



St. Michael's Church
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY OCTOBER 25, 2020

STEWARDSHIP – THE EVERGREEN PROJECT
GENEROSITY – CHAPPY MCKAY TESTIMONY

MATTHEW 6:19-21, 1 TIMOTHY 2:5-7

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU
ALL OVER AGAIN TODAY..

Over the years, bicycling, on and off road has become such a treasure. Perhaps it's the movement, the simplicity of the bike, or the thrill of what's around that next corner. Yes, Biking has grabbed my heart over these last years, and now my son Hudson and I have taken it up as "our thing." Which is why last weekend we rode our bicycles in the Bike Across South Carolina tour. Yes, with 150 new and old friends, Hudson and I biked 100 miles from Sumter to Moncks Corner in two days. Here's what I discovered: when something is a treasure of your heart, it doesn't matter what it takes or if it totally exhaust you. Toward the end of our 2nd day, we biked up a dirt trail, that took us to the top of the Lake Moultrie dam. In a moment I will never forget, Hudson and I experience the lake unfold before our very eyes. And for the next 10 miles we would bike the top of that dam, and the joy of those miles, even in a headwind, brings tears to my eyes even now! I remember saying to Hudson several times, "There is nowhere on earth I would rather be than right here, doing this with you." The treasure of the heart...

Today, I want to speak simply from my heart, about the heart of Matthew 6:21. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." This is part of the longest sermon Jesus ever preached—part of His Sermon on the Mount. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Treasure here doesn't just refer to money. Treasure also describes doing something, looking at something, or believing in something that fills your heart with beauty, value, joy, and deepest meaning. A joy that turns your heart inside out! That fills you up to where you say, "It's all worth it, and it brings you worth!" This treasure might be writing poetry, the artistry of painting on canvas, sailing, golfing, or running. It grabs your heart!

My friends, what do you most treasure? It's different for everyone. I can't assume Hal Frampton, taking his sons Ellis and Fletcher on the same bike journey will have that same treasured feeling of the heart. I think of Johnnie Corbett who in my younger years tried and tried to make me a hunter and a fisherman. And I tried, Oh how I tried. I spent hours in deer stands, but it just was not the treasure of my heart. I absolutely respect hunters, and fishermen, and wish I could hand that down to my children, but it's just not a treasure of my heart.

And believe it or not, this is actually the most frustrating aspect of Christianity! Personally, when I come into church on Sunday morning, the treasure of worship explodes within me! Every time bar none that we process in for worship, this treasure of worship fills my soul. My heart is filled with beauty, and the thrill of worshiping Jesus and seeing your wonderful faces even above the masks is such a treasure of my heart.

And I want to shout to the world, isn't this amazing! Worship makes every earthly treasure pale in comparison. But like earthly treasures, I can't convince somebody to feel the way I do! Just last week I was under the portico ready for the service to get started, I truly felt giddy waiting to come in. And I see five guys walking toward me under the portico, clearly on their way somewhere else and I said, "Join us for worship! Come on in!" Their response was chilling. Not only did they not respond, but they looked at me like I was half crazy, then kind of grunted and kept walking. But this is how the heart works, we can't coerce someone to make worship their treasure. We can certainly invite and must never give up, but we can't order someone to make Jesus the treasure of their heart anymore than Johnnie Corbett can make me a hunter or I make you a cyclist!

It's the work of the Holy Spirit.

My dear friends, I can't force YOU to make Jesus and worship the treasure of your heart. I can only tell you why Jesus is the ultimate treasure of my heart-and it's this: Paul in a letter to his mentoree Timothy is asking Timothy to imagine two cliffs, with a valley between them. Paul is saying, "Timothy, imagine God is on one side of a cliff, and every human on the other, In between, is a valley that we call hell, filled with death and eternal torture." Then Paul says Jesus is the bridge connecting God and humanity, saving us from eternal death.

Every time I contemplate that vision of cliffs, valley, and bridge, I'm wowed. Jesus the great connector between the creatOR and His creatED! Paul repeats this in Hebrews 9, "Christ is the mediator." There is no plan B; without the bridge of Jesus there is no hope for humanity. Which is why Jesus would say in John 11, "All who believe in me, will never die." My friends, I hear this and it grabs my heart all over again! My heart is turned inside out and fills with gratitude, joy, beauty, and deepest meaning. Could there be any more of an important life's mission than to help another walk the way of the cross into the eternal heartbeat of God, where children, men, and women are given a minute by minute presence with Jesus as Lord, Savior, and friend? A relationship that assures us we are never alone even for eternity, that guarantees forgiveness, and where we realize our sins, failures, and past don't have to define us or be final! This is why I weep!

I want the world to know Jesus as Highest treasure Above all earthly treasures! I dream about what our world would look like. What Washington would look like if Jesus were the highest treasure of every heart! This is what drove me to priesthood!

Here's how that treasure changes our lives. In Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians Chapter 8 verse 12, Paul says "what we treasure in our hearts, actually regulates our hands." The heart determines what your hands do and it's absolutely true. Case in point. Because biking has my heart, I had no problem handing out 450 dollars to a bike shop to get my bike tuned up for the trip. Because biking has my heart, I had no problem handing out another 350 dollars for the cost of the bike ride to the organizers.

So, here's the principle I never want you to forget: Your highest treasure of the HEART PRODUCES GENEROSITY. If your heart's treasure is golf, you will give generously to golf. If hunting, you will give generously to that hobby. Our highest treasure produces A NATURAL generosity! When I paid those biking fees, it wasn't a duty, I didn't feel guilted into it----- It was a pleasure to give! "It was a generosity that flowed from my heart's treasure!"

My friends, tithing will only make sense to you, if Jesus and His saving work is the highest treasure of your heart. If Jesus is not your treasure, then when we preach on tithing, it will always appear as a guilt trip to you. It will always be something you have to do and make you feel bad, instead of being something you can't wait to do! And because I can't ask you to do something I'm not, Elizabeth and I tithe 10% BOTH from her salary as a public school teacher and from my salary as a priest. Every month bar none, 1,416 dollars is electronically drafted out of our bank account for our tithe. We do it electronically. And it hurts, because with three tuitions for our children and other expenses, we know that money could be used in many other places! Therefore, some outside the church would say you're nuts and it IS nuts unless Jesus has our heart! Our highest treasure produces generosity!

Back to biking for a second. When we pedaled our final mile last weekend, I remember thinking, not only is every cent I've spent worth it, but I need to tell everyone how awesome this was! If Jesus is your highest treasure, tithing will be a natural, response to Jesus saving you for eternity: worth every cent. Knowing that the tithe is one of the best ways to invest in the lives of others! Our highest treasure produces generosity!

Which leads to the best part...YOU are God's highest treasure. Did you know that? God's love for you is so great He sent Jesus to be that bridge for YOU, God so loved YOU He gave His only Son. YOU are his highest treasure...and I have proof!

I think of my friend, Gary Beeson. One of the things Gary never heard from his father as a young man was "I am proud of you." Hearing that from a father is the need of every man on earth. The absence of that was really grieving Gary's heart, and kind of reached a fever pitch one weekend. That particular Sunday, Gary was scheduled to be a chalice bearer at his church. Gary, with a grieving heart, goes forward to receive the chalice from his Rector. As he does, his Rector at the time, the Rev. Mike Lumpkin puts his hand on Gary's shoulder, looks at him and supernaturally (Supernaturally because Mike had no idea Gary's heart was grieving) says, "Gary, I am so proud of you." Jesus expressing his love for Gary as His highest treasure through Mike. Gary is now an ordained priest and Rector of Prince George Church in Georgetown!

You are His highest treasure. May Jesus be your highest treasure. May this be the sole reason we tithe, generously.