

Ash Wednesday  
St. Matthew 6:16-21  
February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Lay Not Up for Yourselves Treasures

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

### **Sermon Text:**

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.”

### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear friends, what do you treasure? What is it in which you find comfort when things are going amiss? To what source do you turn when life is not what you want or expect it to be? Whatever things we look to in order to bring us happiness and joy that is what we treasure. Our treasure is the thing that makes us happy. Our treasure is the thing that brings us comfort and joy. Where our treasure is, there are our hearts also. For the heart seeks out that which brings us joy and peace. What does your heart treasure? In what does your heart find comfort and peace when dark days surround you? There is your treasure to be found.

Our Lord + Jesus warns us today about placing our trust in earthly treasures. He says, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth.” What this means is not to place our trust in the things of this earth. For the things of this earth will be taken away. They will be destroyed. Moth and rust consume them. Thieves break through and steal them. They are taken away and destroyed. All things in this life are fleeting. They will not last. Even the things of this earth and life should endure, we will not endure. We will find ourselves in the grave. Nothing that we have collected and treasured in this life will come with us into the grave. We have brought nothing with us into this life, and it is certain that we will take nothing out of it. We are born with nothing, and we will die with nothing. Therefore, our Lord + Jesus warns us not to make our treasure anything of this life and world.

What are we then to treasure, my dear friends? We are to treasure the things in Heaven. That which our Lord God gives to us cannot be taken away, they cannot be destroyed. The armies of Hell—the devil and his angels—seek to destroy all that is good in this life; they seek to take away any shred of hope that sounds in this world. They may be able to deceive people into putting their hope and faith in false gods—in earthly treasures—but they cannot and will never be able to destroy or take away the gifts that the Lord God bestows upon His children. The gifts that our Lord God gives to us—the treasures of Heaven—cannot be taken away or destroyed. The gates of Hell cannot prevail against them. The

hordes of Hell cannot break through and steal them from us. The enemies of the Lord God cannot consume them away from us. They are ours and will be ours for all of eternity.

Therefore, my dear friends, make these things your treasure. The treasures of Heaven should be our treasure. The gifts of the Lord God is what we should be placing our trust and hope in when the world seems to be filled with greater darkness and evil. For the treasures of Heaven cannot be consumed or stolen. The Word of God, and the Blessed Sacraments cannot be taken away from us. The promises of the Gospel, that we have forgiveness of sins on account of the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ, cannot be taken away from us. And because we have the forgiveness of sins won for us by the death of our Lord + Jesus on the tree of the holy cross, and because we continue to cling to that cross in faith, we are also promised eternal life with Him, and salvation from sin, death, and the devil and his angels.

These things cannot be taken away from us, and they cannot be destroyed. But we can surely neglect these treasures. We can turn away from these treasures, and try to find solace in the earthly treasures that can be destroyed and taken away. The enemies of the Lord God know this about us very well. They use the bells and whistles of this world, to draw us away from the only source of salvation that we have; that this world has. The devil and his angels succeed, because they use the world and our own sinful flesh to draw us away from the treasures of Heaven, to deceive us into trusting in the earthly treasures of this life. We find ourselves far too often pulled along into this trap, because we are unable to resist the temptation time after time.

This is why our Lord + Jesus in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew—in the Lord's Sermon on the Mount—instructs us about fasting. Our Lord says to us not "if" you fast, but "when" you fast. The purpose of fasting is to skip a meal, or two, in order to find more time for study of God's Word and prayer. If skipping a meal, if not eating, allows us time to strengthen our faith through increased exploration of the holy Scriptures, would it not stand to reason that any earthly treasure could be done away with by us in order that we might find more time to study God's Word and speak to Him in prayer? The reason why our lives are often fraught with worry and concern is because we spend too much time seeking after earthly treasures that come and go as quickly as the rain and sun. The things we have made our gods are destroyed and stolen from us. The things we look to for hope and comfort are removed from us, and we become shattered and broken because we have made a treasure out of something that does not last forever.

This is exactly what the devil, the world, and our own flesh want for us. They want us in despair. They want us seeking after things that do not last forever. Because if we were to seek the treasures of Heaven, if we were to strengthen our faith and remain steadfast in the Word of God, we would not find ourselves in despair every time something bad or evil happens to us in our life. Instead of having a shaking foundation—a foundation of shifting sand—we would find our feet firmly planted on the solid rock which cannot be moved. The enemies of the Lord God do not want us to have our feet firmly planted on solid ground. That means that they have lost us. It means that they cannot lead us into despair and hopelessness.

When we store up the treasures of Heaven; when we place our faith and trust in the Rock which is the Christ, we know that our sins have been paid for, and that we will inherit an eternal life in Heaven. This is a joy that cannot be equaled by the earthly treasures of this life. For this is a joy that cannot be taken away from us, or destroyed. Therefore, our Lord + Jesus would have us fast, in order that we may take the time to draw closer to Him, so that He may use the Holy Ghost to create and sustain faith in our hearts by the means of grace. With a sure and confident hope in the gifts of the Lord God, we know that no matter what evils this world throws at us, we will prevail; we will endure steadfast until we receive the crown of eternal life in Heaven. For we know by faith that the treasures of Heaven cannot be stolen or consumed away from us.

Therefore, my dear friends, what is your treasure? Where your heart is, there will be also your treasure. Our hearts cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus. Our hearts cling in faith to the promises that He gives to us on account of His suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross. Our hearts cling in faith to the hope of an eternal life in Heaven, where we will enjoy the true treasure of our hearts for all eternity. The true treasure of our hearts is the works and merits of the Christ. He has won salvation for us by His perfect obedience to the Law of God, and He has paid the penalty of our sins by His own innocent suffering and death.

This is a treasure that cannot be stolen away or consumed by the enemies of the Lord God. This is the treasure that we possess through faith in our Lord + Jesus. Let us cling in faith to this eternal treasure at all times. But especially let us treasure this eternal heavenly treasure when this world threatens us with every evil and darkness it can throw at us. For this eternal treasure dispels the darkness and destroys the evil of this world, by promising an eternal heavenly realm where there will be joy and happiness forever and ever. Lay up for yourselves this treasure, my dear friends, and you will always find joy and happiness in this life. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*