

## **What Is Your M.I.T.?**

Matt. 6:19-34

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March 25, 2018

Back in my youth minister years, some Sunday evenings the teenagers would show up for a field trip. I did not tell them ahead of time where we were going. Each field trip was a surprise and each destination served a teaching purpose.

One Sunday night I loaded the senior high youth up on the church van and we ended up at the county landfill.

Let me preface this by saying that youth pastors sometimes have ideas that sound good until they are implemented.

First, I am not sure if it's legal to walk around in the county landfill, but I do remember that we didn't have to jump over any fences or cut any locks. I cannot remember if we ignored any signs.

I do remember saying a lot of things like, "Hey, put that down. Remember, I said not to pick anything up." "Hey, get down off that."

"No, you can't take that home." "Yes, that does look like a used..." I'll let you use your imagination to finish that sentence. "Yes, I do believe that thing is dead." "I know it stinks here. It's a landfill."

Despite my not thinking through all the scenarios of taking my teenagers to a dirty, germ, and possibly disease-infested place, the application side of the experience worked out well.

I asked them to name a few of the material things they were obsessed with having, besides a car. Today a teenager might name a Fuji Film Instant Camera that prints Polaroid instant prints, a Marvel Spider-Man Movie Edition Drone, a Bluetooth Turntable System with Stereo Speakers, or a pair of Stan Smith Adidas Sneakers.

Twenty-eight years ago, the items were different but the point I made was powerful. I told them that eventually those items they were dying to have were going to end up in a place like the county landfill.

That new I-phone that people were standing in line for not too long ago is the same one that the battery can't hold a charge now because the company's software upgrades keep slowing down the battery down. Where do all those old batteries go? A lot of them end up in the county landfill.

I wish we would learn to recycle a lot of our waste so that we were not dumping so much into a landfill, but the point I hope you are getting the point. What we believe is a treasure today fades quickly and becomes tomorrow's trash.

We are infatuated with things if they can hold our attention and bring us pleasure and then we discard them like a used dryer sheet.

Many of us learn that money equals treasure. Treasure is whatever brings us momentary happiness. What makes us happy changes so fast that our credit cards stay hot and we need more money to pay them off. To get money the legal way we must work. So we end up working and working and working for treasure that doesn't buy lasting happiness, much of which ends up somewhere in a landfill. That's such a crazy cycle. When you think about it, a lot of our lives literally end up in a landfill.

Jesus said, "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be." (John 6:19-21)

Jesus wants us to decide what our MIT is, our "Most Important Treasure."

In Jesus' day, material things which were traded had a good chance of being eaten by moths, rusting away, or being stolen.

Even today, with all the security we have, the more we have, the more we have to lose; and the more ways there are to lose it, the more opportunities there are for people to steal it, and the more we have to think about protecting it.

It wasn't a good week for Mark Zuckerberg. He lost 10 billion dollars of wealth. Most 401k's saw about 3% of their totals lost. Now there isn't anything sinful about building earthly wealth or saving for retirement or anything else, unless these things become our MIT.

This is the reason Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, that is where your heart is."

That means we need to be honest in answering the question, "What is your Most Important Treasure?"

When I'm taking a picture with my SLR camera, I'm able to set my camera so that the picture will focus on any area within my viewfinder. I can focus on the top right corner or the bottom right corner and that is what your eye will be drawn to in the photo. Most of the time, I want the center of my picture to be what is in focus because the center is what people's eyes are drawn to. What's most important is usually in the center of the picture.

Jesus wants us to live our lives so that his ways of living are in the center of our lives. If our treasure becomes worldly, we lose focus of the abundant life Jesus came to give us.

If our heart is in the wrong place, our lives cannot have the peace of Christ; nor can we offer that peace to others.

When others see a snapshot of our lives, Jesus' influence should be clear. There should be no doubt that serving the Lord is our most important treasure.

As people see where our passions are, where we spend our money, how we conduct ourselves during our free time, what we talk about the most on Facebook, what consumes our weekends through the year, how we treat our bodies, our families, and our neighbors, what will they come to a conclusion about where our hearts are?

Every time we become consumed by a hobby, a sport, investing, reaching for retirement, becoming a home or business owner, searching for a job, striving for a degree, working out and staying healthy, pursuing a relationship, being a new parent or grandparent, raising a family, making a major purchase, reducing our debt, achieving a major goal, we must make sure that none of these things become our MIT. Instead, we want Jesus to permeate all these things.

The first and greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord thy God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength."

We are taught in the Law of Moses that no gods are to come before our Lord.

We may need some radical surgery if any of these things become the MIT in our lives.

For James and John, the Sons of Zebedee, their MIT were the fish they caught from the Sea of Galilee until Jesus showed them how to be fishers of men.

As a tax collector, Zacchaeus' MIT was collecting as many taxes from the people as he could until Jesus showed him how to love others as he loved himself.

For Saul, it was convicting as many Christians of abandoning the Jewish faith as he could, until he met Jesus through a blinding light on the road to Damascus and understood that Jesus was the light of the world.

Is it possible that there is something in your life that has become your most important treasure which has caused your heart to be somewhere other than in a place of allegiance to Jesus and his ways of living?

How do you know if you are making the wrong thing your MIT? There isn't one easy answer. Part of the answer is that we must pause long enough to listen.

We must listen to our bodies, which will break down when we misplace our priorities and develop unhealthy lifestyles.

Stress is normal. We all have our fair share. However, God has not ordained it in unhealthy doses. Unhealthy stress will kill us. God doesn't wish or desire that we suffer from it.

He wants us to learn to live a life free from worry because He has promised to take care of us. When we misplace our most important treasure onto worldly items, we tend to become anxious. We tend to worry. We tend to stray from God and fall into temptation.

We must listen to the Spirit of God as He speaks to our souls. When we become restless, anxious, uneasy, and cannot find peace in what we are doing, these are signs that we are putting importance on the wrong things. The solution is to pray and discover where we are misplacing our focus and priorities.

Remember, Jesus has just finished teaching his disciples how to pray. When he said, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," Jesus is telling us to ask God to help us shift our priorities.

It is our will and temptation to build treasure on earth. It is God's will that we build a different kind of treasure in heaven.

God is not against wealth. God is against anything that becomes more important than Him. Instead of focusing on earthly treasure. God wants us to focus on treasure that has eternal dividends.

Whenever God forgives us of our sins and we forgive others of theirs, we build treasure in heaven.

Whenever we work for justice, we build treasure in heaven.

Whenever we let go of hate and treat others the way we want to be treated, we build treasure in heaven.

Whenever we pray for our enemies, we build treasure in heaven.

Whenever we share our faith, we build treasure in heaven.

Whenever we speak the truth in love, respect the rights of others, refuse to gossip and judge, extend love without prejudice, share our resources with others, forgive those that have wronged us, we build treasure in heaven.

Whenever we are generous with our resources, we build treasure in heaven.

Whenever we do small acts of service, we build treasure in heaven.

Jesus said, "If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose his or her reward" (Matthew 10:42).

The Apostle Paul wrote: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23–24).

Perhaps the greatest treasure we can build in heaven are our efforts to share the love of Jesus with others and seek to bring them to a saving knowledge of the truth in Christ.

What greater treasure could there be than to discover others in heaven and realize we had a part in their coming to know Jesus as the Lord and Savior?

Too often we are like the person who collects gold coins and puts them in a safe at home because he likes the feeling of opening his safe and seeing his money instead of trusting banks to hold them for him.

It is true; you cannot see any treasure in heaven. You can't even see heaven. However, the scriptures tell us there is a reward that comes now for being obedient to God and doing those things we are asked to do and there is a reward coming later in heaven. One of those rewards is peace. Another is assurance of our salvation. It is God's Spirit within you, giving you real joy.

So in addition to listening to our bodies and listening to Spirit of God, we also can listen to scripture.

This morning, you may have had some area of your life come to mind and you know that it and not the Lord is your most important treasure.

Your MIT might not be an evil thing. Most of the time it is not. Satan doesn't care. He just doesn't want you to experience the joy, peace, and abundant life that's possible by making Jesus and his ways your Most Important Treasure.

Even if you are a believer, if you realize today that you have allowed something other than God to edge Him out as your most important treasure, God is waiting for you to come and acknowledge this so your life and the life of your family can be blessed. God not only wants to bless you now, God wants to reward you with treasure in heaven.

So where is your heart this morning? If it's not where it should be, right now, in an act of honesty, express your desire to change the way you are living. Humble yourself, and acknowledge to God what your MIT is and make the changes you need to make so that you will build treasure in heaven.

Begin a new journey with God and discover how your life can change when God becomes the most important treasure of your life.