**Seek First the Kingdom**

**The Word**

Read together Matthew 6:19-34

**The Big Idea**

Jesus’ call to seek God’s kingdom is an invitation to pursue our own ultimate self-interest. When we see reality clearly as he does, seeking God’s kingdom will be the only life that makes sense.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. How does this idea strike you: that rather than calling us to self-denial, Jesus often appeals to our own self-interest and invites us to pursue our self-interest even more fully than we currently are?

2. Imagine a friend coming up to you after church on Sunday and saying: “I still don’t get it. I don’t get what it means to store up treasures for ourselves in heaven. Are we saying there will be gold crowns or cash waiting for us when we get to heaven based on how we lived here?” How would you respond to your friend?

3. Consider the meaning of Jesus’ image of the eye in v. 22-23: that what we focus on radically effects our whole inner life. As you look at your life right now, what is one thing you’re focusing on that’s having an unhelpful impact on your life? What is one thing you’re focusing on that’s having a fruitful impact on your life?

4. Sunday’s message ended with the idea that generosity is the practice that breaks the hold worldly wealth has on our lives and frees us to live in God’s kingdom. What specific practices or postures have been the most helpful for you personally in your quest to keep yourself free from the hold of wealth?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

A. Jesus gives us two main motivations for practicing generosity

1. Compassion for those in need: generosity is for their sake

2. An appeal to our own self-interest: generosity is for our sake

B. The appeal to self interest

1. Jesus regularly invites us to consider our own self-interest in life and simply points us to where it can truly be found

2. When it comes to giving and financial stewardship, we often feel moved by built or obligation, but Jesus’ perspective is that if truly saw reality as he does, generosity would be the only obvious choice for our own sakes

II. Two treasures (v. 19-21)

A. Jesus affirms our desire for treasure; he simply redirects it to a treasure that is deeper and longer lasting: treasure in heaven

 B. Consider the Dot and the line analogy of your life

1. 5 minutes after you die what will become clear to you? What worldly treasures will be utterly gone and seen to be a colossal waste of time?

2. You store up treasure in heaven by investing your resources in people and impacting them for eternity.

a. Paul called the Thessalonian church the joy and “crown” that he would enjoy in eternity because he invested in them in this life in ways that would have eternal consequences.

b. Wealthy Christians are called to be generous with their wealth for the sake of others, and in this way store up heavenly treasure (1 Timothy 6:18-19)

C. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”

 1. Like a dog on a leash, our hearts are tethered to our treasures

a. Consider buying a new car and how much more you think about it and our careful with it

b. Consider online gambling and how much more you care about a football game when you put some money on it

 2. This is why wealth can be a hindrance to entering the kingdom

a. It’s hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom because his heart is tethered to so many other things (Mt 19:23-24)

 b. The third soil is choked by the deceitfulness of wealth (Mt 13:22)

 3. So do your heart a favor and invest your resources in things of eternal value

III. Two eyes (v. 22-23)

A. This image is a metaphor reminding us that what we focus on and give our attention to will profoundly impact our inner lives/the rest of our lives.

B. We all know this from experience

1. If you spend 2 hours a night focusing on the nightly news, you’re soul will likely become anxious, angry, and a bit hopeless

2. Likewise (to Jesus’ main point), if you’re focused on money and material possessions, your inner life will be affected by that.

3. So fix your thoughts on God, his kingdom, and his righteousness, and your inner life will be affected as you experience his peace and the fruit of his spirit.

IV. Two masters (v. 24)

A. Jesus confronts an assumption we have: my wealth serves me and makes my life more free.

 B. Jesus suggests we end up becoming slaves to our money and possessions

 1. Wealth is a rival God that holds out many of the same promises as God

- It promises greater significance, security, and satisfaction, and when we buy into that we give it a power over us, but ultimately it can’t fulfill those promises.

2. Wealth takes us away from our true master who promises true significance, security, and satisfaction

C. Generosity is the practice that breaks the hold of wealth on our lives

 It’s a subversive act that says to wealth: you don’t own me, only God does