

## **Inexhaustible Treasure**

(1). Jesus tells his followers: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” (Mt 6:19–21, NAB)

In the Gospel according to John, we see a boy who put his heart in the right place. He gave to Jesus his treasure of the day – the uneaten lunch which his mom packed for him as he left the house that morning – and was shown the amazing effect instantly. Imagine the surprise in his wide-opened eyes, and the smile of astonishment across his little face when Jesus multiplied the contents of his lunch-bag big time! How exceedingly delighted he must have been as he thought about it that night and throughout the rest of his existence on earth and in heaven. How happy he was for being of help to so many who needed his generosity. How joyful he is now as he prays for us to follow his example.

Here is the account. The apostle Andrew informed Jesus: “‘There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?’ Jesus said, ‘Make the people sit down.’ Now there was much grass in the place; so the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.” (Jn 6:9–11, RSV)

In Jesus’ hands, a few fish burgers given to him by a courageous kid could be used to satisfy the hunger of thousands. How many souls will be affected for all eternity if we heroically offer up some of our possessions, talents, energy and time in doing good, and presenting the merits to Jesus for him to multiply and distribute!

(2). Jesus stated: “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail.” (Lk 12:32–33, NIV) Jesus’ exhortation is intended to encourage us to generosity and sacrifice, hoping to spur us on to works of charity. When we do as he says, we gain unfailing treasure in heaven.

It goes without saying that in the same action, we also obtain spiritual graces for our own families, relatives, friends, and loved ones.

The wonderful passage, incidentally, provides the rationale behind which we appeal to saints for help – saints who may have lived a long, long time ago. By their holy actions, they accumulated stockpiles of treasures in Heaven that “will not wear out” and “will never fail”, and the Lord shares his glory with them by giving from their store of blessed rewards.

(3). When we ask Jesus for things, we should keep in mind that his treasures are, likewise, inexhaustible. They can never be depleted. Whatever he gives us now does not diminish the amount of future gifts that he will give to us or to others. We can request a hundred things, and he will still have plenty more to give to us at a later date, and to the rest of the world. Even when he grants our smallest wishes it does not take away the possibility of more important prayers being answered.

Jesus invites us, “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” (Jn 16:24, RSV) Therefore, let us ask him for every good thing. Ask away, and build up a trustful relationship with the Lord. He is a very magnanimous and loving friend.

He says, “I have loved you just as the Father has loved me.” (Jn 15:9, NJB)

“Your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” (Lk 12:32, NIV)

(4). The Lukan passage in (2) contains the final part of the response which Jesus gave to the rich young man who ran up to him, knelt down, and asked: “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mk 10:17, RSV) Remember what happened? Jesus told him: “You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” (Mk 10:21, RSV) On hearing this, “his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful.” (Mk 10:22, RSV) Unlike the little boy, he kept his heart clinging tightly to where it used to be.

There are people who wish to follow Jesus perfectly, but their inner desire for acceptance by their peers reveal an inordinate attachment to wealth, affluence, and human approval – not much different from their materialistically-minded buddies.

What sadness this could lead to! Jesus says to his disciples: “I tell you, do not worry about your life and what you will eat, or about your body and what you will wear.” (Lk 12:22, NAB) These words are meant for the poor in spirit, but they can certainly apply to the rich who worry – if they were to start giving away significant amounts of money and possessions – how they would appear to the world if they suddenly could not afford to live in keeping with their former luxurious lifestyles, or eat at the same trendy restaurants, or wear the latest fashionable clothes.

Jesus says: “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. ” (Mt 6:24–25, NIV)