

Matthew 12:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

Analysis

'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.' Jesus elaborates the heart/speech connection using treasure imagery. The heart is treasury; speech is what's withdrawn. 'Good man' (ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος/agathos anthrōpos) with 'good treasure' (ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ/agathou thēsauroū) produces good output. 'Evil man' (πονηρὸς ἄνθρωπος/ponēros anthrōpos) with 'evil treasure' (πονηροῦ θησαυροῦ/ponērou thēsauroū) produces evil output. Reformed theology sees this as illustrating regeneration's necessity: you must be made good (new heart, Ezekiel 36:26) to produce good fruit. Behavior modification doesn't work—treasury must change. Conversion replaces evil treasure with good treasure; sanctification increases good treasure's proportion. The verse also teaches stewardship: what are you storing in your heart? Scripture, truth, worship, godly meditation—or bitterness, lust, greed, resentment? You'll eventually express whatever you've stored. Luke's version adds 'mouth speaketh' what heart treasures (Luke 6:45)—explicit connection between storage and expression.

Historical Context

Treasure imagery was common in ancient world where wealth was literal treasure—gold, silver, jewels stored in houses, temples, or buried. What you possessed determined what you could give. Jesus applies this metaphorically: heart is treasury; character/speech is disbursement. Jewish wisdom emphasized heart's

centrality: 'as he thinketh in his heart, so is he' (Proverbs 23:7). Pharisees maintained external righteousness (appearance of good treasure) while hearts contained evil (Matthew 23:25-28—whitewashed tombs). Jesus exposed this: they could quote Scripture, maintain rituals, appear pious—but evil hearts eventually produced evil speech (accusing Jesus of satanic power). Early church recognized: conversion means new treasure (2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:22-24), sanctification means increasing good treasure through Word, Spirit, fellowship (Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:18-19). Puritans emphasized 'heart work'—cultivating inner piety producing outward godliness. Modern evangelicalism sometimes reverses this: focusing on external behavior without addressing heart. Jesus's teaching: start with heart; behavior follows.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What are you storing in your heart—what inputs (media, relationships, thoughts) are you treasuring, and what output will they inevitably produce?
2. How does understanding that speech/behavior flow from stored treasure affect your approach to spiritual growth?
3. What practices help replace evil treasure with good treasure in your heart?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	ἀγαθά	ἄνθρωπος	ἐκ	τοῦ	ἀγαθά	θησαυροῦ	τῆς
G3588	A good	man	out of	G3588	A good	treasure	G3588
	G18	G444	G1537		G18	G2344	
καρδίας	ἐκβάλλει	τά	ἀγαθά	καὶ	ὁ	πονηρά	ἄνθρωπος
of the heart	bringeth forth	G3588	A good	and	G3588	an evil	man
G2588	G1544		G18	G2532		G4190	G444
ἐκ	τοῦ	πονηρά	θησαυροῦ	ἐκβάλλει	πονηρά		
out of	G3588	an evil	treasure	bringeth forth	an evil		
G1537		G4190	G2344	G1544	G4190		

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 4:6 (Parallel theme): Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Proverbs 15:28 (Evil): The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

Proverbs 15:4 (Parallel theme): A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

Colossians 3:16 (Parallel theme): Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Matthew 12:34 (Evil): O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Ephesians 4:29 (Good): Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Proverbs 12:6 (Evil): The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

Proverbs 15:23 (Good): A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!

Matthew 13:52 (Parallel theme): Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

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