

The Reality and Generosity of God

Thomas Robinson, *New Year*, January 7, 2018

Matthew 6:19-34

¹⁹ “Don’t treasure up for yourselves **treasures on earth**, where moth and rust make things disappear and where thieves break through and steal, ²⁰ but **treasure up for yourselves treasures in God’s realm** (heaven), where neither moth nor rust ruins things and where thieves neither break through nor steal. ²¹ For **where your treasure is, there also your heart will be**.

²² The **lamp of the body is the eye**. So, if your eye is **simple** (focused), your whole **body** will be **full of light**, ²³ but if your eye is **bad**, your whole **body** will go **dark**. If then the **light** in you is **darkness**, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ **No one can serve two lords**, for they’ll either **hate** the one and **love** the other, or be **devoted** to the one and **despise** the other. **You are not able to be a servant to God and to Mammon**.

²⁵ **Because of this fact**, I tell you, **refuse to be anxious any more about your life/soul** (*psyché*), what you’ll **eat** or what you’ll **drink**, or about **your body** (*soma*), what you’ll **wear**. Isn’t **your life/soul** (*psyché*) something more than **food**, and **your body** (*soma*) than **clothing**?

²⁶ **Look at the birds of God’s realm** (heaven): they neither **sow** nor **reap** nor **gather** into barns, and yet **your heavenly Father is feeding** them. **Aren’t you more important than they are?**

²⁷ And which of you by **being anxious** can add a single foot to how long you live?

²⁸ And about **clothing**, why are you **anxious**? **Examine those lilies** in the field. How do they grow? They neither labor hard nor spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you, not even **Solomon in all his glory** was dressed like any one of them. ³⁰ But if **God is clothing the grass of the field** in this way, though it’s here today and tomorrow is thrown into an oven, is he not **much more clothing you?** **You of little faith!**

³¹ Therefore **refuse to be anxious**, saying, ‘What are we going to **eat?**’ or ‘What are we going to **drink?**’ or ‘What are we going to **wear?**’ – ³² the nations, of course, are avidly seeking all these things. Why? Because **your heavenly Father knows that you need them all**.

³³ But **seek first God’s kingdom** (rule) and **his righteousness** (justice), and **all these things will be his additions to you**.

³⁴ Therefore **don’t be anxious anticipating tomorrow**, since tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for each day is its own trouble.”

Matthew 5:44-45, 48

⁴⁴ “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who oppress you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” ... ⁴⁸ You therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Matthew 6:10

¹⁰ “Let your kingdom come, let your will be done, as in heaven, so upon earth.”

Matthew 5:34-35

³⁴ “Don’t swear an oath at all, either by heaven because it’s a throne for God, or by earth because it’s a footstool for his feet.”

Heaven and Earth through Jesus' Eyes

We start a New Year not in a freezing crowd in Times Square, but in a crowd on a mountain with Jesus. Even the poorest among us can hardly imagine this crowd from Galilee towns. No medicine, police, grocery, banks; few schools; no political voice, no technology. But still like us, human, hoping, wanting better life, identity, wanting help to understand. What do you say to powerless, struggling people, gathered because of suffering, desire? Jesus does not condescend with platitudes. He teaches them, reshaping theology, ethics, anthropology, cosmology through powerful images that still challenge every real listener. God is real and present here, now – an intensity we're not used to. Our lives can participate in God's life, God's kingdom, on the largest scale. It's there. Seek it! His faithful justice. You have to seek. God doesn't force his power on you. Heaven and earth are not far apart. "Heaven" is God's realm pervading all. "Earth" is the realm where God is visible only indirectly, but everywhere – space for real human freedom to see or not. We delude ourselves that indirectness is absence. God's whole creation is his continuous delight. Like heaven/earth, Jesus points to the unity of body and soul-life (*psyche*), both beloved by God. But within that unity, God has made us "something more." We can be not only God's creatures, but God children. That "something more" makes all the difference!

Treasure, Eyes, and Lords

Jesus lays the foundation for "refuse to be anxious" with three images – splinters in the mind – that point to the intense challenge for us to live toward God's Life/Kingdom. We are treasure keepers. Everyone. What we treasure we want secure. Where is a secure place? On earth, where we think it's just us?: We have to make it secure. In God's realm? Can we really trust what we can't control? Think about yourself, your heart? Life! The problem is our eyes. Our vision is corrupted. We need new clarity/simplicity/focus for reality to come into view. We blind ourselves to the light of reality and live darkened. Jesus calls us to look, to see: sun, rain, birds, flowers, ourselves. God is there. Look! We are servants. We think we don't want to serve, but our lives are always constrained, limited. Lots of our "lords" enslave us by various forces. Mammon personifies all the stuff that offers us power, control, security, ease – practical "gods" that are not God. Our true Lord calls not by force but by love and devotion. But the love is life-transforming.

Anxiety, Vulnerability and the Generosity of God

Anxiety flows from vulnerable treasures, distorted vision, having a false lord. It's the expression of our deep sense that we're the only security we've got and we can't do it. When we live seeing only the "Earth" part of the Heaven-Earth unity, when we live only in the hiddenness of God –eyes darkened to his presence everywhere –we're right to be anxious. Every day has plenty of trouble. That's the human situation. We mess up. We lose. But Jesus calls us to look deeper: When we see clearly, we see a Generous God everywhere. Feeding his birds. Clothing his lilies. We reunite in our lives the unity of heaven and earth. We learn to see God, trust God. God wants to give you life, not just stuff, but Life. The stuff is his too. He is generous with both. We're part of God's great creation, but also Something More. We can share is His Kingdom, his Life! Seek for it. Ask, Knock, Find!