

Matthew 6:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Analysis

Jesus contrasts earthly with heavenly treasure: 'But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal' (Greek: θησαυρίζετε δὲ ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐν οὐρανῷ, 'treasure up treasures in heaven'). Heavenly treasures are invulnerable to decay or theft - eternal and secure. What constitutes heavenly treasure? Acts of mercy, generosity to the poor, sacrificial love, faithfulness to God - investments in eternal realities rather than temporal comforts. The same verb θησαυρίζω is used, but the location shifts everything. This is wise stewardship - investing in what endures.

Historical Context

Jewish thought recognized rewards for righteousness (Daniel 12:3, Malachi 3:16-17), but Jesus emphasizes present action determining eternal outcome. His teaching resembles Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai's later saying: 'If you have done much in the study of Torah, they give you much reward... and faithful is your employer who shall pay you the reward of your labor; and know that the grant of reward unto the righteous is in the age to come.' Early Christians practiced radical generosity (Acts 2:45, 4:32-37), living out this heavenly treasure ethic.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What practical actions constitute 'laying up treasures in heaven'?
2. How does focusing on eternal rewards transform our attitude toward earthly possessions and losses?
3. In what ways are you currently investing in eternal versus temporal realities?

Interlinear Text

θησαυρίζετε	δὲ	ὑμῖν	θησαυροὺς	ἐν	οὐρανῷ	ὅπου		
lay up	But	for yourselves	treasures	in	heaven	where		
G2343	G1161	G5213	G2344	G1722	G3772	G3699		
οὕτε	σὴς	οὕτε	βρῶσις	ἀφανίζει	καὶ	ὅπου	κλέπται	οὐ
neither	moth	neither	rust	doth corrupt	and	where	thieves	not
G3777	G4597	G3777	G1035	G853	G2532	G3699	G2812	G3756
διορύσσουσιν	οὐδὲ	κλέπτουσιν·						
break through	nor	steal						
G1358	G3761	G2813						

Additional Cross-References

Luke 12:33 (Parallel theme): Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

James 2:5 (Parallel theme): Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Matthew 19:21 (Parallel theme): Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

1 Timothy 6:19 (Parallel theme): Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Hebrews 11:26 (Parallel theme): Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

Luke 18:22 (Parallel theme): Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

Revelation 2:9 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

1 Timothy 6:17 (Parallel theme): Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

1 Peter 1:4 (Parallel theme): To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

Isaiah 33:6 (Parallel theme): And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.