

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Lies We Believe

Part 3 Worldly Lies

Mark Pierce, Teaching Pastor

Weekend 11.15-16.08

My name is Mark Pierce. I am one of the teaching pastors here at Crossroads. Tim Armstrong is off this week. He will back in the pulpit next week. We are in this series called, "Lies We Believe." And over the last two weeks, we've been taking a look at lies that are lies...they're not the truth. And yet we act upon them as if they are true. We act as if we believe them. And the first week, we looked at lies about self. Last week, boy, Tim just hit it. You know, on lies about our marital lives, and our relationships.

This week we want to take a look at worldly lies. Lies that we believe about our performance and lies that we believe about our possessions. These are very apparent if you stop and think about it. Little sayings that we have, for example, I'm sure you've heard that "winning isn't everything, it's the only thing." Or "nothing succeeds like success" or my favorite, "you're only as good as your last..."and you fill in the blank...ahem, your last month...your last game...your last sermon. Ahem, to really grab hold of this idea for some of you who are sports fans, all I have to do is say Cleveland Browns and you get it, right? I mean, there's a quarterback who everybody has these great hopes, especially around here, cause he's kind of a local hero in Charlie Fry. He goes out and plays one game in the 2007 season. And it, you know, didn't turn out the way or he or anybody else wanted. And he was traded within a week. And...and then the backup guy comes in...you know, there is no one more popular in Cleveland than the backup quarterback. Ahem...Derek Anderson comes and, you know, your hopes are high on him and he's doing pretty good; he plays out the rest of the season. He comes in this year, has a lousy game or two, and what happened? Brady Quinn is now playing. I don't know about you but if I'm Brady Quinn, I'm thinking, I'm only as good as my last game.

And often times, we live our lives that way. We're only as good as our last whatever. Not only do we believe lies about performance, but we also believe lies about our possessions. That we are somehow the sum of what we own. You've heard this, "money makes the world go round", "you can tell the men from the boys by the size of their toys", "you can have it all." In fact, in Burger King language, "you can have it all your way." Ahem, these are...are lies because they do two things that...that are not true to us. First of all, they put us at the center of the universe and, secondly, they shrink the universe to the life as we know it here on earth. Both of which are lies. We're not at the center of the universe and life is a whole lot more than what we know and see right here.

Now these are not new lies. There are no new lies. These lies have been told for a long time. In fact, in Jesus' day, these same lies were being spread. There was a day when Jesus was preaching and can you imagine Jesus being the preacher and in the back somewhere there are two brothers who are arguing with each other over the estate. I mean, you know, one brother is controlling the estate; the other brother wants his share. And in the middle of the sermon, the one brother shouts out, "Teacher, tell my brother to give me my share of the estate." And Jesus doesn't respond the way that the brother

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thought. Jesus says, “Who made me your judge?” Which is ironic because Jesus is the ultimate judge. But who made me the arbitrator between the two of you? Don’t you know that life is a lot more than your possessions. Then Jesus goes on to tell a story to illustrate this. He tells a story of an incredibly wealthy man. I mean, this man truly did have it all. Everything he did was successful. Every building that he owned was filled with stuff. In fact, he was so successful, that he could not continue to store the stuff because he was out of space and out of room. And he says to himself, according to Jesus’ story, I know what I’m going to do. I’m going to tear everything down and build even more buildings so I can store even more stuff in them. I can lay back and just enjoy the rest of my life. Jesus then says that the man...the man’s soul was required of him that night. And God, the Father, says to this man: Fool, you fool, because everything you saved up, everything that you focused your life on is ultimately going to somebody else and not you. And now you’re here, and you have nothing. This is so important for us to grab hold of because in all of the Bible, this is the only recorded instance that we ever see of God being quoted as saying fool. And in a verse later, Jesus defines exactly what he means. Take a look at it. Luke, chapter 12...it’s going to be on your screens here. Luke, chapter 12, verse 21: Who is a fool, according to Jesus, the fool is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.

This morning, we want to confront the worldly lies of performance and possession that makes us not rich towards God and only rich towards ourselves. We want to say, what can we do to not be a fool? What can we do? What steps can we take to be rich towards God? And fortunately, Jesus gives us the whole thing...four steps in Matthew, chapter 6, beginning with verse 19. I encourage you to take your Bibles and open them up. We’re going to be in this passage the whole morning. If you don’t have a Bible with you, take one out of the seat back in front of you. Turn to page 811. Matthew 6:19, it says, one of Jesus most famous sermons: Do not lay up for yourselves treasure 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 destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Now the very first thing that we get out of this; the very first step that we can take towards not being a fool towards confronting and embracing the truth about performance and possessions is that we are to treasure the right treasure. Treasure the right treasure. You know, we look at this scripture and it’s easy for us to focus on do not lay up for yourselves or do not treasure for yourself treasures on earth and think that God...Jesus is saying we shouldn’t be treasuring. But notice that’s not what he says. What he says is, don’t treasure these treasures; treasure treasures in heaven. In other words, it’s not the idea of treasuring. You are built to treasure. You are built to value. What makes a valuable is that you value it. What makes a treasure a treasure is that you treasure it. And you’re built for that; you’re designed for that. Jesus is saying it’s just that you’re taking the design and aiming it in the wrong direction towards the things that are

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

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consumable...the things that are going to be destroyed...the things that are not going to last. The right treasures are the treasures in heaven. Now Jesus here gives us what I call an indicator light. So how do I know where my treasures are? How do I know what I really value? And he tells us here in verse 21: Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Want to know where your treasure is? Take a look at where your heart is. How do you know where your heart is? Well, look at the things that you spend money on. Look at your checkbook register. That's where you'll find your treasure. Look at your calendar. What are you spending time...what are you investing your time into? That's where you'll find your treasure. Look at your conversations. What are you talking about? What are you excited about? That's your heart passion and that's where you'll find your treasure. Now the really scary thing about all this is that sometimes the indicator light isn't working. And Jesus goes on to explain what happens when the indicator light stops working. So let's pick it up with verse 22: The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, focus on that word healthy; we're going to come back and talk about that. If your eye is healthy, 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 that darkness? Now this seems like a very odd thing for Jesus to be talking about here. I mean, he's talking about treasures on earth and heaven. And right in the middle of this talk, he talks about the eye being the lamp of the body. And what is that all about? I think what he's telling us here is secondly is that we must focus on...we must focus on the right treasure. And I'd like us to understand this, to be able to focus on the word healthy because in the Greek language there was a word that you could have used for healthy. And...and the writers of Matthew chose not to use that word. They used another word that can also mean healthy but in its...in its most basic term, this word means simple...single...not folded twice. Wow! What does that mean? Well, you know, an eye that sees one image, an eye that is not double visioned, is what? A healthy eye. And if the eye of your body, if the lamp of your body is not focused on the right treasures, then how dark is your life? The indicator light of your...of your life might not be working right.

You know, the eye of the body might be a harder concept for us to grasp but I think we could also say, this is like the indicator light on the dashboard of your car, right? If...if you're driving down the road and you have an indicator light that says, hey, you got engine trouble and that light flashes on, you know you've got a problem and you need to get it fixed. But what if that indicator light is busted...you have engine problems and it sends the signal to the little light bulb in the indicator light and the light doesn't work. You'd never know. How great would be the darkness of your engine! You know, this is not only a problem sometimes though of the light bulb being burnt out, sometimes, I'm convinced that it's also a matter of the light bulb being on all the time and we just ignore it. I'm experiencing that problem right now with the indicator light in my car. I...I drive around a 2001 Bonneville and, you know, when you drive around an eight year-old car, things stop working right. I love the car though. You know the best thing about it? It's

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Lies We Believe

Part 3 Worldly Lies

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Weekend 11.15-16.08

paid for...yeh...yeh...I tell you what...that's a great asset. But in this car, there's an indicator light that says, "service engine soon". A few months ago, that light came on and I could just see car payments in my future. So I immediately rushed to the mechanic, right? And I said my indicator light came on, what do I do? And he hooks it up to the computer and comes back and says, oh, Mark, we couldn't find anything wrong. You know, sometimes when that happens, it's a matter that the gas cap isn't on right. So if you just put it on right, maybe the light will go away. And sure enough, in a day or two, the indicator light went off. Some of you have been here...I see you smiling. Well, then a few weeks later, I'm driving around and sure enough that indicator light comes back, "service engine soon", and, oh, my goodness, I wonder what's wrong. You know, it's probably the gas cap but I better take it in just to make sure. And I did. They hooked it all up...nothing wrong. Thank you, Lord. Now, the reason I tell you this story is that now that indicator light comes on frequently. And one of these days, my engine is really going to be in trouble. But I have learned just to ignore it. It's not a good place to be.

Is it possible that in our life we have often thought about this idea of treasuring things in heaven, about our valuables not being what they should be and, we have gotten so use to seeing it that we just ignore it and, we stop looking at it any more. Our eye can actually be the opposite of this healthy eye. It could be the bad eye or the evil eye. And Judaism in this early first century, the evil eye was an eye that was always on somebody else's possessions. And so if you find yourself saying, why can't I have what he has or what she has or...or looking at somebody else's performance. Why can't I sing like her? Why can't I be as thin as her? Why can't I be as cute as him? Why can't I preach like him? Whatever it might be comparing ourselves to others. The evil eye; the unhealthy eye. The eye that not only looks at what God has done for us and has given us but also double vision is looking around and saying, what else might I have been or could be or should have?

So how do we keep our eyes focused on being rich towards God? Jesus anticipates this and he goes on in verse 24: No one, he says, no one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Now what is Jesus saying here? He is saying give yourself up for the right treasure. Give yourself up for the right treasure. What do you give yourself up for? For your later retirement years, for your child's college education, for a grand vacation. These are all actually good things to...to delay gratification of my spending habits now for something that will benefit later. And frankly, many of us struggle even with that concept. That's a good concept. But Jesus here is saying, go beyond that...go beyond delaying gratification from your life now to your life later here on earth. Delay gratification from your life here on earth to your life in heaven. What about a well in Africa that you'll never drink from? What about a house church in China that you'll never attend? What about a child in Richland County whose Christmas you will not be at? Do you have the ability to give in a way that

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Lies We Believe

Part 3 Worldly Lies

Mark Pierce, Teaching Pastor

Weekend 11.15-16.08

doesn't benefit you for your eternal rewards? You see, whatever you sacrifice for will tell you a lot about where your treasure is; where and when you want to benefit from your rewards. This word here to serve...no one can serve two masters really means to be a slave of, to give yourself over to. And we miss this completely for the most part here in the United States because we really don't think about what it means to be a slave very often. We read this and we think, well, I could serve God or I could serve money or I could serve something else. I could serve neither one of them. In other words, I'm...I'm a free agent, I can serve or do whatever I want to do. But that's not what Jesus is teaching here. Jesus is saying, you are a slave and the issue is not whether you're a slave or not, the issue is who is your master, God or money? In Jesus' day, it was actually possible for one slave to be owned by two masters. One master couldn't afford the slave entirely so he would partner, maybe with his brother or somebody else, and the two of them would own one slave. This rarely worked well for the masters but it was especially a lousy deal for the slave because you had both masters telling you what they wanted and what they expected. And ultimately you kind of had to pick which one you were going to serve. Jesus is saying you've got two masters that are vying for you—God and money. And money here means the very thing that you trust to take care of yourself. Which one is going to own you? Jesus is saying is that if you choose to serve God, if you make that conscious decision, I am going to take action steps to deliberately, seemingly, foolishly give up a resource, my time or my money for God's kingdom with no expectation of reward here on earth. There will be treasures in heaven for me and that's a good thing. Which am I going to do? If I choose the treasure...if I choose the...the actionable step of serving God, my focus will be a lot better. And if my focus is better, then I'll be treasuring the right treasure, you see that?

Let me help explain this a little bit. Ahem, Mary Kay, my wife, her favorite channel...she's not here yet this morning so we'll try this out. Her favorite channel is the weather channel. Anybody here...just I mean you're kind of addicted every day. You watch the weather channel. Before you leave, you check out the weather channel. I...I...it's not my favorite thing...my preference would be to look out the window. But Mary Kay likes the weather channel and I have learned that there are these things called high pressure systems. And high pressure systems always move clockwise and, when a high pressure system comes in, moving clockwise, it clears out all the clouds and you can see the skies and the heavens forever. But then sometimes a low pressure system will move in and it's moving in the opposite direction...it's...it's moving counter clockwise and when that happens, the clouds come in, the storms come in and...and, well, it snows. Jesus here is giving us the example of the high pressure system of getting the treasure thing right. He's saying that when you start with serving God and instead of yourself, that that very service will help you to focus your eyes on the right treasure and, when you're focusing on the right treasure, you will treasure the right treasure. And the fact that you're treasuring the right treasure moves you to want to serve and want to be a slave of God and it just keeps cycling up and out...and it clears out the clouds that are between

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Lies We Believe

Part 3 Worldly Lies

Mark Pierce, Teaching Pastor

Weekend 11.15-16.08

you and the heaven and you can see what eternity is like before you. But it's possible, even for the Christ follower doing it right, sometimes to get your eyes off of that right stuff and get your eyes focused on something else and you start serving your needs. And your focus is off and all of sudden you...you can't think in terms of the eternal treasure for the needs that you feel have to be satisfied now and the clouds come in and you're in that low pressure system of life. Now I know what some of you are saying. I know right now in your minds there's this argument coming back to me...it is so crystal clear...you're saying but Mark, you don't know my situation. Have you watched the news lately? Do you know how tough it is out there?

Well, Jesus anticipated this. Let's take a look at what he has to say. Matthew, chapter 6, verse 25 and 26. These again are Jesus' words: Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; you know, they neither reap nor sow nor gather in the barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not of much more value than they? Are you not of much more value?

And this takes us to our last instruction this morning. And that is to trust God to treasure you. To trust God to treasure you. Many of us here this morning call ourselves Christ followers. We have made the commitment to be Christian. We believe the things of Christianity. Have you thought about what some of those things are? We believe that God is three persons and yet somehow one God. We believe that Jesus was born of a virgin. How could that be? We believe that Jesus was somehow fully man and yet fully God all at the same time. We believe that Jesus died for our sins. We believe that not only that but Jesus resurrected three days later and we have dead man walking...only time in the history. We believe that. While we believe all of these great theological truths, things that are so big, so grand that only God could do it when it comes down to this issue, will God take care of me? Oh, I don't know. Is he big enough? Is he strong enough? Does he love me enough? Do you realize that the hardest thing that God could ever do was to send his Son to die a death on the cross so that he could have a relationship with you and with me. There is nothing harder that God could do than that. If God could do that and, did do that, was willing to do that for you, is there anything else he's not willing to do?

A few years ago, Mary Kay and I took our kids and we went with Mary Kay's brother down to Walt Disney World, you know, to have a nice vacation. Our kids were really little then. And Mary Kay's brother had a little boy, maybe he was four years old, he was very little. He couldn't swim; went out to the swimming pool, you know, put the big rubber things on his arms so he wouldn't, you know, sink to the bottom of the pool. And he kept looking at this slide and Jason was his name. Jason...Jason was...and you know, he just wanted to enjoy life; he wanted to experience it all. He...he was one of those kids

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Lies We Believe

Part 3 Worldly Lies

Mark Pierce, Teaching Pastor

Weekend 11.15-16.08

that would just go for it, you know? And there's this sliding board that comes down into the pool and he decides...he can't swim...but he decides I want to climb up to the top of this sliding board and slide down into the pool. You know how it is? You kind of go up and up and you get up there at the end you're sitting on it and you're looking down and all of a sudden that pool looks very far away. And you remember you can't swim? And I could just see it, Jason was seized with fear. He couldn't move so I go wading out there, you know. Go down to the bottom of the pool...Jason, come on down...the waters great...I'll catch you...I won't let you fall. And moms and dads and big brothers and sisters, you...you all know...you've been there. You've been in the pool and you said to someone little to you, come on in the pool, I'll catch you...I won't let you go.

This morning, Jesus is saying to you, jump into this pool of life. Don't be afraid. Stop holding on to your puny little performances and trust the big performance that I've already done for you. Stop gripping so hard those here today, gone tomorrow possessions that you'll never ultimately benefit from. Give it away and when you give it away, you'll have treasures you will not imagine. They're worthless to you if you hoard it for yourself but they are of infinite value if you give it away.