

Hey, how are we? Good? If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them and turn to Matthew, chapter 6. The holiday season is almost upon us. I have a strict policy of, "It's not the holiday season until someone nearly gets trampled to death at Walmart." Since that hasn't happened yet, we're not there, so you need to put away your Christmas music. On Friday that will occur and it will be game on. Until then, we're not quite there.

We're going to finish our series entitled *City on a Hill*. Then we'll move into Advent next week. I want to give you some quick background on where we've been out of this series. We haven't covered the whole Sermon on the Mount. We've just covered a part of the Sermon on the Mount. What I want to do is bring you back to speed on what we've discussed. Then I'll take this last text, and we'll do some work on it.

In week one we marveled at the fact that God saved us and created a people out of our backgrounds. If you were here for that week, we did a little straw poll and learned some interesting things about The Village Church. We learned that out there right now some of us are PhDs and some of us are high school dropouts. Those are different backgrounds, correct? That's not the same kind of line. PhD, upper-level grad work, and high school dropout. Those are two different backgrounds, two different stories.

We learned that some of us were loved well by mommies and daddies who didn't divorce and who poured into our souls and loved us well. Some of us had a single parent, either because of divorce or because of tragedy, and they loved us well. Others of us were neglected, and some of us were abused. We learned there are a lot of people here at The Village Church who have come out of backgrounds where there was very serious addiction, whether that be drugs, or alcohol, or other types of addiction.

We learned that some of us were saved when we were little children and a lot of us were saved post-college. We learned a whole slew of us grew up in church for a little while and then bailed for about a decade and then came back around. The one that was a marker for me that really surprised me is that the bulk of us are not originally from the South. We are not originally Texans. According to the bumper sticker, we got here as quickly as we could, but we're not from here. We're from all over. We were born in other countries. We are from different ethnic backgrounds. Some of us grew up with lots of money. Some of us grew up broke...ramen noodle broke.

What we wanted to show in that moment is the lie that sometimes can be heaped upon us and upon thoughts about our faith that there's a type of person who becomes a believer in Christ. Just in our little covenant community of faith that's literally blown to kingdom come, because we are a giant mutt. There's no rhyme or reason to the reality that God saved us. On top of that, he saved us not just to himself, but then he saved us to one another. That's where things get really goofy.

We don't have the types of backgrounds that should create a love for one another and a steadfastness toward one another and a desire to honor one another. We literally, according to the survey, come from backgrounds that should make this place a powder keg of conflict. If you see someone who has been saved straight out of the strip club from a life of drugs and addiction and debauchery and you put that woman into a home group with a good girl who got saved out of Sunday school...

If you put them together and they begin to confess to one another, there's not going to be a lot of mutual understanding there, is there? If the gospel hasn't done its work, if we haven't let the gospel be the glue that holds us together, you have conflict. One feels guilty she saw an R-rated movie that wasn't about Jesus, and the other one is offended the others feel that's sinful. You have a powder keg unless the gospel is what binds them. If the gospel binds them, you have not only peace but brotherly affection.

What we marveled at in week one is that God saved us, and he saved all of us from different spots and different places. He saved some of us straight out of church. We were churchgoing, good, high moral people who thought our moral actions saved us, and Christ snatched us right out of that and helped us understand grace and delivered us. Some of us got saved out of drugs and alcohol and rampant promiscuity, and he rescued us. He rescued both. Some of us were completely not interested, I mean, not interested in Christ at all, and God still saved us.

I had a great conversation with a young man named Aaron who actually came to know Christ at this church. He didn't have a big background in church before God saved him. He has a great testimony because he just despised me. He'd come every week and was like, "Why is this guy always yelling like this? Just talk, bro. Why do you have to scream? You're wearing a mic. You don't need to scream." He didn't really care for the music and really would mock almost everything we did week in and week out.

He would mock what I taught, he would mock the songs, but then he wanted to come back with his friend who invited him. Like, "This is so dumb. I can't believe you do this every week. Can I come with you next week?" He kept coming back until God saved him. Jesus doesn't need you to be interested to wreck shop on your heart. He doesn't need you to be interested. He alone owns salvation, and he'll open your heart even if you don't want him to open your heart at times.

I've already said I marvel more at people who are saved out of religion than I do at those who are saved out of irreligion. Religious people have just enough Jesus to be inoculated to their actual need for him. They know a lot *about* Jesus rather than *knowing* him. They know Jesus like I would know some kind of professional athlete, where I can give you stats about him but don't actually know him. Some of you, your testimony is that he saved you out of that. So here we are, just a giant mutt. God has saved us and called us to himself. Not only to himself but to one another.

We talked at length about how the Bible says you and I should interact with one another with grace as the fundamental understanding that binds us together. We talked about that we are to love one another with a brotherly affection. Now, you've blocked out what I taught on that, so let me remind you. Loving one another with a brotherly affection means I love you enough to get in your business. Notice the lack of amens and agreement. I love you enough to get in your business.

With the gospel as our foundation, with the gospel as the glue that holds us together, I am not willing to watch you fall off the rails, drift off into sinfulness, or celebrate your difficulties and struggles. I love you with a brotherly affection and will engage you. We are to engage one another both in encouragement to spur one another on to love and good deeds and to love graciously when we see error. The church is marked by a love for one another that would have us consistently and constantly encouraging while simultaneously having us willing to risk the relationship to point out error that might lead us astray.

We talked about outdoing one another in honor. That should be a mark of the covenant community of faith. I love this. I'm competitive by nature. I always want to win. There's not a lot of competition in our faith. In fact, Jesus would speak very aggressively against competition. You can't be the best "pray-er." You can't be the best preacher. You can't be the best "fast-er." You can't do that. That's hypocrisy. It's not about competition with others unless you're trying to outdo one another in honor. Now we have ourselves a game.

The covenant community of faith is marked by a desire to outdo one another in honor, that our heads and hearts are on a consistent swivel looking for someone to bless, looking for someone to honor, looking for someone to take the seat below them so they might have the better seat, to take the parking lot farthest so they might take the parking spot closest, and on and on. We are to outdo one another in honor. We are to out-serve one another. It should be awkward. "You first."

"No, you first."

"No, you first."

"No, you go."

"I'm not going to go. That would be a point for you. You go. You're not going to outdo me in honor, bro. Get through the door. This'll get violent. Get through the door." We outdo one another in honor.

I love the Bible's honesty. For all of the argumentation against the Scriptures, the raw honesty in them should draw you to them. The Bible says as a covenant community of faith we rejoice in hope. Can you flesh out that little sentence? We rejoice in hope. That means there will be circumstances that are not pleasant, and our rejoicing, our gladness, is not in where we are but in the promises that God has not abandoned us to our circumstances and will one day, whether that be one year, five years, decades, or at death, redeem all things. We rejoice in our hope, not in our circumstances.

We're patient in tribulation. The world is broken, the world is fallen, but we have not been abandoned. We are constantly in prayer. This is how we're marked to one another. Why? Because God says he has saved us and made us a people from all of these different backgrounds and all of these different shapes, sizes, and ethnic groups. The reason he has made one family out of all of us is so we might be salt and light to the world around us, that we might serve as a preserving agent to culture by and large, and that we might reflect the wisdom and knowledge of God to the world around us.

When you and I are obedient to the commands of God, what we're reflecting, what we're revealing to the world around us is that God is smarter than us. **"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."** Think about that. There's a way that seems right to you. You'll look at the scenario, and there's a way that'll feel right, a way that'll seem right. The Bible says in the end that way leads to death.

When you and I look at marriage, money, family, children, work, play, hobby, and rest through the lenses of the Word of God, when we line ourselves up with how God created the universe to work, we walk in greater joy and the world can see, "God is smart. God knows what he's talking about." The more we rebel against God's commands, the more we actually taint the reflection of God's wisdom and really skew people's perception of who God is and what God is like.

Then we talked about what I believe is such a difficult passage until you understand it, where he looks at the Pharisees and scribes and says, "Unless your righteousness supersedes the righteousness of the Pharisees, you have no part in the kingdom of God." Here's why that's difficult. There are 613 commands in the Old Testament: 365 "thou shalt nots" and 248 "thou shalt." That's what you have.

What the Pharisees and scribes did... That was their game. They were going to keep as many of the commands as they possibly could. Compared to them (I'll just be really honest with you) you are a junior

varsity, seventh-grade, third-string, never-going-to-touch-the-field type of player. These boys could hit in regard to keeping the law. Jesus looks at the crowd and says, "Unless you're better than they are, you have no shot at the kingdom."

There's kind of a weight on that until we let Jesus flesh that out a bit. This is Christ's, God in the flesh's, full-frontal assault on external morality as a righteousness-giver before a holy God. This is the declaration of the kingdom of God that says God is after your heart, not just your external moral action, and if you could do the external moral action but your heart doesn't belong to God you're no better off. Really the rest of the Sermon on the Mount is him unpacking that reality.

Right after superseding righteousness, he gets into this external/internal kind of argument where you begin to see the manifest love of God toward you. What God wants for you is not for you to behave but for you to be free, so free that behavior is natural. Are you with me? He says, "You have heard it said, 'Do not commit murder,' but I say if you have anger in your heart you've committed the same sin." Do you see what's happening there? God is like, "Why would you just kind of be like, 'I don't want to murder anyone,' when you could just have a heart that doesn't get angry so easily?"

What Jesus wants is not for you to just obey the Law but rather to have a heart that's so set free that being obedient to the Law becomes very easy. I know a lot of you are like, "I'm not really struggling with wanting to murder anyone." Well, a couple of things. Give it time. The holidays are just kicking into gear. Family will be in soon. But really, I would just roll to the next one. Jesus says, "You have heard it said, 'Do not commit adultery,' but I say if you look upon a woman with lustful intent you have committed the same sin."

Our game is, "Let's not physically or emotionally commit adultery," but Jesus says, "How about we just have a heart that understands our brothers and sisters in Christ aren't just bodies but are souls? How about we value whole people and don't look at them as objects? How about we get our hearts set free not just from an activity or an action, but why don't we get complete freedom and have a heart that celebrates the personhood of people?" On and on and on he goes through this text, where he's constantly going, "God so loves you that he wants you to have freedom of heart, not just conformity of will." So that's what we see.

Then we talked about motivation behind godliness the last couple of weeks. We came out of starting in Matthew 6, verse 1, where it says, "Do not practice your righteousness in front of others to be applauded by others." We talked about giving and prayer and fasting, that we're not to be the types of people who do those things in order to be applauded by other believers. We're not to be that type of hypocrite. We're not to do religious acts in front of people to be seen by those people. Rather, when we give, the right hand shouldn't know what the left hand is doing.

When we pray, any public prayer should flow out of our private prayer. When we fast we're not to look all gloomy and gruff. "Why are you so grumpy?" "Because I'm hungry. I'm fasting. Get off me! Are you going to eat that?" We're not to be that way but actually are supposed to quietly love the Lord and pursue the Lord. Our goal is God, not the applause of man. The applause of man is fickle. The people who will celebrate you today will hate you tomorrow. That's a fact of life most of you should already know. That leads us to this last piece.

My first three or four years here I altogether stayed away from the topic of money. I stayed away from the topic of money for two reasons. One, God was drawing to this church (like he still does) a lot of people who are not believers. They are skeptics. They don't know what to think about Jesus. They have had bad history with other churches. I wanted to not give anyone the right to not listen to the gospel of Jesus Christ because I was talking about money. That was the first thing. The second thing is I was naïve enough to think that if we were growing and people were being saved and God was drawing people and there was a lot of life, that people would just naturally sow in and give. So for several years I just never mentioned money at all.

What I did in those four years (I've already publicly confessed this) is I put all of us, myself included, in harm's way. What I mean by that is... Please hear me so that moving forward you can just breathe out. Jesus talks about money often, and it's never, ever about money. He never takes up an offering. He never has a thermometer. He never has a "get me to Jerusalem" campaign. You have God in the flesh frequently discussing money but never asking for any money. When Christ teaches about money, it's never about money. By me trying to protect the gospel by not addressing what Christ so clearly addresses, I have laid you and myself in harm's way.

So we're going to get into texts that are about treasure and money and have nothing to do with money. You will very quickly see that God's desire is not your checkbook but rather something far more valuable to him and something he actually came and died for to claim. So let's look at this text. Right here at the beginning there will be two commands. We'll call them command A and command B. We'll cover command A first and then we'll move to command B.

Verse 19: **"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal..."** Let's flesh this out. Jesus is saying that the point of your life, the pursuit of your life, the goal of your life, should not be to lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...trinkets, toys, savings accounts. You need to be really careful about putting all of your hope and all of your value and your identity on treasures you can gather here and now.

His argument (I want you to take note of this) is not a spiritual argument; it's a common sense argument. Here's his common sense argument: nothing is on your side if that's the goal of your life. The earth wars against you. Everything you own right now is in the process of moving toward the garage sale and on into the dump. *Everything*. I know some of you are "nerdier" than others, and you're like, "Well actually, this is made from a type of plastic that..." Okay, hear me. I'm going to grant you your "nerd-dom," and then I'm going to throw this at you.

Even in that, your uber-plastic is becoming more and more and more obsolete. In fact, it is more obsolete now than when you walked in the door. An iPhone 5 anyone? A couple of you. You can just be honest. In the end, all of our trinkets... Do you see? The earth is warring against us. Everything is in the process of losing value and decaying. Again, "What about gold?" Well you can't eat it, bro. Under the right circumstances, gold and diamonds are worthless.

He says, "This is madness. Don't do this. Don't spend your life accumulating for yourselves treasure, because not only does the earth herself wage war against you but people will try to steal the stuff that's on its way to the dump." People want your garbage. They esteem the stuff you're going to sell in your garage sale in the next decade. I think we have to be really careful here because stuff is intoxicating. Have you ever slowed down to think about this? Has it ever popped its way into your brain that new stuff creates an emotive response in us?

Think about how crazy this is. We feel better about ourselves when we get new stuff. How is that possible? How can a new car make me feel like a better human being? How can new clothes make me feel better about myself? New gadgets and toys make me feel more put together. Isn't that absurd? It's intoxicating, and we're addicted. We are addicted. You don't buy new clothes because you need new clothes. That's not why you buy new clothes. No one buys new clothes because their stuff disintegrates. We spend a lot of money on clothes that *look* like they're disintegrating.

For those of you who raised your hand and got the iPhone 5 (praise God, I'm getting mine this week hopefully), in the end you didn't get the iPhone 5 because your old flip phone or that bag phone you've been carrying since '97 finally died. You just upgraded. It was time. Siri works better on this model. Right? We buy not because we need; we buy because we're addicted to the emotive response to trinkets and toys.

We perpetually are believing the lie that what we need to be happy and content is more of what we actually already have. It's the grand lie of our culture. What you need to be content is more of what you actually already possess that hasn't worked. Jesus entering the fray says, "Stop this. It's madness. Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where men are prone to break in and steal." That's command A: "Stop this madness."

Command B is found in verse 20: "**...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.**" I love his point here. Where you need to put your treasure, where you need to be single-minded, what you need to be living for is not treasures here where fraud and force can take those things from you, but rather sow into and put your treasure in a place where fraud and force could never take it from you.

Then the question is left...*How do you store up treasures in heaven?* The Bible lines up some very easy ways. We live open-handed lives. We care for the widow and orphan in their distress. We live lives marked by generosity where we outdo others in honor. We are marked by spirits of generosity, where our hands are open on how God has blessed us, what God has given to us. We're not hoarders. Don't think of the show *Hoarders*. Think even how we perceive our stuff. We don't perceive our stuff as us being stewards of what God has given us; we view everything as ours. "This is mine, and I want more of it."

We store up treasures in heaven by living open-handed lives that sow into the kingdom of God, caring for the widow and orphan in their distress, and pushing back what is dark in the world with the resources we've been given, whether that's money, time, energy, or talents. We are people of the kingdom of God. We are salt and light, open-handed, and we're sowing into what is eternal, not into what is transient. We're sowing not into the stuff of future garage sales; we're sowing into the stuff that lasts forever. That's what we're to be marked by.

Here's where we're going to get into a very clear picture that God is not after your stuff, that God doesn't need your stuff. This is not about God's needs. God does not need you to fund his mission. Do you get that? He does not need you to accomplish what he's going to accomplish. You have been invited to play. What is all of this about? We find out in the next verse, verse 21: "**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**"

The manifest love of God toward you is made visible in the fact that God is not ever telling you to deal with it. He's after your heart. He longs for you to be free. Why are we having this discussion on where your treasure is? Why are we having this discussion about your stuff and your trinkets? Because Jesus is after your heart, and where your treasure is there your heart is going to be also. If your treasure is in your trinkets, in your stuff, in your house, in your cars, if those things have become identity markers for you, then your heart is going to be there.

Let me flesh some things out for you. There's nothing wrong with wealth. There is nothing wrong with nice houses, nice cars, and nice clothes. None of that is sinful or a problem. It simply becomes a problem when

they own us. When they define us, when they manage us, when they drive us, when we gather our identity and our meaning from those things, at that point we're in a lot of trouble.

When the scale for success in life is the same scale they use in high school, something has gone wrong. If clothes, cars, and houses make me cool, that's the same scale 14- through 18-year-olds use. That means we're a little bit immature, then, as grownups who have to have the right neighborhood, who have to have the right car, and who have to have the right clothes in order to be cool. It's immature and (because I love y'all I'll use this word) pathetic. *Pathetic*. He says, "Where your treasure is, your heart will be, your thoughts will be."

Whatever is uppermost in your affections is your god and will shape every aspect of your life. Whatever is uppermost in your affections is your god and will shape every other area of your life. If what is uppermost in your affections is how people perceive you, so you're going to dress the part and play the part in order to be accepted by men, in order to be viewed by something more than being children of God by those around you, then you're going to go into debt.

That's going to create all sorts of pressure on your relationships. Your relationships will be far more based on what you can get rather than you being able to have relationships where the person in the relationship doesn't give to you but rather you give to them. Those relationships become nearly impossible, and you are going to be cranky and crabby almost all of the time, trying to earn the approval of people you probably don't even like.

Jesus is saying, "No, no, no. Let's not do that. Where your treasure is, your heart is going to be. Put your treasure on the things above so heaven serves as a magnet for your thoughts, for your affections, for your joy. Get your treasure up here so your heart and your thoughts and the shape of your lives is shaped and molded by me and not by this transient stuff that's on its way to the garbage place. Get your mind on me. Get your heart on me."

Look at this next section, verse 22: **"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"** Just to make this really simple (because that's a lot of eyeballs and light and darkness), here's what's being said: "If you think you're right and you're wrong...uh-oh." That's me simplifying this text. Let me flesh it out.

The Bible is now going to say, "Since where your treasure is your heart is also, you should be very mindful, you should be really dialed in to what you value as supreme." The heart is deceitful above all things. It does not take much for us to think and believe we're operating one way and in a very real way be operating

in a way contrary to what God would have for us. Let me give you an illustration I think will paint this picture.

Before I became pastor of this church, which was 10 years ago here in a couple of weeks (that's crazy to think about), I predominately did college ministry. I hung out with college students. It's funny how life has changed. I used to get up at 10:00 in the morning and go to bed at about 3:00. Now I go to bed at about 9:30 and get up at about 5:30 or 6:00. Once we got away from college ministry... It's funny; they just live in a different set of hours than when you're not in college.

I loved college ministry. College ministry is terrifying. You make life decisions when you're young and dumb. It blows my mind that God wired it so that when you're in that stage of life you're making the decisions that affect the rest of your life. Was anyone in here an idiot in college? Come on, let's do this. You think about you in college and you're like, "How am I alive?" Right? I'm guessing not too many college students raised their hands. They're like, "Not me. I'm crushing this right now." In college you decide what you're going to do. In college you start to form that "I want to get married to this kind..." I mean, in college all of this trajectory is set. You just don't know near as much as you think you do.

Here's what Lauren and I ran into over and over and over again. Our style of ministry is... I'm a people person. I genuinely enjoy people. So we had our house open, and college students were always over at our house. Here's what we ran into over and over. I want to speak particularly to men right now. I'm not saying women aren't guilty of this; I just want to speak primarily to men. Women can be guilty. I'm going to speak primarily to men. It's holiday week. I don't want emails. I want to speak particularly to men, and in particular, husbands and daddies. Here's what we ran into in college ministry.

Oftentimes we would run into a young woman coming to college who just drove a hoopty. Do you know what that is? Do I need to flesh that out? Just a junky, backfiring, rusted-out bucket of a car. To help you, that's a hoopty, a jalopy, something like that, all right? She would drive up to school. There was nothing fashionable about her at all in regard to her clothes or her presentation of herself, but Daddy cuddled with her at night. Daddy loved her well. Daddy was ever present. Daddy pointed her toward Jesus Christ. Daddy encouraged her giftings and was honest about her shortcomings.

Good fathers don't always just go, "You're great," when you're awful. That's how you end up on *American Idol* that first night. They speak truth in love. They engage. Amen? Here's what I found. That young woman, for her ghetto clothes and ghetto vehicle, was well-dispositioned and had no bitterness toward her daddy at all. She could see through the hunting antics of idiot college boys. She could spot them coming. I don't know if you know this, but young unregenerate college males can smell insecurity, and they hunt it. You can giggle if you want, but there's a whole slew of heartbreak because Daddy didn't love Baby but just gave

Baby what they thought she wanted. For a daddy to work 120 hours a week to get Baby \$150 jeans and a nice ride is a fool's exchange.

I want to chat here, because I'm not anti-success. Men, climb the ladder. Get yourself up the ladder. CEO, CFO...kill it. With all the gifting God gave you, climb up that thing. I want you as far as your gifts can take you. I want you up there, but don't lose your integrity along the way, and don't sacrifice your family to get your family nice stuff. Do you know what they need? They need Daddy. I've never met a young woman or a young man furious with their father because they were poor or couldn't get the stuff other kids got. If Daddy was there and Daddy was available, there was no bitterness, they were well-dispositioned, and they saw the world well.

Fathers, train your boys to be men. The only way to do that is for them to watch one. They're not going to learn that from a book. They're going to learn it as Daddy helps them understand. Stuff is intoxicating. I'm trying to get to the bottom of it. I think I'm fleshing it out. I think a lot of you weren't very cool kids so you want your kids to be, and you're whoring them out instead of loving and shaping them into what God would have them be.

Just little things. Put your phone down, Gollum. "Preciousssss." Put the thing down, man. Nothing happened in the last five minutes that's life altering. Turn your phone off. The world has a Savior; you're not him. You cuddle with those girls. You cuddle with your little boys. You kiss their faces. Your son will be like, "Oh, get off me," and you just kiss him all the more. "Well, I'm uncomfortable with that." That's okay. Let's love our families well, because what happens to us is if in our hearts what we think our family needs is stuff and we sell out for that in order to love our family, we'll lose the one great privilege we've been given concerning our family, which is not nice provision but presence...quiet, gentle, godly presence.

To help your son understand, "Open the door for your mom and your sisters. Help your mom and your sisters. This is what men do. Turn it off and go help. Let's go, buddy. Mom is here with the groceries. Get off the couch. Let's go. This is what we do. Press pause. When I was a kid, I didn't get to press pause. You can press pause. Press pause and let's go." Right? Train, pour into, be present, because if the light in you is dark, oh, how great is the darkness.

Then he closes with, again, him going back after the heart. Verse 24: **"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."** Now, what happens when trinkets and toys define you, when you define success not by God delighting in you and adopting you as a son or daughter but really you're defining success based on some projected image of hyper-reality, something that's not reality...

When you become a \$50,000 millionaire in Dallas to live the part and be seen a certain way and the earth and men are trying to take from you what is ultimate and is your treasure, then aren't you forced to take a lot of vitality, a lot of energy, and protect what defines you? We would say, "Aren't you forced to keep up with the Joneses?" You absolutely are.

If your treasure is on earth, you have to defend that treasure, protect that treasure, and put a lot of energy into that treasure. What God is saying is what happens in that moment is your heart gets divided. Your heart is divided, and the vitality and energy that was granted to you for freedom and joy goes into fear and anxiety. This text, when all is said and done, is an invitation out of anxiety and into a glad resting in God's provision and grace. It's a call back to the things you won't regret.

It struck us just recently. My son's birthday was a couple of weeks ago, and it struck us that Audrey is 9, which means we're halfway to her going off to school, and she *is* going off to school. I don't know where. I'll be fine wherever. I'd like her close but not too close. She needs to grow into a woman, and Mom and I will be just great with her being close but not too close. It struck us. We're halfway there. It's not halfway to us being done, because what I've learned as a parent is you just don't get to be done. You get to die. There will always be concern. There will always be care. There will always be hope. There will always be a tinge of nervousness right up until you go to glory.

We're halfway there, and I just can't imagine the time, energy, and effort I'm pouring into my daughter I'm going to regret once she's gone, that I'm going to be like, "Dang it. I could have written another book." I just don't think that's ever going to happen. This is a call back to what matters. This is a call away from regret and into a gladness of pouring yourself out into things that actually matter, things that are eternal, and things that are very much gifts of grace...your wife, your husband, your family, your friends.

This is an opening up of the hands and a freedom from the tyranny of trinkets, a call out of the intoxication of toys. What Christ is after is your heart having a singular purpose and it not being divided, because you cannot serve God and money. You will love one and despise the other. You will cling to one and forsake the other. You will not be faithful to both. You cannot get your identity from both Christ and your stuff. It's not going to happen.

As we've preached through this series, here's where my mind has gone, where my prayers have gone, and where my passion to spend my life well has gone. If this is the covenant community of faith and living in these ways reflects fully to the world around us the glory of God, what would happen if the Holy Spirit did a real mark among us and in us, that we would surrender to these things in gladness? What if going through this series once again, we were not seriously affected by the overt sensuality of our culture but were able to honor and see other humans as people in the image of God, not as objects?

What if we took seriously our covenant vows in marriage? Even if we married crazy... Don't amen right now, brother. Don't even look me in the eye. Just look down at the floor, sister. I'm not talking mentally ill, although I think there are people who have spouses who are mentally ill who love them like Christ loved the church. But what if we just said, "Marriage is a very serious deal, and we're not going anywhere. This is not an easy season, this is not an easy person, but I'm going to trust that Christ is going to work and move, and as we both seek to submit to him, and as we both ferociously hold on to our vows..."

I mean, you said it. "For better or worse." You didn't say, "For better." You acknowledged on that really beautiful, romantic day, "Some of this is going to stink." I bet you weren't thinking about that when you said it, were you? Or you would have edited that one out. "For better or for really, really good." What if there wasn't divorce here at The Village? Can you imagine? You want to talk about bucking the cultural trend. I mean, they'd be sending sociologists here.

What if we were marked in the community by our generosity? What if we were known as a ridiculously generous people, almost easy to take advantage of? I know some of you are like, "Well, that wouldn't be right." Better to be known as over-generous than stingy. What if there was very little anger left in our souls because of the work of Jesus Christ in our hearts? What if the gospel took root in us in such a way that we reflected brightly the glory of God in this city?

On three or four separate occasions in Christian history, God has chosen to pour out himself in a given period of time in such a way that they're called awakenings. You have the Great Awakening, and then the Great Awakening part two, and you had Pentecost, and you had the Azusa Street Revival. You have these markers in Christian history where God pours himself out in such a way that weird stuff is happening. By weird stuff I mean like attendance among churches just skyrockets. Not *a* church but *churches*. If we want to see God move profoundly and powerfully in our day, it will be well beyond the walls of this church, not just inside the walls of this church.

I'm hungry for that. I'm hungry for not just something that's here but that God might profoundly work in the DFW area and in our country in such a way that healing occurs and the glory of Christ is seen. I'm hungry for it. What God has done here is profound...from 160 to over 10,000 in less than a decade. But do you know how small this is compared to what he could do? Do you know how nothing this is compared to what he could do? A \$400,000 budget to a \$14 million budget in 10 years. We've planted dozens, hundreds of churches, have worked all over the globe, and been in very dangerous places, places that are closed, as if there is such a thing. All of it...firstfruits. There's so much more that could be had. I'm hungry for that, and that's what this whole series has been about.

Here's the way I thought we would end our time together. I want to close our service like we always close the service, with an invitation to the Table. We'll end our service with Communion and worship. We'll come to the Table. Why? Because the invitation from Christ is, "Come, all who are weary and heavy-laden." There isn't anyone in this room this Matthew 6 passage didn't read on a little bit. There isn't anyone in this room who isn't at some level trying to serve two masters.

The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is God knows. Having your heart opened to it doesn't mean God is just becoming aware of it. It's not like all of a sudden you're aware "Hey, I think I'm trying to serve two masters," and God is like, "You are? Well, I am furious." No. The invitation to the Table, the broken bread, the juice in the cup, is a celebration of the fact that God knows and he has made a way. "Come, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

We're going to pray about a couple of things. I'm going to lead us into a time of prayer. Then from there I'll pray to close us, and as I pray to close us, you're going to hear some noise. Men and women are going to be getting up, and they're going to be going to get the elements to pass out, or up in Denton they'll do intinction; they'll just stand at their stations. Then when I pray and say amen, I'm not going to lead us into group Communion. You just partake when you feel ready before the Lord.

I want to say just a couple of things about Communion before I lead us in some prayer. One, if you are a believer in Christ from another church, please participate with us. We're going to be spending a lot of time together in the future. We might as well just eat together today. Then here's what I would also say to you. If you're not a believer in Christ and you were just invited by a friend, or you were just brought by a family member, I need you to hear me say this.

I'm the lead pastor of this church, and my heart is unbelievably glad you're here. You will find very few, if any, doors closed for you at all. Come as deep into our covenant community as you possibly can. You will find us a people lacking, you will find us hypocrites, you will find us not there yet, but you will find us rejoicing in hope. But Communion is a really sacred thing to us. It is symbolic of the most serious covenant we have entered into with God Almighty, that God has actually entered into with us. It is not magic bread. It is not magic juice. It will not forgive your sins. It will not make you right before God. You must confess your sins and lay your life down and ask Christ to reign and rule in your heart. The Lord's Supper is symbolic that you have done that.

So if you're doing that today, brother, take and eat. If you're not, will you just let that pass? No one will judge you here for letting it pass. If anything, we'll respect you. In fact, we've tried to build out our service in such a way that shows you respect. We want to acknowledge that you're here. Maybe you don't believe like we believe, and that's okay. We're not nervous about that. We're glad you're here. I pray the Lord has

stirred up some things in your heart, maybe some questions that will lead you into knowing and acknowledging Christ as Lord.

With this idea of a city on a hill, this idea of God moving profoundly in our day, I want us to pray in a couple of directions. I want us to pray for our church, The Village, and then I want us to pray for DFW. I want us to pray for other churches. Here's how I would wire that. If you have come to The Village Church from another church, I want you to pray for that church you came from. If you were converted to Christ here or aren't from a church in this area, I just want you to pick another church in the area and pray for them. If you know a pastor's name, pray for them.

To give you a couple, Prestonwood Baptist Church is celebrating 35 years of ministry in the Metroplex today. Thirty-five years is a long time to pour yourself out for a city, and they've done it faithfully. There have been bumps in the road, but they have served God faithfully. Tons of people have come to know Jesus Christ, have lived generously, and have been discipled by the ministry of Prestonwood Baptist Church. Don't have ears for anyone who would say anything negative about Prestonwood. Don't have any ears for it. Maybe you've come from Fellowship. You need to pray for them.

One of the things that happens when God pours himself out is he pours himself out in different streams, different than the ones we're in. God does not just work in our methodology. He works in all sorts of places. That's what makes him God. He's not confined to such things. So I want you to pray for our church, and I want you to pray for other churches, and then I'll close us. You can do it in multiple ways. You can just pray by yourself. I would encourage you to group up with who you came with.

If you're a lost person, this should not wig you out. You are at church. I'm not doing this at the bar. You would have grounds to go, "This is a little weird," if I came to the bar and had some bourbon and said, "Here's what we're going to do. Everybody, let's pray. Everybody gather up..." But it's happening at church, not at the bar. If you don't want to gather, if you're lost, just stare at me awkwardly, or just drink in what we do as people: submit our lives to God.

Let's get to praying. Pray by yourself or group up and pray, but I'm going to give you just a few minutes here to get after the Lord, and then I'm going to close us. Let's pray. Don't look at me awkwardly anymore unless you're not a believer and don't know what to do. Let's pray. Pray for us, pray for our pastors, pray that God would continue to show us favor, that men and women would be saved, that we would mature, that the truths spoken from the Word of God would go deep in our hearts and transform us.

For churches in Denton, for churches in Dallas, Fort Worth, Flower Mound, Lewisville, Carrollton, Grapevine. Let's pray for other churches now, for their pastors, that God would bless, that he would protect, that he would grow, that he would stir.

Father, I thank you for these men and women just believing that you drew them into this place today. I thank you that you want our hearts. I thank you that you want to free us from dozens of enslavements and let us walk in the freedom of life and joy. I thank you that you have engaged us this morning over the tyranny in our hearts, our propensity, God, to love trinkets and toys and to be drawn to gather and invest simply in this world rather than in the next, the one that matters, the eternal world. I pray, God, that you would confront us in very loving ways. Thank you, Spirit, that you're dealing with us in areas that don't have anything to do with trinkets and toys.

God, I pray we would be marked by generosity, marked by compassion, marked by covenant faithfulness, that you would do a profound work, not just in this church but in the churches of this city; not just in the churches of this city but in this city. God, might businesses that make money from ill repute shut down. God, might areas of the city that are wrought with crime and poverty, God, be addressed and engaged, and might you pour yourself out in such a way, God, that your kingdom and will become visible in this place as we talked last week, Father. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

I thank you for my brothers and sisters who are already gathering the elements to serve. God, that you would bless them as they serve us what is such a great symbolic truth, that you acknowledge our sinfulness and rebellion and love us and delight in us still, that despite our rejection of your way being better than ours, despite our rejection as you as our Lord, God, you have made a way to rescue and redeem. We celebrate now the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. It's through your beautiful name I pray, amen.

Love you guys.