

Nov 11th 2012: Sermon on Mount #7 Matt 6:19-34 "Spot The Difference"

(Before the Bible reading) When one studies the Sermon on the Mount it soon becomes obvious that Jesus, in talking to His followers is telling them that they have to be different to everyone else. That even as a light set upon a hill is different to the darkness all around it, so His disciples must stand out as different. Not being different by dressing differently, or by isolating themselves from others, but different because of the changes that have occurred deep within them since they chose to follow Jesus as their Lord and Master.

In the reading that we are looking at today Jesus mentions two such differences and they are related to one another. Your task this morning is to Spot the Difference as I read this passage to you.

Matt 6:19-24 followed by congregational response.

Worry.....It's one of the distinctive about being human. Animals get scared and fearful at times, but I don't reckon they worry too much. I came across this little poem the other day:-

Said the robin to the sparrow:
'I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so.'

Said the sparrow to the robin;
'Friend I think that it must be
That they have no heavenly Father
Such as cares for you and me.'

When Jesus tells His followers to not worry He does so on the basis that they have a Heavenly Father who cares about them....Isn't that a glorious thought, especially when we think about who our heavenly Father is. He is the Mighty God of the Universe—the all-powerful One, the all-seeing One, the all-knowing One, the all-glorious One—and He is for us; for you and for me whom He has drawn into His forever family. He is especially the all-loving and all caring One.

Jesus tells us that the Father cares constantly about the birds of the air and the lilies of the field and we are much more valuable to Him than they are.

And that being aware of God as our Father means that we have a lot less to be anxious about , particularly when it comes to worrying about material things like food, clothing and the accumulation of goods and money in order to be secure.

That's why Jesus does not simply advise His followers not to worry, but in v25 He commands them not to.

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.

In the Greek text the word worry is in the imperative, which makes it a command and not a request or a suggestion, which also means that we have to take His words very seriously. It is also in the present tense letting us know that this is continuous worrying that Jesus is talking about. It is not simply being worried and therefore acting to solve the problem. The Lord has no difficulty with that. It is when we constantly go on worrying about the things that we should be trusting God for that the problem develops. The Amplified Version of this text says:-

25 Therefore I tell you, stop being perpetually uneasy (anxious and worried) about your life.....

So OK, we can see that Jesus wants us to be different because we are not seen as worry-warts, constantly worried about where the money will come from to pay the bills and keep our family and ourselves clothed and fed.

But why, we might well ask, should this ever be a big problem for most of us? We are Christians living in what is still a lucky country. We are conscious of some in our midst who, because of their circumstances struggle economically and face the temptation often to continually worry about money matters, and at different times we may all have been in a similar place or close to it. But for the rest of us worrying about such things is not an issue.

That's until we see the other difference that Jesus expects to see in His followers and it relates to our attitude towards money or, as Jesus puts it in v19, **not storing up for ourselves treasures on earth but rather undertaking as our first priority, the storing up of treasures in heaven.**

We need to notice the word therefore in v25.

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life.....

Literally it means ***"Because of what I have just said about the attitude I expect you to have towards money and other earthly treasures, you are not to worry about your life....what you will eat or drink***

You see what Jesus is saying in verses 19-24 is that His followers will have a difference approach to personal wealth to that of the majority of others. While others see it as a necessity to store up what they can and hold on tightly to it, because that is all they have to live on, believers see it as a resource that God has entrusted to them to use for Him. And if He calls them to use part of it or every cent of it to extend His Kingdom then they should do so and not worry about where the money will come from to pay the bills and to feed and clothe their family, for their heavenly father will supply it. And not only that but by being obedient they will actually be storing up treasures in heaven.

There are many of you here in this fellowship who I know, already do that. Some have willingly offered resources to God that they didn't even have at the time they committed themselves to using them, for the sake of His Kingdom. I think in particular of those who paid out a substantial amount of money to go on the Impact Africa Mission trips. They trusted their heavenly father to supply all their needs and He did. And they returned with the blessings of spiritual treasures that no amount of money could ever purchase.

And the reason seeks from His followers this different approach towards money is explained in v24

24 "No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money."

If money and goods, or the pursuit of it and the worry about it becomes our Master, then God cannot be our Lord.

This is where the rich young ruler who came to Jesus seeking eternal life, had trouble. He wanted to gain eternal life but he had great earthly wealth, and he went away sad when Jesus said to him in Matt 19:21

"If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Did you note the connection between what Jesus said to him and the command He gives to His followers in our passage today.

V19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth....."

V 20 "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven....."

Jesus promises this rich young ruler treasures in heaven, but to have such he must be prepared to own Jesus as Master, and to do what Jesus says. Which in this case was to give away all the treasure he had stored up on earth.

I reckon that many Christians read this story with some concern in their hearts about how they would fair if God asked them to do the same. Where would the money come from to pay the mortgage, to feed and clothe the family. To cover all the bills that continually appear, often with little notice.

Jesus says, "Do not be anxious about such things, because your Father knows what you need." It's a simple matter of Faith and being different to those who are not in Christ.

I have been reading a little book called the Cambridge Seven.....

This whole section of Scripture is of course summed up in that one verse which joins the two sections together...v33

³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well

When we put God's work first we will discover that whatever He asks us to do or to give, He will supply all that we need.

I was reading some different comments about this verse and I came across these thoughts by Dr Ray Pritchard that I believe are really helpful:

"And all these things will be given to you as well" ([Matthew 6:33b](#)). What are "all these things?" Jesus defines them for us in verses 25-32: food, clothes, shelter, money, a job, and all the other necessities of life. God already knows about them. When you say, "Lord, I'm out of a job," it isn't news to him. When you say, "Lord, I can't pay my bills," he checked your bank account before you did. He knows you are broke. That's a wonderful incentive to pray. He already knows the details of every problem in your life. So go ahead, tell him the whole story. He won't be surprised. And pray with confidence. He's waiting to hear from you.

Let God solve your problems. Keep on praying. Keep on trusting. Keep on believing. Keep on doing good. Keep on serving the Lord. Keep on helping others. Keep on sharing. And God promises to take care of you. Let God be God even in the hard times. And everything else you need will be added to you. You will have everything you need to do God's will.

That's a strong promise from a powerful passage of Scripture, and it comes with an even stronger challenge. The challenge for us to be different as followers of Christ because we are willing, above everything else, to seek the extension of His Kingdom. To pray and implore Jesus to touch souls through us, and we are prepared to do or to give whatever He asks to make it happen.