

5. Double Vision

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: 21 May 2014

Preacher: Rupert Hunt-Taylor

[0 : 00] Well folks, welcome back to our Lunchtime Bible Talk and to the Tron Church. If you're joining us for the first time, then you're joining us towards the end of a series in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

We've been looking at Matthew's Gospel. And we're continuing that today, looking at Matthew chapter 6, verse 19, right through to chapter 7, verse 12.

So do rummage for that in your Bibles. While you look for that, let me encourage you to stay behind at the end. There's tea and coffee. Plenty of time to have a conversation with your neighbor. If you don't have to rush back to the office, it'd be great to do that.

So page 811 in the Vista's Bibles. And we'll read Matthew chapter 6, from verse 19. Jesus says, Do not lay up for yourself treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

But lay up for yourself treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[1 : 11] The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, single, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness. No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate one and love the other, or he'll be devoted to one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you'll eat or what you'll drink, nor about your body, what you'll put on.

Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns. And yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not more value than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to the span of his life? And why are you anxious about clothing?

[2 : 17] Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows you need them all.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Judge not that you be not judged, for with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

[3 : 22] Why do you see the speck that's in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that's in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, let me help you take the speck out of your eye, when there's a log in your own eye?

You hypocrite. First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Don't give to dogs what's holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how

much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask him?
So, whatever you wish others would do for you, do also to them. For this is the law and the prophets. Let's ask for our Father's help before we look at his word together.
[4 : 55] Our Father in heaven, we thank you that in the Lord Jesus Christ, we can come before you now as children of a good and generous provider.

Father, we thank you that you know our needs and that you love to supply them. And so, as we open up your word together now, we ask confidently for your help.
Teach us, Lord, to love the things that you love and to see your world as you see it, and make us more like your Son, our King. Amen.

Well, one of nature's cruel truths is that some of us are born to play tennis and some of us are born to walk into lampposts or even to reverse into them, as I did last week.
Some of us just don't seem to have basic locomotor competence. If I look over my shoulder while I'm riding a bike, I veer into the road.

[6 : 00] If I'm distracted by the kids, even for a second, when I'm pushing a trolley, grumpy supermarket customers appear out of nowhere, tutting at me ferociously.

And if you are unlucky enough to be anything like me, well, for once in your life, you're at an advantage because you'll understand pretty quickly how this passage works.
You see, the simple truth is that human beings find it very hard to look in one direction and move in another, which means that if we haven't really made up our minds about which way we're going, which way to face, we can get into serious difficulty.
But when it comes to spiritual things, most of us have a tendency to try and face both ways. Last week, Jesus was showing us our tendency towards religious hypocrisy, doing things not so much to please God, but to impress each other.
And which way are you looking? It's still very much the question he's asking us today. Last week, it was whose glory are you really after? Today, the question is, what is it you've really set your sight on?

[7 : 20] Where does your true loyalty lie? Is it the kingdom of God and his righteousness, verse 33? Or do we have double vision?

Are we seeking something else? Watch where you're going. That's Jesus' implicit warning right the way through this passage. Make sure that you're seeing things as they really are, or you'll end up in deep water.

So then, it's our sight being examined today, and through it, our hearts. There are two halves to Jesus' message, each with its own condition, a problem of seeing things as they really are.
And both of them leave us seeking all the wrong things as a result. Did you notice that as we read? Both halves start with a little illustration about how we see, followed by the consequences for the things we seek.

The first condition leaves us with double vision, and blind with worry. And the second, in chapter 7, leaves us with double standards, and blind to ourselves.

[8 : 35] Two conditions. So firstly then, in chapter 6, verse 19 to 34, comes double vision. It's the cross-eyed man with his eyes fixed on two places at once.

And first of all, we're told the cause of his problem. He simply can't see stuff as it really is. He's got one eye fixed on the material world, his savings, his pension, his security.

And he simply can't see that all of it, verse 19, is crumbling away. The moths will get his clothes, rust and inflation will get his gold, and one day, he'll even be cheated out of his pension.

If not by the government, then by death itself. But his problem is that his heart is invested right with them.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. That's a worrying verse, isn't it? The way Jesus teaches anatomy in the Sermon on the Mount, there's a little wire running from our heart to our eyes and our limbs.

[9 : 49] They all work together. So where we set our eyes or our hearts dictates where we end up. Our heart in the Bible isn't so much where we feel things, it's where we decide things.

Our heart is who and what we are as a being. And if we've lived with one eye on our overvalued wealth, well, our whole being will end up crumbling away with it.

And that's the warning behind this slightly confusing picture about eyes and lamps in verse 22. What he's asking there is, which way are you looking? Your eye is what sheds light, he says, on

your whole body.

It's your eyes which light up the way you're going, isn't it? And that's fine, verse 22, if your eye is healthy or single, as some of the older translations put it slightly more helpfully.

Keep your eyes fixed in the right place, in one place, and your whole body will be full of light. The problem comes if you don't know which way to face.

[11:02] If you overvalue the treasure of this world and constantly let it distract your gaze, well, that sort of double vision ends in disaster.

Because no one can serve two masters, verse 24. You cannot serve both God and money. Now, my guess is that most of us function day to day as if that verse weren't really true.

The truth is that I'm so used to two-timing that I think I can manage it pretty well. It feels like we can, can't it? The two-master life doesn't feel all that impossible.

And I suppose that's because we don't think like servants. We like to think of ourselves more like modern-day contractors. So I'll put in a few hours for Christ one day and hire myself out for treasure the rest of the week.

And if church starts to demand too much, well, then I'll take up my complaints with the union. So Jesus warns us twice, verse 24, you cannot live like that.

[12:15] You think you can, but you really can't. you need to start seeing material stuff as it really is. Perishing. Now there is one treasure which lasts, something worth investing in, verse 20, but a choice has to be made.

You can't have your eyes on both. Let me read the words we'll be singing at the end of our service because as we do, we'll need to ask ourselves very carefully which way we're facing.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise. Thou, mine inheritance, now and always. Thou and thou only, first in my heart.

High King of heaven, my treasure, thou art. If we don't really mean those words, if it is not true that the King of heaven is our treasure, well then why not live to hoard up all the rusting gold we can lay our hands on?

Why not spend our lives gathering it up and then spend our retirements watching it moulder away? Unless there is a longer lasting treasure to be had, well we might as well scrap over every little bit of pleasure we can grasp.

[13:43] But thank God he's made us for more than that. He's made us to enjoy him forever in a world full of things which really matter. And one day, all the silly stuff that we've set our hearts on here will be well and truly outshone.

So condition number one is double vision. And it leaves us blind with worry. Frantically trying to gather up enough before it all turns to dust. That's what happens to us, isn't it?

When we can't see what really counts. So what's the cure? Well that takes up the rest of chapter six. And I suppose if we've learned to see things clearly then it becomes obvious.

the answer in verse 33 is to seek the things that are truly valuable. The stuff that lasts. Jesus' kingdom and his distinctive ways.

And seeking that first frees us from all sorts of worry and anxiety now. you can't serve God and money verse 24 so don't be anxious verse 25.

[15:01] I don't know about you but when I read verse 19 about laying up treasure it's the bankers and the fat cats who come to mind and I guess that's because it's much more comfortable to think about rich people.

But Jesus goes somewhere quite different doesn't he? much more ordinary. A mum struggling to buy the groceries can just as easily believe that it's money which comes first.

And it's her Jesus bothers with. Not the banker's bonus but you and me blinded with worry. Don't make stuff the slave master around which your whole life revolves he says if it's your heavenly father you're serving you can trust him to look after you.

Life is about more than food and drink and clothes verse 25. He's made human life with so much more dignity and purpose than that.

We are the crowning glory of his creation made as we saw back in chapter 5 to glorify him. And so just look at how he cares for even the little things in his world.

[16:22] Look how he cares for even the birds verse 26. They never go hungry. Won't he do more for his children? It's not that we won't have to work hard.

It's not that we won't have to plan or save wisely. But why should we put ourselves in bondage to those things? When we have a master in heaven who has taken us to be his own sons and daughters we're made for so much more than menial slavery to those things.

We're made to seek his kingdom verse 33 and his righteousness. And unless we see that clearly what we'll never believe that the stuff of this world is in our maker's hands.

Which one of us verse 27 can add a single hour to our lives by worrying about it? It's not in our power. It's in his hands. And the point is that he is a good and a generous father.

A father we can trust. So don't worry about tomorrow verse 34 that is his job. Because today you and I have a far more important concern.

[17 : 43] God's kingdom and God's ways are more than enough to worry about. Seek that says our creator and all the rest will come right.

Now that takes real trust doesn't it? And the treasures we're tempted to worry about might not always be financial. We can set our hearts on all sorts of earthly things can't we?

In fact the big one which we've seen right through the Sermon on the Mount is human approval. That's an earthly treasure. Or it could be the security of a job which pulls us away from a good church.

Or a relationship that comes at the cost of what we know is right. But whatever it is that we tend to treasure, it does take real trust to know that our father's way is best.

But he tells us we can either hunger for righteousness or we can worry about hunger or status or security.

[18 : 55] but we can only put one of them first. Well that's the first condition, double vision, one eye on the kingdom and one eye worrying about the next bill.

And next comes double standards, chapter 7, when our eyes are blind to ourselves. Isn't it a brilliant picture that opens up this chapter? Nothing turns a grown man into a helpless baby faster than something in your eye.

one of my especially inept habits seems to be blowing coffee grains into my eye and even that teeny little grain reduces you to a blubbing wreck while your wife has to pin you down and deal with it.

It really does hurt. So here's an illustration from the Jesus who spent a decade or so working with his dad in the carpenter's shop.

How many times I wonder did one of them have to stumble hopelessly to a chair while the other one peered into his eye looking for that tiny speck of sawdust? Well the butt of the joke comes in verse 3.

[20 : 03] Imagine that instead of the magnifying lens that the optician uses your helpful friend has a massive great log sticking out of his socket. There you are with tears streaming down your cheek from that teeny little bit of dust heart.

And this folk reckons that he is the one to help you. It's ludicrous isn't it? Let me tell you if that was my optician and he came at me with a cotton bud in his hands I would be out of that seat before you could blink.

And yet when it comes to church and to each other's moral failings for some reason we still think we're just the right person to help point them out or to grumble resentfully.

Why on earth is that? Well because you and I are often just as absurdly blind to our own problem as the man with the big log in his eye and it makes us hopeless at seeing others right.

The cause of the last guy's problem was not seeing stuff as it really is but in chapter 7 the problem comes with not seeing people as they really are.

[21 : 20] He can't see himself as God sees him and he can't see others as God sees them. What we so easily forget is that sin can floor our judgment as badly as a splinter through the eye floors our bodies.

So why on earth do we relish gossiping in church or priding ourselves about each other's flaws? It's absurd isn't it? Now there's the other extreme too.

Same problem, same blindness to human nature, but in verse 6 it comes out in a different way. In our log-eyed friend it came out in his censorious and critical attitude to others.

But the other extreme is being hopelessly naive and optimistic about human sin. There does come a time in some relationships verse 6 when we have to recognize that the precious gospel pearl just isn't wanted.

Sometimes to seek first the kingdom means to stop rubbing it in the face of someone who mocks every mention of Jesus. That takes wisdom doesn't it?

[22 : 38] It takes good judgment. There are two symptoms there aren't there and the cause of both is not seeing people, ourselves included, as we really are.

And once again, seeing things clearly is what leads us to the cure. That comes in verses 7 to 12. If we recognize our problem, the only answer is to seek help from our Father.

Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. knock and it will be opened. I wonder if the very way that we read those words gives away what it is that we're really seeking.

Do we read them and think first of all the impressive things we could ask for? Or do we read those words having been stung by verse 1? With all our hypocrisy and double standards exposed, and hear Jesus now with a massive flood of relief.

It's a pretty good indicator, isn't it, of where our heart is set. So what does Jesus mean? What sorts of things is he talking about here? He's already dealt with money and clothing and material needs, hasn't he?

[23 : 53] So why does this encouragement to pray come again here? Surely the point is to encourage us to seek help. Help in the very thing which Jesus has been driving at all along, the thing we struggle with so badly, hypocrisy free kingdom living.

What sorts of things should we seek? Well, the seek first things, of course, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, that's what he means. The cure to seeing people properly is seeking properly, seeking help and forgiveness from our heavenly father.

And the more conscious we are of the log in our eye, the more we're driven to him. If you're the sort of person who despairs of ever changing, well, there's a great encouragement here, isn't there?

Keep on asking, says Jesus, because he opens the door to the poor in spirit, doesn't he? Our heavenly father isn't some cosmic sadist who gives us something rotten and then laughs in our face.

So trust me, he says. Trust me with your whole heart. Set all of it on my kingdom and let him shape the things we value now, whether it's stuff or people or the things we pray for.

[25 : 27] Well, verse 12 puts the lid. on everything Jesus has taught in this manifesto, here's what it looks like to seek the kingdom, hungering for righteousness without any show or hypocrisy.

Treat others as well as you treat yourself. It's the Pharisees' nightmare, isn't it? A command as open-ended and heart-searching as could possibly be, and that is the law and the prophets.

That is what our heavenly father has wanted from us all along, real, hypocrisy-free love for his kingdom, which is shown in how we treat each other.

And however far off that sort of life feels, that is what he's promised to give his children. So if our prayers are for a heart like that, how on earth could this father ever close his ears to them?

The only question left is whether that is what we're asking for. Which way are we facing? Let's pray. no one can serve two masters.

[26 : 56] So seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Father God, we confess that we have divided hearts, and we struggle to believe often that the world is as you say, but we long for you to make us whole.

We ask you as our father in Christ to help us seek first your kingdom and its righteousness, help us to value and treasure its ways above everything that we can see, for the glory of your name and your king.

Amen.