

Alderwood Community Church
July 24, 2016

GOD IS: THE DOCTRINE OF GOD (GOD REWARDS)

It's Not about Now! (part 3)

Matthew 6:19-24; Luke 16:1-13

Intro: At the Egyptian National Museum in Cairo, you find the King Tut exhibit. Tut, the boy king was only 17 years old when he died. He was buried with solid gold chariots and thousands of golden artifacts. His gold coffin was found within gold tombs within gold tombs within gold tombs. The Egyptians believed in an afterlife- one where they could take earthly treasures. But all the treasures intended for King Tut's eternal enjoyment stayed right where they were until Howard Carter discovered the burial chamber in 1922. They hadn't been touched for more than 3,000 years.

Not far from the King Tut Exhibit there is a sun-scorched tombstone that read "William Borden, 1887-1913." Borden, a Yale graduate and heir to great wealth, rejected a life of ease in order to bring the Gospel to Muslims. Refusing even to buy himself a car, Borden gave away hundreds of thousands of dollars to missions. After only 4 months of zealous ministry in Egypt, he contracted spinal meningitis and died at the age of 25. The inscription on his tombstone ended with the phrase: "*Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for such a life.*"

A Jewish tax collector named Zacchaeus had a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ and when he professed his faith in Jesus Christ, he also made this profession, "*Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.*" (Luke 19)

John Wesley had just finished buying some pictures for his room when one of the chambermaids came to his door. It was a winter day and he noticed that she had only a thin linen gown to wear for protection against the cold. He reached into his pocket to give her some money for a coat, and found he had little left. It struck him that the Lord was not pleased with how he had spent his money. He asked himself: "Will Thy Master say, 'Well done, good and faithful steward?' Thou has adorned thy walls with the money that might have screened this poor creature from the cold! O justice! O mercy! Are not these pictures the blood of this poor maid?"

Perhaps as a result of this incident, in 1731 Wesley began to limit his expenses so he would have more money to give to the poor. He records that one year his income was £30, and his living expenses £28, so he had £2 to give away. The next year, his income doubled, but he still lived on £28 and gave £32 away. In the third year, his income jumped to £90; again he lived on £28, giving £62 away. The fourth year, he made £120, lived again on £28, and gave £92 to the poor.

Wesley preached that Christians should not merely tithe, but give away all extra income once the family and creditors were taken care of. He believed that with increasing income, the Christian's standard of *giving* should increase, not his standard of living. He began this practice at Oxford and he continued it throughout his life. Even when his income rose into the thousands of pounds,

he lived simply and quickly gave his surplus money away. One year his income was slightly over £1,400; he gave away all save £30. He was afraid of laying up treasures on earth, so the money went out in charity as quickly as it came in. He reports that he never had as much as £100 at one time.

When he died in 1791, the only money mentioned in his will was the miscellaneous coins to be found in his pockets and dresser drawers. Most of the £30,000 he had earned in his lifetime he had given away. John Wesley's royalties at one time gave him what today would be an annual income of \$160,000. Yet he lived like someone today might at an income of \$20,000.

Wesley said, *"Money never stays with me. It would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it should find its way into my heart."*

What do William Borden, Zacchaeus and John Wesley have in common? They understood, believed and practiced what Jesus said, *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

This morning will be our third message on the doctrine of eternal rewards. I hope you really get this, understand this and practice this principle in this life:

Big Idea: Our choices on earth have direct consequence on our life in heaven.

While our faith determines our eternal destination, our behavior determines our eternal compensation.

Jesus will reward you in heaven for what you do for him on earth.

Review:

1. God promises to reward his children.

The promise of reward in heaven is mentioned often in Jesus' teaching on the subject:

"For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done." Matthew 16:27

2. What does God reward?

- A. God will reward you for seeking him.
- B. God will reward you for submitting to your employer as a faithful servant.
- C. God will reward you for serving those in need in his name.
- D. God will reward you for suffering for his name and reputation.
- E. God will reward you for sacrifices you make for him.
- F. God will reward you for sharing your money and resources to further his kingdom.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21

“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Luke 12:33-34

You see here (1) that we are told specifically what laying up treasure in heaven means. Here it is giving to the poor. When we give of our earthly treasures now to take care of the poor, we are actually providing for ourselves something valuable in heaven. Jesus understands what we do not, and that is that treasure will matter to us in eternity and he wants us to have a lot of it there.

(2) We also learn that these treasures in heaven will last forever. They aren't temporary gifts. Look again at the words in Luke 12, “*a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted*.” Not only is heavenly treasure not subject to thieves and moths, not only will the heavenly money belt (purses) not wear out, but these treasures in heaven will not be exhausted. They can be used in heaven without ever being used up. These eternal rewards are themselves eternal, imperishable and inexhaustible. That means these are gifts that will keep on giving, and giving all throughout eternity.

In heaven we will not all have the same experience. We will not all have the same level of responsibility (ruling) or the same amount of treasure or rewards. Those who serve faithfully, do good works for Christ and give away their resources to the poor, needy brothers and sisters and to advance the gospel will have more crowns (responsibilities), treasures and rewards in heaven than those who are disobedient, preoccupied with material possessions and pleasure and are selfish with their resources.

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.” 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Observations:

1. *Those who are rich* That is you and me. If you have sufficient food, decent clothes, live in a home that shields you from the weather, and own some kind of reliable transportation, you're in the top 15% of the world's wealthy. Add some savings, two cars (in any condition), a variety of clothes, and you own your own home, you have reached the top 5%. You may not feel wealthy, but that's only because you're comparing yourself to the mega-wealthy.

2. *God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment...* Did you get that? For our enjoyment. It is ok. Material things are given to us by God to enjoy. (Pause...) Sadly, we enjoy them but then we idolize them, worship them and become consumed by them, making money, possessions, retirement accounts, homes, cars, boats our god.

3. Paul tells us further what Jesus meant by “laying up treasure in heaven”. He says clearly that when we are generous with our money and willing to share with those who have needs, we are laying up treasure for ourselves.

4. *We are to be rich in good deeds* These are also yield treasures in heaven... when we serve the needs of others to bring glory to God we are also investing treasure in heaven. (repeat)

Illus: When General Sam Houston came to Christ, he was a changed man. No longer coarse and belligerent but peaceful and content. The day came for Houston to be baptized – an incredible event for those who knew him. After his baptism Houston offered to pay half the local minister’s salary. When someone asked him why, he said, “My pocketbook was baptized too.”

The famous missionary Jim Elliot who was martyred by the very people he was seeing to reach for the Gospel said, *“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”* That is exactly what Jesus is trying to tell us, when he instructs us to *“lay up treasure in heaven.”*

3. How will God reward us?

- A. Praise *“Well done, good and faithful servant.”*
- B. Treasure
- C. Hospitality ***Open your Bibles to Luke 16:1-13**

Jesus is essentially saying that the people of this world give more thought to their physical well being than believers do to their spiritual well being. They give more foresight to their future. They are insightful in the dealings with people.

The main idea Jesus is trying to get across is this: Use your position and your possessions to win friends in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Observations:

1. We are to use money to win people to Christ. *“use worldly wealth to gain friends for your self, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”* **Luke 16:9**
2. If you prove to be faithful with a little, you will be given more. *“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much.”* **Luke 16:10** This strips away the excuse, *“If only I made more money, then I’d help the poor.”* Or *“If only I had a million dollars, then I’d give it to*

my church or missions.” Jesus is teaching that if I’m dishonest or selfish in my use of a few dollars, I would be dishonest and selfish in my use of a million dollars. The issue is, What am I doing with what God has already given to me?

D. Rulership and authority

The Bible tells us that believers will reign with Christ over the world (Rev. 20:6). We’ll even rule over angels (1 Cor. 6:3). Some will be put “in charge of many things (Matt. 25:21-23). Christ spoke of granting some followers rulership over cities – 11 for one, 5 for another and none for a third, in proportion to their faithful service (Luke 19:17-24).

It is apparent from these passages that although all believers will be with Christ, not all will reign with equal responsibility and authority. There are stated conditions for reigning: *“If we endure we will also reign with him”* (2 Tim. 2:12). Christ promises, *“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne”* (Rev. 3:21). He says, *“To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations...just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star”* (Rev. 2:26-28).

E. Crowns

Crowns are a common symbol of ruling power, though they may symbolize other rewards as well. Five crowns are mentioned in the New Testament:

1. The crown of life – given for faithfulness to Christ in persecution or martyrdom. (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10)
2. The incorruptible crown – given for determination, discipline, and victory in the Christian life. (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)
3. The crown of rejoicing – given for pouring oneself into others in evangelism and discipleship. (1 Thessalonians 2:19; Philippians 5:1)
4. The crown of glory – given for faithfully representing Christ in a position of faithful leadership. (1 Peter 5:1-4)
5. The crown of righteousness – given for joyfully purifying and readying oneself to meet Jesus at his return. (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

4. Should we be motivated by rewards?

A. Objections & Misunderstandings

Although God’s glory is the highest reason for any action, Scripture sees no contradiction between God’s eternal glory and our eternal good. On the contrary, glorifying God will always result in our greatest eternal good. Likewise, pursuing our eternal good, as he commands us to do, will always glorify God. Of course we should desire rewards. Hearing our Master say, *“Well done”* will not simply be for our pleasure but for his. It seems that the prevailing thought among

evangelicals is that everything comes out in the wash, so it won't make any difference at all. But according to the Bible, it will make a tremendous difference. *"The doctrine of eternal rewards for our obedience is the neglected key to unlocking our motivation."*

Moses *"regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because...he was looking ahead to his reward."* (Hebrews 11:26) Motivated by long-term reward, Moses chose short term disgrace. Not because he wanted disgrace, but because he wanted reward.

The prospect of eternal reward from the Master was Paul's consuming motivation throughout his life. *"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone whom competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."* (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

The prospect of rewards is a proper motivation for Christian obedience- including the generous sharing of money and possessions. If we maintain it's wrong to be motivated by rewards, we bring serious accusation against Christ. We imply he is tempting us to sin every time he offers rewards for obedience. This is unthinkable. Since God does not tempt his children, its clear that whatever he lays before us as a motivation is legititmate.

Just as you are given incentives in the work place. Just as you give incentives to your children for educational or athletic accomplishments. God has given us incentives for our obedience to him. Think about it. When we do good works and serve the needs of other people. When we use our money to take of the poor and needy. When we give our money to Christian ministry to spread the gospel. At least 3 things happen, and all 3 things are God given motives. (1) We obey God and bring glory to him. (2) People are served and experience the love and provision of God through us. (3) We will be laying up treasures, rewards and greater opportunities to serve Christ in heaven. This is a good motivation. It is God's idea after all.

B. What it does to our heart

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:21

What we do with our money doesn't simply indicate where our heart is. Although is certainly does that. According to Jesus, it determines where our heart goes. Some of you may be saying, I want to by more mission minded. Give your money to missions and your heart will follow. Some may say, I really need to care more about the poor. Give your money to take care of the poor and your heart will always follow.

Making Heaven our preoccupation.

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. Col 3:1-2

This radically affects the way we live our life.

The more we make heaven our preoccupation, the more our lives become radically transformed. People, possessions, career, time, pain and pleasure all have meaning when viewed through the lens of heaven.

The reality of eternity was the central motivation of the disciples during the early days of the church. The resurrection of Christ proved to them that heaven was real. Since there was life after death, nothing on this side could distract them. For them the other side was worth living for- and dying for if necessary. Nothing this passing world offered could deter them from living for eternity. Heaven was the primary reference point of their existence.

Making heaven our primary point of reference transforms us as well. What does it mean to make heaven our ultimate point of reference?

Points of reference rivet our attention and alter our behavior. Let me give you an example: When a college student prepares for a major grade-point-threatening test, he views all of life through the grid of that impending exam. If he neglects that point of reference- if he fails to prepare- he feels guilt and fear. If he gives proper attention to that point of reference, he will begin to do things he’s never done before. He will say no to other less-important activities such as pick-up basketball and instead spend a long night at the library, sifting through his research notes and resources as though he were a scholar.

We all have points of reference. They dictate who we are, what we dream about, where we go and what we do when we get there. Among these other points of reference may be: (a) an upcoming marriage (b) a vacation (c) a promotion (d) a baby soon to be born (e) a new home (f) a new car (g) retirement

When we make heaven our point of reference, we will know it because everything on this side becomes radically rearranged.

Conclusion:

John Wesley said, *“I judge all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity.”*

Missionary C.T. Studd said, *“Only one life, ‘twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.”*

Five minutes after we die, we’ll know exactly how we should have lived. But God has given us His Word so we don’t have to wait to die to find out. And He’s given us His Spirit to empower us to live that way now.

Resources:

Heaven by Randy Alcorn

The Law of Rewards by Randy Alcorn

The Life God Rewards by Bruce Wilkinson