

LOCATING OUR HEART

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Mathew 6:19-34.

If we were just to think of our physical bodies, the issue of locating our heart would be an easy one to answer. The Lord was not talking, however, about the organ that supplies blood to our body. He was speaking about the things that really count for us, the things, putting it like this, that make us tick. He was talking about our ultimate hopes and interests. It is to do it with the plans, places and people our heart really is. In particular, it is about whether our heart is with things that are to do with earth or to do with heaven. Would we actually be able to answer that question? Do we know ourselves well enough to be able to answer the question?

1. Treasure on earth

This is where our heart ought not to be. We should not be investing our hopes and our dreams in this world, in things that only last as long as our earthly existence and then run out.

Some people seem to live as though they imagine themselves looking back, maybe at the moment of death, and being able to say to themselves that they did all they hoped to do, saw all they hoped to see, went to all the places they wanted to go. They want to die with no regrets that they missed out on anything in life, that they did not fail to enjoy any pleasure or miss out on their quota of sin indulged. In many ways, this hoped for end-of-life experience is a pastime for the rich who have the chance to fulfill these dreams. Others have to set their sights lower and be more realistic.

Often, even if not as clearly worked out as this, people are thinking that this life is all they have and that they have to cram in all the experiences, relationships, and possessions that they can. So they invest their time, their money, their hopes, their futures in getting things that will last no longer than this life. So they aim to have bigger houses, bigger gardens, more leisure time, more holidays. Poorer people may just live envious and resentful of those who have the means to make these things happen in this life.

But when that is where our treasure is, then these are also the things that we worry about. This we can see in Matthew 6:25-32. Getting hold of and then protecting our possession of the things of this earthly existence, become the be-all-and-end-all of life. Nothing else counts.

But the Lord warns us that this is futile. It will fail as a policy for life. 'Moth' and 'rust' will ruin these things. Prized possessions break or grow old. Dream holidays are ruined by the weather. Pandemics come and spoil plans and hopes. Other people break in and steal our dreams by their bad behaviour, by their bad advice or by straightforward deception.

And at death, none of these things are of any value. On the contrary, they will condemn us. They will turn to dust and ashes. The recollection of them will bring no joy. The lack of regret we hoped to feel at death will turn to deep regret as it did for the rich man (Luke 16:25) on thinking about his good things he had in this life. They are no help to him now. He would swap them all now to be able to go to heaven and escape the place of torment where he now found himself.

If our heart is in these things, we must repent. Judgment lies ahead. It is a doomed policy for life.

2. Treasure in heaven

The Lord would counsel us to have all our hopes set upon eternity and to be investing time and energy in attaining to the glory of the next world. These are the best of things that have a value that outlives the earth and our earthly existence. These are the things that are bound up with the Lord Jesus Christ, with heaven, with eternity. We are to sell up all our hopes of this earth and being animated just by what this earth can supply to us. We are to disinvest our time and energy, our secret hopes and plans from being bound up with solely what this world can offer. Seeing our interest tied up with the Lord means that we have seen through all the rest and that the whole focus of our life has changed. We have found that which is truly long-lasting, satisfying, real, true and valuable. We have found the things which ultimately are all gain and not loss when weighed in the balance. These are the things that count most for our immortal soul which one day will be joined to an immortal body.

The things of the Lord Jesus Christ do not suffer loss as do the things of this life and the hopes that are bound up with them. What the Lord did on the cross does not suffer loss. The new covenant is not re-negotiated and its benefit to sinners re-written. There are no U-turns with the Lord. The Lord Himself does not change. He is ever God and ever man. Thinking of His humanity, He always remains with us as our Redeemer and Friend. The relationship that has been established through His precious blood is not subject to alteration. And God does not change. Nothing corrupts Him. He remains faithful to all His promises to His people. Neither does heaven change. It is good and pure. It will not change when we get there or suffer from wear and tear, pollution or decay.

As we check to see if our heart is bound up with these things, we remind ourselves that we can be very confident in all the arrangements that have been put in place at the

cross. None of these arrangements alter even if we might suffer loss to the things that belong to the earth. We have to ask ourselves where our heart really is. What would happen to us if we were to lose our goods? Would that be the end of us? Would we still believe that our real treasure in heaven was still in tact or would we despair? If that is true of us, we need to change course urgently. We need to turn against our heart and hear the counsel of the Lord to us. We need to locate our true heart to find out if all is well with us. We need to be sure that we are building for a future where we have a real and lasting home and where we have real wealth rather than that which fades away.