

Stingy Dad, Generous Dad
Mathew 6:19-34

Friends, I have to confess that when I was growing up I was often envious that other kids got things which I didn't.

Now don't get me wrong – I wasn't a deprived child... it's just that my friend's parents didn't seem to mind including things like potato chips, and pop, or Twinkies on the grocery list.

My other friends got to eat out at McDonalds on a regular basis, or they got the latest brand name shoes for school.

And other families would travel across Canada to see the mountains or the ocean or they would go to places like Florida, or Disney World for vacation.

But we only got pop and chips on our birthdays, and we rarely went out for McDonalds, we got whatever shoes were on sale... and when we went on vacation - we always went to Minnesota – and it wasn't to see the Mall of America – it was to visit our relatives... on the farm!

And when I was a teenager – I was the only one without cable TV, in fact we didn't even own a TV until the winter Olympics came to Calgary, and then my parents managed to get an old 1970's floor model with rabbit ears that some TV Store was trying to get throw away...

We didn't even ask about getting a VCR or a video game system. That's what we went over to our friends' houses for.

And growing up like this shaped me in two ways.

On one hand, I felt like I was missing out on the plastic pop culture of North America. So when I grew up – I made certain that to make up for all that stuff I thought I missed out on. I ate at McDonalds as much as I wanted too 😊 I got cable TV, a video game system, and I bought season passes to Canada's Wonderland.

But on the other hand, as a kid I learned that I didn't really need all that stuff.

So when my daughter – at age 10 – was asking me if she could get a cell phone ... I heard my parents speaking through me as I answered back *“You’re only 10, you don’t need a cell phone!”*

It was the same when she wanted specialty cartoon channels.

I answered back with *“basic cable has plenty of cartoons and kids shows we don’t need pay extra for the deluxe package... and I know the latest Play Station Gaming system is amazing – but our other one is only two years old and it still works fine!”*

I could hear myself repeating what my parents had said to me. Have you ever caught yourself doing that with your kids?

It’s interesting to see how our parents’ attitudes about these sorts of things are passed on to us and how they affect the way we parent our children, isn’t it?

And that’s the whole idea behind Robert Kiyosaki’s book *“Rich Dad Poor Dad.”*

Kiyosaki explores how our attitudes towards possessions – and especially money and success are passed on to our children – by the kinds of comments and choices we make.

And He shows us how they are implicitly picked up by our kids and shape their attitudes about wealth and success.

And Kiyosaki believes that while most people are well educated in reading, writing and arithmetic, they lack a basic understanding of how our current economic system works and the financial smarts to take advantage of it.

The goal of his book is to make people aware that the traditional path to success - of staying in school, studying hard, getting good grades in reading, writing, and arithmetic so you can put them to use in a good job and make good money - doesn’t lead to financial success in the current economic system.

He’s not trying to say that we shouldn’t send our kids to school and have them study hard – but rather that we can’t

rely on this traditional path to give our children the riches, or financial freedom that could be theirs or ours...

So in Kyosaki's terminology the "dad" who doesn't realize this is the poor dad.

The Poor Dad still believes that its possible to be frugal and thrifty and save your way to financial freedom – but his life tells otherwise.

In fact he struggles all his life worrying about money, making the statement "I can't afford it!"

By comparison, Kyosaki's rich dad understands how the system works and is able to work the system so that money isn't an issue.

His different mindset is revealed in the fact that he doesn't say "I can't afford it," but instead he asks "how can I afford it?"

The Rich Dad doesn't save money – He invests it, he puts it to work so that it grows. He learns about the tax laws so that he is able to take advantage of tax credits and benefits offered by the government.

He is enterprising, outgoing and is willing to take risks, and if they pay off he will gain more wealth - but regardless of how much wealth the rich dad has he is financially free because he is not controlled by money, but in control of his money and he makes it work for him.

Do you see the difference?

Now – at first glance I would think that in my own life my parents were more like the poor dad. They didn't strike me as risk takers or entrepreneurs, or people who were concerned with the ability to generate wealth and financial freedom, and they often told me they couldn't afford certain things.

But, while I may have thought my Dad was stingy when it came to things like Mc Donald's, junk food, and cable TV and

fashion fads, I now realize that it was so He could be extremely generous and invest as much as he could in the Kingdom of Heaven – or as our scripture passage this morning puts it *“store up for yourselves treasures in heaven”*

The reality was that I had a spiritually rich dad – which I’ll call a Generous Dad, who knew how to take the material blessings which God had given him and leverage them to produce Spiritual results.

For example, he could see that by being thrifty with other things he could afford to invest in a Christian education for myself and my three sisters - and that investment has paid off in giving us all a strong Christian worldview and faith.

I’m sharing this with you today because my sense is that God wants us to reflect on what we are passing on to our children about how we use our many blessings to store up treasures in heaven, to seek first the Kingdom of God.

So we need to ask ourselves - are we stingy or generous when it comes to using what we have to store up treasures in heaven?

And we might not know if we are stingy or generous because we might not be familiar with how we can actually store up our treasure in heaven?

Friends Robert Kiyosaki is convinced that people need learn the financial principles our economic system works on so they can profit from it, I’m convinced that people need to learn how God’s Kingdom works so that we learn how to invest materially in order to become rich spiritually.

If I were to write a book about this I would call it – Stingy Dad, Generous Dad...what people of faith teach their children about wealth.

It’s a bit of a controversial subject I know...it was for the people of Jesus’s day as well – because it confronts how we

are living our lives and spending our time and investing our money and challenges us on that.

The fact is that it's all too easy for us to become consumed in being consumers, and forget about God and others in the process - and the disturbing thing is that we can pass that on to our children!

So to correct this Jesus teaches us – *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures **on earth**, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures **in heaven** (Matt 6:19)*

But it's interesting to note that what Jesus is not confronting the practice of storing up wealth... only where we store it.

You see in the ancient world it was common practice for wealthy people to take all their treasure with them to the grave.

The ancients believed in the afterlife, and so they stored up their wealth for it and it was buried with them – they enjoyed

their riches in this world and they expected to continue to do so in the next.

But that mentality was flawed – not only because it's not true, but as Jesus warns, when we store up treasure on earth *“moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal.”*

Just think of all the tombs of Egyptian Kings that were looted...

So, even if it was true that your worldly wealth could benefit you in the afterlife – it was at risk of decay, or being stolen, and it wouldn't last.

Now, our thinking has changed a bit since Jesus time.

First - we don't take the afterlife seriously anymore, and so we've become even more focused on storing up treasure on earth, and many believe that it's the only thing that gives meaning to this life.

So we say “you can’t take it with you when you’re gone!” or “you only live once!” So we better enjoy our wealth while we can.

However from time to time we come to the realization that our material blessings can be “eaten by moths, destroyed by rust and stolen by thieves” and they don’t seem to give meaning to our lives like we thought they would...

And in reaction to this we take a “low view” of wealth and possession and we attempt to rid ourselves of our desires and attachments to material things - and focus on what really matters – like relationships or people...

But we’ve made three mistakes friends...

First, we ought to take the afterlife very seriously - Jesus says to us “*store up treasure in heaven*”

Second, if we take the afterlife or our next life seriously we’ll realize that the purpose of material possessions is to invest in

the next life – not hoarding them or enjoying them only “on earth”

And third, the solution to the limitations of our material possessions to provide meaning is not to rid ourselves of desire and attachment to material things and become Buddhists...

Notice that Jesus doesn’t say **pick a different treasure** - a spiritual, immaterial treasure that won’t decay. The problem isn’t with what you treasure – it’s where you are storing it!

Store up your treasure in heaven and you will have something to live off in the next life – guaranteed, and it won’t decay or get stolen.

It’s like how we invest now – while we’re earning income so that when we retire we will have something to live on. Only when you store up in heaven there is nothing – not even economic uncertainty - which can affect it.

We **can** invest in the afterlife because we **can** take it with us when we're gone, we don't live once – we only die once!

The scriptures are quite clear that what is coming in the afterlife is this world -- made new once again, this world -- made free of human sin and rebellion.

In the afterlife we live in this restored world, interacting with the creation and worshiping God face to face.

So friends if you are a follower of Jesus Christ what you are storing up in Heaven is everything that you've ever done for God's glory...

Everything you've ever used to work towards helping others believe in Jesus Christ...

Everything you've ever done to steward and take care of this world and everything you've ever done to prevent sin and evil from affecting how you live and love and work.

The only thing you won't bring with you is your sinful nature and the sickness and disease and suffering which resulted from that.

So "taking it with us" or "storing up treasure in heaven" is all about what we do with the material blessings and wealth that God that gives us now.

So the question we need to reflect on this morning is "Are we investing them for that time when all things will be made new? Are we really storing up our treasures in heaven?"

Because that makes all the difference in how we manage those treasures on earth. Let me give you some examples...

When we use our food, our shelter, our money to do charity work, to help the poor and needy and the homeless we want to be intentional about doing it in such a way that it reflects the truth that one day Christ will make this world a place where there will be no more poverty, hunger or homelessness

so that we give this hope to those we help – and in doing so it also strengthens our Hope.

We're investing materially and growing richer spiritually...

Or when we recycle, drive a hybrid, use eco-friendly products in an effort to take care of the planet we need to be intentional that we're doing this because of our faith that one day Christ will make it new once again?

We may decide to go green because we're afraid that the environment will be destroyed, we may start to do charity out of humanitarian compassion – but as followers of Jesus we want to grow to the point where all that we do with our material blessings comes from a place of faith that Christ will return to bring in the Kingdom of God.

That is how we invest materially to grow spiritually

That is how we store up our treasure in heaven – and that frees us from the danger which Jesus warned of not being able to serve both God and money.

You become financially free because you're not serving money - you serving God with your money... and with everything else that He's blessed you with.

So apply the same thinking about the coming Kingdom to your work.

Do you may do a good job with your skills and knowledge as an engineer, a teacher, an accountant, an artist because you are proud of your reputation – but storing up treasure in heaven means you're going to be intentional about preparing to use your skills and knowledge in the New Creation to Worship God in ways we can't even imagine yet.

What will it be like to design a building in the New Creation?
To write a story, paint a picture, hike in the mountains or tee

off on the back nine with Moses? (*who probably has an advantage when it comes to dealing with water hazards*)

I don't know, all I can say is the scripture tells us that *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him"* (1 Cor 2:19)

So it's beyond the best of what we've experienced this to be so far. Isn't that amazing!

So friends - we need to work at developing and growing and shifting the focus of why we do what we do with our charity work, our environmental efforts, our possessions, our skills, our jobs, our relationships so that we are more and more inspired and driven by the promise of the New Creation.

And then Jesus words in vs. 21 become a promise to us in a whole new way. *"Where your treasure is...there your heart will be also."*

So not only will your current desires and longing be focused on wanting to know what this New Creation will be like – it also means that one day you will also be there too!

You will end up *where you've stored* your treasure.

So, friends now you know. Now you know how you can use your material blessings – your treasure - to gain spiritual benefits, to invest in the Kingdom of Heaven and reap the rewards of being a part of the New Creation in the afterlife.

And don't be stingy about giving to the Kingdom of Heaven because your children are watching.

You don't want them growing up thinking that education, good grades, working hard, getting a good job and being a good person is enough – they can have more, so much more... if they learn how to invest it in the afterlife.

Where are they going to learn this from? – Not from our society.

The majority of people in our society think if there is an afterlife, it's rather vague and undefined and that God will look at them and see that they tried their best, that they were a good person and that their heart was in the right place.

But friends- as we've learned this morning it's not about having your heart in the right place – it's about making sure you put your treasure in the right place – and Jesus promises that your heart will follow it.

So friends – heed the words of Jesus and store up for yourselves treasure... in heaven.

Amen.