

# Matthew 6:19-24

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 20 May 2018

Preacher: Paul Levy

[ 0 : 00 ] I wonder whether you've ever been at those parties or camps where you get a broom and you are to hug the end of the broom and then you kind of look at the top of the broom handle and then you spin around. Have you ever done that? No?

And supposedly if you do that and you spin around and you keep your focus on the top of the broom handle, you can go round and round and round and then when you stop, you can still run in a straight line. You've got to stagger. Maybe we'll try it at the picnic.

But the key thing is where your focus is, isn't it? The key thing is the locus of your focus or the loci of your foci. Whatever your eyes are fastened on. What your eyes are fastened on will keep you from losing your bearing.

And that is what Jesus is talking about in our text. He is concerned about the locus of your focus or the loci of your foci. Where is your gaze fixed upon? Where is your treasure?

Now the Lord Jesus, in our journey of the Sermon on the Mount, he's shown us, hasn't he, several aspects of what the Christian life looks like. Chapter 5 and verse 17 to 48, we see he stresses really the stringency of the Christian life.

[ 1 : 24 ] He shows us, doesn't he, how deeply the law of God goes. How rigorous the law of God is. The depth of God's law as Jesus exposes to us what it means.

And then we see in chapter 6, 1 to 18, the secrecy of the Christian life. That the only thing that matters for the believer is not what other people and other believers may think of him, but that he pleases his Father in heaven in secret.

And then we go into another kind of distinct section in the Sermon on the Mount in our passage today from verse 19 to 34. And Jesus really is describing the singularity, the single focus of the Christian life.

The Christian life is to be a life of one thing, of one treasure, of one master, and of one focus. And basically all he has to say flows out from that.

If you want to sum it up, let me just show you in a nutshell, look at verse 20. He says there, he says, lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven.

[ 2 : 40 ] Or you could take the implication of verse 24. That is that you must be a slave to God. Or verse 33, you've got to keep focusing and seeking his kingdom and his righteousness.

And so the first thing I want to say to you this morning, my first point, is the focus that you must have. The focus that you must have, that's in verses 90 to 24. And when you look at that section, you might think Jesus isn't talking singly, of one focus.

He's talking doubly. I know those aren't words. But just look with me. Look, he says that there are two types of treasures. Or two kinds of vision. And there are two kinds of masters.

I don't think when he talks about treasures, upon earth, he's talking about stuff. I don't think he's talking about TV or tech. Things that you might count valuable.

But the kind of treasures that you had back then in Jesus' day. So let's try and think about that. How was wealth measured in Jesus' day? It was measured in garments.

[ 3 : 53 ] The garments that you amassed over time. Several festal garments. So your wardrobe, what you wore, would be part of your wealth.

And Jesus said, if you lay that up as your wealth, and if you make those garments your wealth, do you know there's such a thing as moths?

And moths can come in, and moths can eat and destroy and ruin those garments that are your wealth. And not only that, there could be corrosion. It could just mean eating.

You might have some of your crops. Maybe that's your wealth. They are your wealth. But those crops, they are subject, aren't they, to rodents, to rats, to mice, and so on.

And your riches, they could be eaten away. And not only that, but maybe you have your treasure, perhaps in your house. But do you realise that a thief can dig through the muds or the clay walls of your house, and they can take your stuff away that you don't expect.

[ 5 : 02 ] And so he says, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Now what does Jesus mean by that? He doesn't mean by having treasures after this life.

That may be included. But I don't think that's his main thrust. He's not saying how many treasures as later treasures. When he says treasure in heaven, he essentially means treasures with God. Now what kind of treasure could this be? That we have two kinds of treasures. It could be that we have beside our treasure in God, an economic kind of treasure.

Verse 19. Or verse 24, he speaks of worldly possessions. Mammon. But not only that, there can be other sorts of treasures.

It's not just economic treasure. That is the way that I've always taken this passage. It's spoken about the kind of money, give your money away. So your heart will go where your money is. But in fact, when we look at the Sermon on the Mount as a whole, I think it's much broader than that.

[ 6 : 10 ] So the preceding sections. You remember last week, verses 1 to 18. Jesus mentioned and he told us that we need to be aware of having our focus on winning the esteem of others.

Of others being so important to us that they can be your treasure. The esteem of other people. Human popularity.

Acceptance with others. And you can crave that. You can crave that more than anything else. That can be your treasure.

Rather than God as your treasure. And so the kind of treasure can vary. And it's important. Because you really only have one treasure, Jesus says.

Because where your treasure is, what really matters to you, that's where your heart will be also. Treasure claims affection. And whatever it is, the stuff that you really value, that is where your focus is going to be.

[ 7 : 14 ] And that is where your heart is going to be. And that is where the centre of your being is going to be. It may be success. It may be prestige. It may be reputation.

And that's where your heart will be. That is what you long for and you yearn for. So it's very vital. Where is your treasure? Jesus also says, doesn't he, and there's two kinds of vision.

Verses 22 and 23. Verses 22 and 23, he talks about the light. The eye. The light. The eye is the light of the body. The light is the body.

It's the eye. The light of the body is the eye. Essentially the same point. You've got the whole body. But there's one thing that controls the condition of the body.

The condition of the eye. And Jesus says, what kind of vision do you have? If your eye is single. That's the literal meaning of the word.

[ 8 : 14 ] Some translate it generous. Some translate it sound. And you get Jesus' point. If your eye is good. If its condition is sound. Then the whole of your body is full of light.

If it is evil. That is probably something that's not healthy. About it. Then your whole body will be affected by your vision. Your whole body will be full of darkness.

Or literally, if your eye is single. If you have a focused vision. If you see images sharply and clearly. Then your whole body is full of light. If you see devil.

If it's blurry. If it's distorted. Then it's going to mess you up. You must have single vision. If you're going to function effectively. Vision determines condition.

And then Jesus goes on to talk about two masters. And he essentially says. You can only have one. There is a single master.

[ 9 : 15 ] He says. No man is able to serve. To be a slave to two masters. We translate it. No one is able to serve two masters.

Verse 24. And that's okay. It's not ideal. As we're going to see in a minute. But we tend to think. Well of course I can serve two masters.

I can be at home. Serving there. I can be at work. Serving there. I can do a part time role. I serve several people. It doesn't seem to conflict. But that's not what Jesus is talking about.

He's not talking about serving. As in employment. But he's saying. No one is able. To be a slave to two masters. That's what it literally is. In the ancient world.

You'll know this. A slave was a piece of property. It's owned by his lord. Or master. And you couldn't be a slave. And work for two masters. You only belong to one.

[10:16] Your tithe was your own. Your possessions were your own. You belonged to his master. You were his slave. And a slave can only belong to one master. That's what Jesus means.

And you're not able to be a slave to God. And mammon. Mammon is worldly possessions. It may be wealth.

But it doesn't have to be. It can be many worldly possessions. Or it may be just a few. But certainly. The world and its stuff.

You don't have to have a lot of it. You can just have a little bit of it. To be its slave. I think this is one of the key things. About the New Testament. That they understood. That we don't get. The slave image of the Christian life.

We're just a little bit nervous of it. I know that there's another picture. Of the Christian life here. And Jesus gives it to us. In verse 25 to 34. And Jesus is talking to his disciples.

[11:16] About your heavenly father. And we are his children. By implication. There's an expression isn't there. Of intimacy. And care. And we love that.

We actually talk a lot about that. In the Christian world. At the moment. But in the New Testament. There's a very definite. Slave picture. You see.

If you've trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are not only a child. Of your heavenly father. And you live in communion with him. And intimacy with him. But this morning. You are also a slave.

You are a slave of my king. And my master. And I am under. In a relationship. Of authority. Of under authority to him. So can you see.

The nature of the Christian life. New Testament picks this up. The word for master. Is the word that we call. Lord. And someone. Even in the epistles.

[12:14] Even though it's. It's translated. Often as servant. We need to see this motif. Again and again. Of slavery. So let's look at James. James. Was Jesus. Half brother.

And in James 1. Verse 1. The half brother. Of the Lord Jesus himself. And he calls himself. He says. James. A slave of God. And the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who is Jesus Christ? He is. Lord. He is. The owner of the slave. Can I say this?

Jesus Christ. Is the slave master. And I am. As his follower. His slave. And so as a follower.

Of the Lord Jesus. I don't have. Any rights. Of my own. Everything. That I have. Is to be offered. To him. And so what Jesus is saying.

[13:12] It ties in. Is this. This single focus. That you must have. You can't have many focuses. But rather. Where is your treasure? What are your eyes.

Fixed upon? And whose slave are you? And the reason Jesus is so insistent upon this. Is because that one question. It governs. The whole nature.

Of our whole life. Everything else. Follows that. Everything else. Flows.

From that. Everything. In the Christian life. Is determined by that focus. The first. Ten years.

I was minister here. I used to save. All my sermons. Onto a. External hard drive. And that external hard drive. Is a little. Blue little thing. Like that. Tiny little thing. Within that.

[14:07] Contained. Ten years. Work. Reams. And reams. Mounds. And mounds. Of notes. Of course. It. Got wet. And got ruined.

And now it costs about. A thousand. Fifteen hundred pound. Repair. It's a blessing. In some ways. Those sermons. Are in the past. So I can hear you say. A hearty amen to that. But all my work. Depended on that.

One. Little. File. Everything. Ten years work. Flowed out of that hard drive. Everything. In the Christian life. Is determined by this focus.

Your little focus. That one concentrated focus. Where is your treasure? Where are your eyes fixed? Who's slaving you? If you have a single focus.

If you have. But one treasure. If you have. But one master. Do you see what Jesus says? Jesus says. You will have one anxiety. Verse 25. You say.

[15:03] I thought we weren't supposed to have any anxieties. Well Jesus allows you one. It's the one positive command. Of instruction. That he gives you. In the second part of the text. Verse 33.

But seek first. The kingdom of God. And his righteousness. And all these things will be added to you.

That is. If you have a single focus. Then you can have that. One single anxiety. That drives your life. And that one single anxiety. Is seeking God's kingdom.

And his righteousness first. That's what worries you. And rightly so. So we have to ask ourselves. Don't we? What does this mean? He says.

I allow you to. Have this anxiety. Of seeking his kingdom. And righteousness. What does that mean? Well Jesus already dealt with it. Hasn't he? In the first part of the Sermon on the Mount. He says in chapter 6.

[16:02] We pray. For your kingdom to come. May his name. May your name. Be held sacred. May the time come.

When your kingdom will come. On earth. As it's done in heaven. And that is what we pray for. Don't we? We pray. For the time. When his kingdom. His kingship. Will be fully shown on earth.

That doesn't mean. That God doesn't reign now. Of course he does. But that kingdom. That's a kingship. It's not just the space. Over which God reigns.

It's the fact that he reigns. As king. And so if I'm seeking. His kingship. His kingship. It's not. Just when his kingdom. Comes in its fullness.

But it's his kingship. Over my life. Even right now. Over my social relationships. Of my marriage. Of my home. Of my work. Of my sex life.

[16:58] Of my employment. Of my school. Of my recreation. Of my lifestyle. My concern. And my anxiety. And all of that. Should be submitted.

To the kingship of God. And that he rules. In all of that. What does it mean. To seek his righteousness. For that to be the focus.

What is his righteousness? Well. We've seen it already. Haven't we. In the Sermon on the Mount.

That I'm going to be seeking. For a deep righteousness. Do you remember the commandments.

Of the king. In chapter five. That I'm not just concerned. To keep the commandments. Not to murder. But I want to. Get to that point.

Where I'm able to eradicate. The wrong anger. That's in my heart. And the things that control. This anger. That which leads.

[17:54] To the act. And I just. It's not that I just. Want to be kept. From committing adultery. But I want to do away. With the lust. That's so prevalent. In my heart. So I'm seeking.

A deep relationship. And not only that. I'm seeking. A faithful righteousness. Do you remember. Chapter five. Verse thirty three. To thirty seven. That I.

Faithfully. And I. Candidly. And I frankly. Speak the truth. And I remember. That in all my words. They are spoken. In the presence of God. And then we can say.

Look at me. Chapter six. One to eighteen. We are to seek. A hidden righteousness. Not one that parades itself. But one that's main concern. Is not to please men.

But above all. To please my father. Who sees in secret. And I will be a generous. And a praying. And an earnest. Christian disciple. But my concern.

[18:47] Is not. Is not. It's not. Applause from men. And credit from others. But to please my father. Who is in heaven. And that's all that matters. That's what Jesus is talking about.

To keep on. Seeking his. Kingship. To keep on. Seeking his. Righteousness. That is the one. Allowable. Anxiety in life. And that will be true.

If you have. One master. So where is your treasure. Where is your vision. Who is your master. The single focus.

You must have. For the preachers. Asking questions like that. It's like when the child. Gets a toy gun out. Isn't it. You know when you go to. Dinner with a child. And the child gets a.

A toy gun out. What's the first thing you do. You put your hands up. Don't you. You immediately surrender. And when I say to you. Very often. What is your treasure. Immediately you just give up. And surrender.

[19:46] How do. How do we. How do we. Deal with this. How do we work this through. Now secondly. Let's see. How Jesus helps you. To have this kingdom focus.

And what he does. Is he wonderfully. Gives you multiple arguments. That you must hear. First of all. A single focus. But then in 25 to 34.

Multiple arguments. And Jesus stacks up. Argument after argument. Reason upon reason. About why you should not. Have anxiety. About the things of life. About what you'll eat.

And what you'll drink. And what you'll wear. And I think you might say. Well what right does Jesus have. To talk about this. He never struggled in that way. But remember.

Who is speaking to you. Remember that the one. Who said. Foxes have holes. And the birds of the air. Have nests. But the son of man. He doesn't have a place. To lay his head. He knows.  
[ 20 : 41 ] About what he speaks for us. And not only that. But you recall. That there'd be a good number. Wouldn't there. Of people who were listening. To this sermon. Who lived. On the borderline of poverty. It would address them.

Pointedly. And please. Please remember. What Jesus says here. Is not a program. For world poverty. Relief. And hunger relief. It is spoken to his disciples. To his church. Now what's the connection.

No sooner. Is Jesus talked about. The same single focus. But in verse 25. He says. For this reason. I tell you. Stop being anxious. About your life. Stop being anxious. About what you'll eat. And what you'll put on. Now what's the connection. Jesus is saying. You may not have. In this area. Of mammon. You might not have. Great wealth. You might not have.

Masses of riches. That will draw your affections. Away from your father. But do you know. That your affections. Can be drawn away. From your father. Not only by great. Masses of wealth.

[ 21 : 42 ] But your attention. Can be drawn away. From following your father. By what you don't have. It's not only those. Who have money. Who love it. There is. Isn't there.

A poor man's. Idolatry. And anxiety. About being anxious. About what we'll eat. And what we'll wear. And so on. And Jesus says to you. Very clearly. Stop being anxious. Stop being anxious. About those circumstances. In your life. Which draw you away. From that one. Central focus. And Jesus is very. Gracious though. Isn't he? He doesn't just. Lay down the law. But he reasons. With you this morning. And he seeks to give you. Reasons to. Maintain and sustain. Your confidence. In our father's provision. We say anxiety.

Don't we? The old king James said. Take no thought. Of your life. And in those days. That made perfect sense. For us it's a little difficult. Jesus is not saying. That you.

[ 22 : 42 ] Can't think about. What you eat. Or what you wear. Or anything like that. Jesus is not saying. You can't provide for yourself. He's not saying. Don't make proper provision. For the future. He's saying.

Don't be excessive. He isn't saying. You can't make proper provision. He's saying. Don't be anxious. About thought. Or work. Or study. He's not forbidding.

Work or study. But the worrying. That kind of stewing. The ulcerating. Kind of attention. That goes along with work. And focuses on that. So let me give you.

Jesus' arguments. Number one. Jesus gives you. An argument. From priority. He gives you. An argument. From priority. He says.

Therefore I tell you. Do not be anxious. About your life. Verse 25. What you'll eat. Or what you'll drink. Or what you'll put on. Is life. Not more than food. And the body. More than clothing. What's he saying there?

[ 23 : 36 ] He's saying. God is the one who gives you life. He gives you the greater gift. Doesn't he? Then won't your father. Give you the food. That you need. To maintain your life.

He gives you the body. The greater gift. Won't he give you. Clothing. To put on that body. Won't he give you. The lesser gift. It's an argument. It's from priority. He gives you.

The greater gift. So can't you trust him. With the lesser gift. And then he gives you. An argument. From value. In verse 26. Look at the birds.

Of the air. They neither sow. Nor reap. Nor gather into barns. And yet your heavenly father. Feeds them to you. Are you not. More value. Than they are. He says.

Look. Think. About the birds. And when you do that. When you think about the birds. You realise that they're not trading. They're not. Selling crops. They're not reaping crops.

[ 24 : 37 ] They don't gather. Into barns. And yet. Wonder of wonders. Your father feeds them. He doesn't mean. That those birds. Have an absence of work. But an absence of worry. And Jesus is not suggesting.

That the birds sit there. And in their nest. And they open up their beaks. And some invisible hand of God. Comes and drops worms. Into their mouths. No. They have their own ways. Of providing. Don't they? But like us.

Not like us. There's no worry. Connected with it. And if God feeds the birds. Will he not feed you? And aren't you. Of more value.

Than birds. Aren't you? It's an argument from value. You matter more to God. Than the birds of the air do. And if your father.

Values you. More than the birds of the air. Won't he feed you. Like he feeds the birds. And then he goes to an argument. Called length of life. If I can go to that. An argument of length of life. Look what it says.

[ 25 : 37 ] In verse 27. And which of you. By being anxious. Can add a single. Hour. To this span of life. Jesus is saying to you.

You have a certain lifespan. And if you really. Really. Concentrate. On your fitness. On your health. Can you add any span.

To your length of life. By worrying. By being anxious. Can you eke out. Maybe another. Six months. Another year. You know.

He's saying. Anxiety is no power. Anxiety can't produce anything. It's empty. It's useless. It can't do anything. Positive. Like that. So he's trying to say.

It doesn't do us. Any good anyway. And then he gives us. An argument. Through extravagance.

You see the Adam. Verses 28 to 30. And it's something like this. He says. Consider well. The lilies of the fields.

[ 26 : 35 ] He means wild flowers. He says. Look at those wild flowers. They're really beautiful. And if God decks out. Something like that. Like a flower. And he takes.

That kind of care. To produce. That kind of beauty. For what? Somebody will pick them. Or they'll be here today. And gone tomorrow.

The heat will come out. And they'll wither away. And yet. God invested. All that potential. And all that beauty. That you see. In those wild flowers. When you see them.

That not even Solomon. Great King Solomon. In all his glory. Was decked out. Like one of those. And if God gives. That kind of attention. To flowers. Which are here today.

And then gone tomorrow. Will he not also. Clothe you. O you of little faith. It's an argument. From God's extravagance. And not only that.

[ 27 : 29 ] He gives you an argument. From compassion. Verse 32. Your heavenly father. Knows. You need all these things. And then in verse 34. He gives you an argument. From realism.

He says. Don't become anxious. About tomorrow. Because tomorrow. Will be anxious. For itself. There's enough trouble. For each day. What does Jesus mean?

You know what he means. Don't anticipate. Trouble. And try to live. Through it. By means of anxiety. Before it comes. Jesus. Jesus.

Isn't stupid. He doesn't. Hand out stickers. Saying life is a beach. He says. There's trouble. For every day. And there is trouble.

For every day. Isn't there? And there's trouble. And God's people. Frequently. Seem to be the ones. Who know more trouble. Than other people. There's enough trouble. For each day. You will have problems.

[ 28 : 30 ] But don't anticipate them. By being anxious. About them. And trying to forecast. What you're going to do. And face it. When it comes. Don't try to overload it.

Each day. He's got enough trouble. Of its own. In other words. For Jesus. Don't be anxious. Don't be anxious. About the tragedy. That you fear most.

That might happen. Don't be consumed. With dread. About the disease. That you dread most. That you might get.

Don't be anxious. In stewing. Over the person. You love most. That they're going to be. Taking from you. Because each day. Has enough trouble. Of its own. It's an argument.

From realism. Let me try and pull this. On briefly together. Teach you what Jesus is doing. When Jesus is multiplying arguments. I want you to see that. To try and stem your anxiety.

[ 29 : 31 ] And why is he doing that? He knows what he's doing. Did you notice what he calls us. In verse 30. I like that. He says. Oh you of little faith. Jesus knows that. For his disciples.

This morning. It is possible. For you and I. To be able to trust him. For our eternal salvation. Many of us here this morning. We know Jesus Christ.

And we have no doubt at all. That when we stand before him. At the judgment. We will be acquitted. We don't struggle with doubts on that. And we have no doubt. That we know. A little bit of heaven on earth.

And we are saved for all eternity. And yet. We have all sorts of problems. And we have all sorts of worries. And difficulties. In believing. That our heavenly father.

Is adequate. For the circumstances. Of my daily life. To trust him. So how does Jesus help you? What is his method?

[ 30 : 26 ] He doesn't want you. To lose your single focus. So what does he do? How does he help you. To overcome your anxiety? He doesn't sit down beside you. And say. Do you know what? I know how you feel. I have a struggle with that too.

He's not doing that. What is Jesus doing? He's giving you reasons. And arguments. And he's using logic. And clarity.

And he says to you. Meditate on these truths. Reason in faith. He says. What kind of father do you have? And that's what he's saying. You see.

And that is interesting. Isn't it? It's not reason. And it's not thinking. That brings you to faith in Christ. God can use that. But that's not the point. But after we come to faith.

One of the key ways. That Jesus sustains your faith. And my faith. Is by getting us to think. Something comes to us. And happens to us.

[ 31 : 22 ] And we think. What do I do? Or how do I feel? But that's not the answer. Jesus is saying. Don't be consumed. With the anxiety.

That comes. With whatever circumstance. But think. Think what your father is like. And use these arguments.

If God did this. Won't he do that? Jesus wants you. To be a thinking person. And to be a believing disciple.

In other words. If you want to sum up. Verse 25 to 34. Jesus says. Do you look at all the evidence. Of your heavenly father's faithfulness. By multiple arguments.

Jesus is saying. To you and I. Think about the various ways. And the evidence that you have. That your heavenly father. Is firm in his faithfulness. Here's our building.

[ 32 : 22 ] It's between green. And we miss that little building. You go into this chapel. And there are six giant pillars. Holding up a flat roof. Those pillars are completely unnecessary.

Very very annoying. They look good. You don't need the pillars. To hold up the roof to you. It's a flat roof for goodness sake. It's just a folly of an architect. And our pillars of anxiety.

We don't need them. We don't need them. You can construct great big pillars of anxiety. And tries to do his work for him. But they won't hold up anything.

God's faithfulness has never faltered. You can trust your father's faithfulness. To hold you up over the years. You don't need pillars of anxiety.

And if that is true. Then you can keep the locus of your focus. You can keep your heart. Or where your real treasure is.

[ 33 : 20 ] Which is God. And you can be free to seek first his kingdom. And his righteousness. Let's pray. Let's pray.