lord" three times and God will give you a Maserati because you desire one. When you are truly delighting in the Lord, His desires become your desires.

Are you a man or woman after God's heart? Is your main focus in life to seek FIRST His Kingdom? Your heart will either be committed to the world's philosophy about possessions or God's Treasure Truth. The world says, "Get all you can. Can all you get. Sit on the can, and poison the rest." The world says, "This is MY money and I earned it. I don't have to share it with anyone else."

But you can set your heart on the desires of God. Paul writes, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-2)

People without Christ have their hearts and minds set on this world, the fads, fashions, finances, and fun this world offers. But we're different. We're made for a higher calling than this world. So we need to get our hearts and minds out this world and focus on the priorities of heaven.

2. DAVID GAVE HIS PERSONAL TREASURE TO EXPAND GOD'S WORK

David first gave out of the royal treasury for the building of the Temple. That would have been like government spending. But he took it another step and gave his personal fortune as well. He said, "In my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and

silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple: [113 tons of gold; 214 tons of silver]." 1 Chronicles 29:3-4. At the current price of gold and silver, David's personal offering for the temple was around \$18 billion U.S. dollars.

The Hebrew language seems to indicate that David didn't just give a portion of his personal treasure. He gave it all. Please excuse the Texas hold-'em analogy, but David said, "I'm all in!" He put his treasure in the providing a building for worship. And because he put his treasure there, his heart followed.

Please notice three things about David's amazing offering. First, he wanted the temple to be so beautiful that it would be a testimony to the greatness and glory of God. He held nothing back. Second, he gave to a ministry he would never see happen. He died before the temple was completed. That didn't stop him. He was giving so future generations could be blessed by the worship in the beautiful temple.

A few years ago as we were building these facilities, our theme was "For the Joy of all Generations." Many people have given so future generations of families, children, students, and single adults can have a place to meet God.

The third thing about David's gift was that He knew one day the temple would crumble and fall. In less than 400 years, Solomon's temple lay in ruins. They built a second temple and it was destroyed as well. This is a reminder that everything we build in this world is only temporary. But David knew it wasn't about bricks, wood, mortar, and gold. It was about the people who would meet God through the ministry of the temple. Buildings are temporary, but souls of men and women are immortal.

God has blessed us with beautiful facilities, but one day, these will all be gone. Every building on the planet will one day be gone. But it's what happens in a church building that is eternal. We are dealing with the Word of God and the souls of people.

Once David transferred his treasure to the building of the temple, that's where his heart dwelt. This is also true for us. When you put your money in something, then your heart follows.

A few years ago I bought some Apple stock. Since then, I've been interested in the Apple products and how Apple stock is doing. Before I bought stock, I hardly even thought about Apple as a company.

Some of you have sponsored a child in Uganda through Parental Care Ministries. Before you did, you probably never thought much about children in Uganda, but now, you think about them and pray for them often. Your heart followed your treasure.

I mentioned last week the two ways we store up treasures in the Kingdom of heaven. The first is by giving to help poor, hurting people. The other way is by investing our resources in taking the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who don't know Him.

A.W. Tozer was a twentieth century prophet. He wrote: "As base a thing as money is, it yet can be transmuted into everlasting treasure. It can be converted into food for the hungry and clothing for the poor; it can keep a missionary actively winning lost men and women to the light of the gospel. Whatever is given to Christ is immediately touched with immortality." (*Born After Midnight*, p. 107)

3. DAVID REVEALED THE SECRET OF JOYFUL GIVING

All this amazing generosity produced joy. The Bible says, "The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly." (1 Chronicles 29:9)

There's a distinct correlation between generosity and joy. People who are stingy with their possessions are often miserable like Ebenezer Scrooge in "A Christmas Carol." I've known some people who were such tightwads that they squeeze a nickel until the buffalo roared. Jack Benny was a comedian with a reputation for being a skinflint. He told the story of being confronted by a robber who said, "Your money or your life." Jack Benny didn't say anything and the thief said, "Look, bud! Your money or your life, which will it be?" Jack Benny said, "I'm thinking it over."

But the most joyous people I've ever known are those who are givers. The Bible says, "God loves a cheerful giver." We have a Bible verse on all the offering receptacles that says, "God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7) I remember when we first put those out, Everett Brazeal was our Stewardship Director and he said we ought to have the sign say, "God loves a cheerful giver, but the church will accept money from a grouch."

In his prayer of thanksgiving, David gives us the three truths that reveal the secret of joyful giving.

A. Everything we have is a gift from God

After this remarkable multi-million dollar offering, David broke out in a prayer of thanksgiving and said, "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you."

Everything we have is a gift from God. What are some of the gifts God has given you? Your health is a gift. Your job is a gift. Your intelligence is a gift. Your children are a gift. Your friends are a gift. Your possessions are a gift. Your wealth and investments are a gift from God. You and I don't own anything. Everything we have is on loan from God. He gives it to us for a little while and says, "Manage it well. Don't hoard it. Keep it in circulation."

When Lyndon Baines Johnson was President, he was a larger-than-life Texan. Nobody ever accused him of being humble. One day, he arrived at Andrews Air Force Base on Air Force One. As he got off the plane, there were over a dozen helicopters parked on the ramp. A Marine corporal was leading him toward Marine One. He pointed and said, "Mr. President, this is your helicopter." LBJ said, "Son, they're ALL my helicopters!"

But he was wrong—he didn't own any of them. Compare that attitude with that of John Wesley, the Founder of the Methodist Church. Wesley was riding his horse back from a preaching assignment when one of his associates met him and said, "Mr. Wesley, I have bad news. Your house just burned down." Wesley thought for a moment and said, "It's not my house. It's God's house. That's one less thing for me to worry about!"

B. We give to God only what He has first given to us

David prayed, "All this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you."

I recall when my daughters were young I would give them money for Christmas shopping. They would take the money I gave them and buy a Christmas present for me. So they gave me gifts I had supplied the money for! But I was still blessed and happy with the gifts they gave me because I knew the gifts they gave me were motivated by love.

That's the way it is with all of our offerings to God. He gives us the money, and we use His money to make an offering to Him. But He is still blessed when He knows the gifts we give Him are motivated by love.

Bob McQueen, a former congressman from Ohio who is also a Christian, tells a story about taking his young son to McDonalds. He got his son a large order of French fries, and without thinking, reached over to get one of the fries. His son grabbed his hand and pushed it back and leaned over to protect his precious fries. He said, "Dad, you can't have any of these fries, they are MINE!"

Bob pulled his hand back and thought about his son's lousy attitude. He just wanted to hang out with his son and have some quality time, but his son's greed spoiled the fun. Bob said that in less than five seconds, God taught him the most important lesson on stewardship he'd ever learned. Bob wrote these thoughts: "1. My son doesn't understand from whom these fries came. I am the one who went to the counter and ordered and paid for them. He doesn't understand that I am the source of the fries that he claims are his. 2. He does not understand that I can take those fries from him if I wanted. I'm bigger and stronger than he is, and they're mine after all. 3. He doesn't understand that I don't really need his fries. I can buy my own. I could go to the counter and buy a hundred large fries if I wanted."

"Yes, my son had a terrible attitude. But the Lord spoke to my heart and I realized that I sometimes disappoint the Lord with my bad attitude also. God taught me that: 1. He is my resource. All that I have is from Him. I can really call anything MINE. 2. God can take my French fries any time He wants. He can give me more or take them away. 3. God doesn't need my French fries. But he wants me to share what He gives me so we can walk together in a loving relationship."

C. God tests our hearts according to how well we manage His resources

David prayed, "I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you." David realized God tests our hearts when we give. Are we giving willingly and joyfully? Have you ever considered the possibility that God places resources in our hands to test us? Are you passing the heart test?

Just imagine you are sending a birthday present to your dad who lives in another state. You buy him a nice coat and wrap it in a box and take it to a UPS office for them to deliver. But instead of delivering it to your dad, the UPS driver takes the package home and opens it up. He likes the coat and puts it on. Then as he delivers packages he has the audacity to wear the coat you intended for your dad. How would you feel about that? If you heard about that you would be mad as a hornet. You'd say, "Who does that guy think he is? He's only the middleman. That package isn't his. He was only supposed to deliver it to my dad!"

Have you ever stopped to think that the reason God gives you money and resources sometimes is because He wants you to deliver it to needy people, or some ministry to spread the Gospel? But instead you take His money and you hoard it and save it. We're just the UPS guys: We need to deliver it where God wants it. You may say, "Well, why doesn't God just give it straight to those needy people or that ministry Himself?" Because He wants you to have the BLESSING of honoring Him by putting His money and resources to work.

Are you passing God's heart test? Is your treasure invested in God's work so your heart will be there too?

Ron Blue is a respected Christian financial teacher. He uses the word "stewardship" for what we're calling "management" but what he says is true Blue: "You can't fake stewardship. Your checkbook and your credit card statements reflect all that you really believe. They reflect your goals, priorities, convictions, and even the use of your time. A person who has been a Christian for even a short time can fake prayer, Bible Study, going to church, and so on, but he can't fake what his financial statements reveal."

CONCLUSION

I have a pastor friend who attended Baptist Bible Institute in Graceville, Florida, now called The Baptist College of Florida. He worked in the school cafeteria. Every week a tractor-trailer load of Tropicana Orange Juice backed up and unloaded at the cafeteria kitchen. He wondered how they could afford it, but he soon learned there was no charge for the orange juice.

Then one day in chapel, an old Italian-American man named Anthony Rossi gave his testimony. In broken English he talked about how he moved from Italy in the 1920s with nothing but the clothes on his back. A Christian couple befriended him and he became a follower of Jesus. He worked in an orange grove until he was able to buy it and then he developed a patent to chill orange juice and ship it. He was so grateful to God that He promised to give back 50% of what He earned. Tropicana Orange Juice became one of the largest juice companies in America, worth millions. For decades he donated free Tropicana Orange Juice to Christian colleges all over the nation. He was an active member of Calvary Baptist Church in Bradenton, Florida. He sold the

company in 1978 for \$500 million and used his treasure to build a missionary retirement village in Bradenton. My friend said when he gave his testimony in chapel, Mr. Rossi focused on two words: grateful and generous. He was so grateful that God had blessed him that he received great joy in being generous.

Here's the bottom line: Do you know how to tell when your treasure and heart are in the right place? Two words: Grateful and Generous. If your treasure and heart are in the God's Kingdom, you will be grateful for everything you receive from God and you will be generous with everything you have. Your heart abides where you invest God's money. If you want to know where your heart is, look to see where you're putting your treasure.

Pastor Geoff Thomas from Wales has expressed this thought in a way that blessed me. He wrote: "Your treasure is the magnetic pole that pulls and draws your heart and makes it point towards it. Acknowledge that a certain thing is your treasure and when you are there you'll find a lot of other things because we give our lives to what we treasure the most. You'll come across your heart, and so your love, and your obsessions, and your thinking, and the issues of your life, and your investment, and all that you really are—it will be there with what your treasure is. So if the Lord Jesus Christ is your treasure then you will find your heart is there at His feet pulsing in love for him, and your joy will be full there in the presence of your treasure."

Where's your heart today? Is it languishing in some bank vault or safe deposit box? Or is it thriving in the ministries of your church or on the front lines of missionaries taking the gospel to the nations? Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

OUTLINE

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2. *I can't take treasure with me to heaven; but I can send it on ahead.*
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- B. We give to God only what He has first given to us
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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
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