

“KEYS TO THE TREASURE (#1):
FINDING SECURITY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD”

(Matthew 6:19-21, 24-33)

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[Cornerstone U.M.C.; 10-16-22]

--I--

1. **[11am ONLY:]** Read CEB Text: Matthew 6:19-21, 24-33 and Pray.
2. We as Americans today live in the most affluent culture on our planet, at one of the most affluent times in history.

A--Even with the economic struggles we've dealt with during and after the pandemic, we still have one of the highest per capita incomes in the world, and one of the highest disposable income levels of any nation on earth.

1--Yet, even with all this, on the whole, we are generally unhappy as a society. ¹
 Why is that? Could it be that we have our focus on the wrong things?

2--You know, Jesus taught that the “treasures” of this earth *cannot* be the source of true happiness or fulfillment.

B--That’s why over the next three weeks we’ll be sharing in a series that I hope will help us to unlock some “Keys to the Treasure” of our life in God through the proper understanding and use of our resources and possessions.

3. Now, this series is *not* going to be primarily about *money* (even though we’ll talk about it every week).

A--But money IS a big part of the problem in many of our lives. Whether we’re in plenty or in want, it has a direct connection to our stress level, our anxiety, and the health of our relationships.

B--It’s no wonder, then, that Jesus talked about the relationship between our treasure and our hearts. And because he cared so much about our hearts, he therefore talked about what we do with our treasure.

C--Because of all that, what this series is really about, then, are the *heart issues* that cause us to want more, thinking that we’ll find happiness and contentment in what we *have*.

D--So, over the next three weeks, my goal is to explore Jesus’ teachings about treasure, and how a proper understanding and use of it can help us not only find security in an uncertain world, but can also unlock a vital relationship with God,

4. So, let's start by talking about how we go about "Finding Security in an Uncertain World." Listen to what some people say about this...
[WATCH VIDEO "Security" (SermonSpice.com, Time: 2:21, cut 1:50-3:44 of orig. video)]

A--So, where do you find security in life? ...your sense of peace and fulfillment?

1--Well, in addition to the jobs, relationships, and other things these people mentioned in the video, many of us find it in the "treasures" we have on earth -- things like big homes, nice cars, high salaries, and cool gadgets.

2--A USA Today poll once found that 61% of us define "The American Dream" as "*Being financially secure.*" ²

B--What this tells me is that what drives most of our obsession with earthly "treasure" is not so much "covetousness" (a desire to have what isn't ours), but the need to feel safe and free from anxiety.

C--E.G., we don't want to have to worry about our future (like when we retire), and so we accumulate and surround ourselves with "things", thinking that they'll somehow insulate and protect us from potential bad things that might happen.

5. Now, we first need to understand that there's absolutely *nothing* wrong with wanting (and searching for) a sense of security in life.

A--In fact, the scripture says it's one of the basic needs God created us to have as human beings. ³ But the question is: "WHERE do we go to find it?"

1--OUR problem, you see, is that we tend to search for security in and among the fallen "treasure" of our world, which by its very nature is inherently INsecure and UNcertain.

2--Economist Ronald Bloom once wrote that "*The only thing certain about 'economic certainty' ...is uncertainty.*" ⁴

3--Yet, the irony is that even knowing this, we *continue* to look to insecure things (like money and possessions) to find certainty and security in life.

B--And the result, of course, is that the more uncertain/insecure "things" we have, the more anxious, stress-filled, and fearful our lives become.

1--Pastor and author Dale Burke refers to this the "*Stuff-ocation*" of America -- that as a society we are "*suffocating*" on our desire and lust for "*stuff*." ⁵

2--Author Randy Alcorn similarly wrote that "*The uncertainty of material things makes materialism [e.g., living life focused primarily on and around material "things"] the mother of anxiety.*" ⁶

6. Perhaps that's why Jesus said what he did in today's scripture from Matthew 6:19-21.

[**9am**, Hear what he says there... // **11am**, Hear his words again...]

19 "Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth & rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. 20 Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. 21 Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

A--In other words, whatever it is that we "treasure" here on earth will draw the affection of our "heart," because our "treasure" and our "heart" tend to track together.

B--Now, most of us understand how this works, don't we? For example, when my family and I moved to a church in Marietta 17 years ago, neither Trish nor I had interest in giving money or time to Sprayberry High School, even though it was near our house.

C--But when our daughter Jennifer started attending there in 2008, our hearts/ affections (and our money!) was drawn there... because our "treasure" (Jennifer) was there. ⁷

D--And what did Jesus say?... "*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" ⁸

--II--

7. So, if our hearts follow after our "treasure," and earthly "treasure" can never provide lasting security, then where *can* we find it? **Where can we find real "Security in an Uncertain World"** (if at all)?

A--Well, the answer to that is found in the rest of today's scripture in Verses 25-32 --

[**9am**, Listen to what Jesus says there... // **11am**, Hear Jesus' words again...]

25 "Therefore, I say to you, don't worry about your life, what you'll eat or what you'll drink, or about your body, what you'll wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds in the sky. They don't sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth much more than they are? 27 Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? 28 And why do you worry about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don't wear themselves out with work, and they don't spin cloth. 29 But I say to you that even Solomon in all of his splendor wasn't dressed like one of these. 30 If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully, even though it's alive today and tomorrow it's thrown into the furnace, won't God do much more for you, you people of weak faith? 31 Therefore, don't worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' 32 Gentiles long for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

B--And then in Vs. 33 he gives the key to it all, "*Desire/seek first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*"

1--You see, Jesus here is *not* saying we can't own "things"; just that "things" shouldn't own *us* -- that God designed them to be "*possessions*" for our well-being, *not* for them to be the "*possessors*" of our soul.

2--He's saying that true security is not found in our *finances*, but in our *faith* -- not in *earthly* "treasure," but in the *heavenly* "treasure" that is God our Father.⁹

3--All of the things of earth -- money, possessions, our job, health, family, friends, and even ourselves -- will eventually let us down, ¹⁰ but just as God always provides for the birds of the air and flowers of the field, He can always be counted on to take care of us. ¹¹

C--God wants us to put our ultimate trust in *Him* as our Provider, rather than trusting in the *blessings/things* He provides. ¹²

D--And THAT is the cure for our anxieties and fears about money and possessions, and it's what enables us to walk in absolute security.

8. Now, the Bible actually contains a whole host of ideas to help us practice this kind of faith, and find this kind of security.

A--But in the interest of time, today I simply want to share a simple card that contains "10 Keys To True Security" (ushers if you'll please pass these out to everyone here as I continue, and those of you ONLINE can find them at www.pastorbriang.blogspot.com).¹³

B--I want to invite everyone to read & prayerfully consider these and their related scriptures -- discuss them at home and in your classes and small groups, if you like.

C--But most important, try putting them into practice, and see if you don't notice your feelings of faith and security increase!

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9. The bottom line, you see, is that God *wants* you and I to be secure in our lives. But finances and earthly "treasures" -- of any *amount* or *form* -- will *never* provide that.

A--No. The only *real* security in today's world is the absolute security we have when we walk in a daily relationship with God our heavenly Father --... ¹⁴

B--...Because as we do that -- and as we learn to handle money, possessions, and other worldly "treasures" *God's* way -- God promises to take care of us.

10. In the end, you see, "*Finding Security in an Uncertain World*" is merely a search for God Himself. He wants you to find Him. Will you trust in Him?

11. [PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

¹ Because money is such an important part of our lives, it can either be the source of great joy or happiness, or it can be the source of great frustration, disappointments, challenges, and anxiety. For example, finances are still one of the leading causes -- if not of divorce -- at least of tension in our marriages and significant relationships.

² USA Today “*Snapshots*”, April 14, 2009.

³ For example, read Genesis 28:15, Exodus 6:7, Psalm 46:10, Isaiah 49:23, Joel 3:17, and others.

⁴ Bloom, cited in Dr. Dale Burke’s sermon “*The Heart of the Matter #3: The Search for Certainty in an Uncertain World*”, preached 10/17/2004.

⁵ From Dr. Dale Burke’s sermon “*The Heart of the Matter #3: Security*”, preached 10/3/2004. For him, this condition should cause us to ask the question: who do we love more... God? or “stuff”? He goes on to say that a series of things flow out of us, depending on our answer, and that all of this affects the condition of our heart. To help identify which one we track towards more, he suggests we reveal our heart condition by asking a series of questions that test “Who/What do we love?” (based on 1 Timothy 6:9-10). Specifically, looking at the set of words in the column below, which set do we relate more to -- the words on the left column? or the right? When we think about money and money-related issues, are we...?

<i>Fearful</i> (Note: if we’re afraid of what’s happening in our economy, maybe it’s because we love stuff too much)	<i>Confident</i> (Note: if we’re confident even amid the shambles of the economy, it’s probably because we’re trusting more in God)
<i>Coveting</i> (i.e., always wanting more)	<i>Content</i> (i.e., content with what we have)
<i>Frustrated</i> (when thinking about money)	<i>Fulfilled</i> (when thinking about money)
<i>Sad</i>	<i>Joyful</i> (especially when we pay bills and balance our checkbook; do we have sadness or joy when we do these things?)
<i>Tight</i> (are we a tight-wad w/what God gives us?)	<i>Generous</i> (is it easy to share what God gives us with others?)
<i>Indulgent</i>	<i>Compassionate</i>
<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Thankful</i>
<i>Pessimistic</i> (regarding money and finances)	<i>Optimistic</i> (regarding money and finances)
<i>Eternally Poor</i> (no or little relationship with God, setting aside only tangible, earthly possessions)	<i>Eternally Rich</i> (e.g., setting aside non-tangible Ariches” like loving and serving others)
(Words in this column reveal more of a LOVE OF “STUFF”)	(Words in this column reveal more of a LOVE OF GOD)

Burke points out that the world produces the things on the left hand column, but faith in God can help us move into more practice of the attitude, perspective, characteristics and things in the right column [From Dr. Dale Burke’s sermon “*The Heart of the Matter #3: Security*”, preached 10/3/2004].

⁶ Alcorn, cited in Dr. Dale Burke’s sermon “*The Heart of the Matter #3: The Search for Certainty in an Uncertain World*”, preached 10/17/2004.

⁷ If you are putting (or have put) children through college, then you know the same thing -- when your money went there, you took an interest in that school you probably didn’t have before (unless you were an alumni, in which case you were invested already)!

⁸ What’s more is that where we spend our money not only *draws* our heart/affections, but it also *reveals* our heart/affections, as well.

⁹ Read also 1 Timothy 6:17, “*Do not put your hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God.*”

¹⁰ To these other things to base security upon I ask: (1) Can we find security in family or friends? No, they can (and often do) let us down; (2) What about security in our good health or job? No, as the economic events of this year show, we can lose both in an instant! (3) So, what about finding security in “ourselves”? Well, I don’t know about you, but in my experience, absolute self-assurance is an elusive myth, because deep down there *are* (and *will* always be) things beyond my control that are frightening -- things that actually *do* prevent me from feeling complete peace and security, even if I give the outer *appearance* that I have it.

¹¹ In the Old Testament Hebrew, God is called “*Jehovah-jireh*” (“*God our Provider*”). Read Psalm 103; Philippians 4:19; and Matthew 6:11.

¹² In other words, God *supplies* us with our needs by giving us the tools and resources we need to live life for Him (such as our intellect and talents, that helped us get a good job, so we have a good income, so we could buy the nice car and have the big home, etc.). But then, most of us begin to focus on these things that are *given* to us and place our security in *them*, rather than in the one who is the *giver* of these things. This is like saying that it’s better to have a few dollars in the bank than to be the son of the banker. Yet, our security is always better if we know that we’re the son of the banker, because the banker *owns* the bank.

And that’s what God is -- the owner of the “bank” we call “life.” He distributes portions of blessings to all of our lives, but then most of us are so excited about what He gives us that we start worshipping the *gifts* instead of the *giver*. Yet, the Giver (God), not the gifts, are the ultimate source for our security, because the gifts are always uncertain. The Giver, on the other hand, can always be trusted and believed to be true and faithful and secure.

¹³ **“10 KEYS TO TRUE SECURITY”**

1. Learn to value eternal rewards over temporal riches (Matthew 6:20 & 33)
2. Work hard with a servant spirit (Exodus 34:21; Matthew 20:26)
3. Worship faithfully, giving your “first fruits / tithe” (your *first* 10%, rather than your left-overs) to God’s work through His church (Exodus 34:26; Leviticus 27:30; Malachi 3:10)
4. As God blesses you, learn to give sacrificial “offerings” (anything in addition to and above the tithe) to other worthy causes (Mark 12:44; Luke 21:4)
5. Save consistently (try to save at least 10% each pay period) (Prov. 21:5, 20)
6. Avoid / get out of debt by spending *less* than you earn -- pay off your credit cards, and do not carry a balance (Romans 13:8; Proverbs 22:7)
7. Remember that you are a Steward of what you have (not an Owner), and practice consulting your heavenly Father’s will on every financial decision (Psalm 24:1)
8. Learn to be content with what you have, finding peace in God’s promises and presence, rather than in the need for more “stuff” (Hebrews 13:5-6)
9. Believe that God your Father will provide for your daily needs (Matthew 6:11; Philippians 4:19)
10. Be compassionate and generous with what you have, especially towards the poor and needy (Proverbs 11:25; Acts 20:35)

¹⁴ Another way of saying this is that financial security is based more on our *faith* than on our *finances* -- on us asking “*Do I really believe I have a heavenly Father who is committed to me?*” Because if so, then we can all rest secure because we know my Father knows and will find a way to meet all our needs.