

“KEYS TO THE TREASURE (#1):
FINDING SECURITY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD”
(Matthew 6:19-21, 24-33)
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-I-

1. [Traditional Service ONLY:] Read NRSV Text: Matthew 6:19-21, 24-33 and Pray.
2. We as Americans today live in the most affluent culture on our planet, at one of the most affluent times in history.

A–Even with the economic events of the last nine months, we still have one of the highest per capita incomes in the world, our gross national product is strong, and we still possess the highest disposable income level of any nation on earth.

1–And yet, even with all this, on the whole, we are generally unhappy as a society.¹

2–Why is that? Could it be that we have our focus on the wrong things?

3–You know, Jesus taught that the “treasures” of this earth *cannot* be the source of true happiness or fulfillment.

B–And that’s why over the next three weeks we’ll be sharing in a series that I hope will help us to unlock some “Keys to the Treasure” that we call our finances and possessions.

1–Now, this series is *not* going to be primarily about *money*, even though we’ll talk about money every week.

2–What it’s really about are the *heart issues* that cause us to want more, thinking that we’ll find happiness and contentment in what we *have*.

3–And my goal is to help us discover how to put money and possessions back in the proper place that God designed them to have.

3. Let’s start by discussing how we go about “Finding Security in an Uncertain World.” Listen to what some people say about this search...
[WATCH VIDEO “*Security*” (From SermonSpice.com, Time: 2:21 – cut 1:50-3:44 of orig. video)]

A–So, where do you find security in life? ...your sense of peace and fulfillment?

1–Well, in addition to the jobs, relationships, and other things these people mentioned in the video, for many of us security is found in a desire for and love of “things” – “treasures” on earth like big homes, nice cars, high salaries, and cool gadgets.

2–A recent USA Today poll revealed that 61% of us define “The American Dream” as “*Being financially secure.*”²

B–What this tells me is that what drives most of our obsession with earthly “treasure” is not so much “covetousness” (a desire to have what isn’t ours), but the need to feel safe and free from anxiety.

C–E.G., we don’t want to have to worry about our future (like when we retire), and so we accumulate and surround ourselves with “things”, thinking that they’ll somehow insulate and protect us from potential bad things that might happen.

4. Now, we need to understand that there’s absolutely *nothing* wrong with wanting (and searching for) a sense of security in life.

A–In fact, the scripture says it’s one of the basic needs God created us to have as human beings.³ But the question is: “WHERE do we go to find it?”

1–You see, our problem is that we tend to search for security in and among the fallen “treasure” of our world, which by its very nature is inherently *insecure* & *uncertain*.

2–Economist Ronald Bloom once said that “*The only thing certain about ‘economic certainty’ ...is uncertainly*”⁴ – and the financial news over the last half-year has borne this out.

3–Yet, the irony is that even knowing this, we *continue* to look to uncertain and insecure things (like money and possessions) to find certainty and security in life.

B–And the result, of course, is that the more uncertain/insecure “things” we have, the more anxious, stress-filled, and fearful our lives become.

1–Pastor Dale Burke once called this the “*Stuff-ocation*” of America – that as a society we are “*suffocating*” on our desire and lust for “*stuff*.”⁵

2–Author Randy Alcorn similarly wrote that “*The uncertainty of material things makes materialism* [e.g., living life focused primarily on and around material “things”] *the mother of anxiety.*”⁶

5. Perhaps that’s why, 2000 years ago, Jesus said what he did in Matthew 6 (Vss.19-21), (MSG) “*Don’t hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by ruse or – worse! – stolen by burglars. [Instead] stockpile treasure in heaven, where it’s safe from moth and rust and burglars. It’s obvious, isn’t it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.*” (NRSV) “*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*”

A—In other words, whatever it is that we “treasure” here on earth will draw the affection of our “heart,” because our “treasure” and our “heart” tend to track together.

B—Now, most of us understand how this works, don’t we? For example, my family and I have lived here in Marietta for nearly 4 years.

1—And in that time, other than attending a few sports and music events to support fellow church members, we hadn’t heavily invested either our lives or our money at Sprayberry High School.

2—But when Jennifer started attending there this past Fall, our hearts/ affections were drawn there... because our “treasure” (i.e., our daughter) was invested there.⁷

3—You see... (MSG) *“The place where your treasure is, is the place you’ll most want to be, and end up being.”* (NRSV) *“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*⁸

—II—

6. So, if our hearts follow after our “treasure,” and earthly “treasure” can never provide lasting security, then where *can* we find it? **Where can we find real “Security in an Uncertain World”** (if at all)?

A—Well, Jesus gives us the answer in the rest of today’s scripture (Vss.25-32)—hear it (again): (MSG) *“If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don’t fuss about what’s on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds. Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion – do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them. If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers – most of which are never even seen – don’t you think he’ll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I’m trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God’s giving. People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works.”*

(NRSV) *“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. 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 of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? 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 clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”*

B—And then in Vs. 33 he gives the key to it all, (MSG) “*Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.*” ... (NRSV) “*But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*”

1—You see, Jesus here is *not* saying we can’t own “things”; just that “things” shouldn’t own *us* – that God designed them to be “possessions” for our well-being, *not* for them to be the “possessors” of our soul.

2—He’s saying that true security is not found in our *finances*, but in our *faith* –that it’s not found in *earthly* “treasure,” but in the *heavenly* “treasure” that is God our Father.⁹

7. Now, we may ask: why trust *God* as our ultimate source of security? What makes trusting *God* better than trusting in the things mentioned in the opening video – like our friends or family, our job, health, or even in ourselves? ¹⁰

A—Well, not only do all these other things eventually let us down, but even today’s scripture describes God as our “*provider*”– the one who provides *us* with the things *we* need for life, just as surely as He provides for the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. ¹¹

B—So think about it– which is smarter? ...to put trust in the *gifts and blessings* that have been *provided*? ...OR in the *Giver* who *provides* them in the first place? ¹²

1—Of course, what happens with many of us is the former: God provides our needs, but then *we* focus our trust and security in *them* (uncertain though they are).

2—And what God wants from us is to look to HIM to provide our needs. I mean, isn’t that what we pray in the Lord’s Prayer... “*Give us this day our daily bread...*”?

(a) Notice, it *doesn’t* say “*Give us this day our 401k*” ... OR “*Give us this day our financial plan for retiring at age 55.*”

(b) No. “*God, grant us the things that we really need to make it through today (i.e., ‘our daily bread’), and we’ll trust you tomorrow for the things we need then.*”

C—*That’s* the kind of faith God wants of us, and it’s the kind of faith that cures both our fear and our anxieties about money & possessions, and enables us to walk in absolute security.

8. Now, the Bible actually contains a whole host of principles and ideas that can help us practice this kind of faith, and find this kind of security.

A—But in the interest of time, today I simply want to share a simple card that contains “*10 Keys To True Security*” (ushers if you’ll please pass these out to everyone here as I continue).¹³

B—I want to invite everyone to read & prayerfully consider these and their related scriptures – discuss them at home and in your classes and small groups, if you like.

C—But most important, I want to invite us all to try putting them into practice, and see if we don’t notice our feelings of faith and security increase!

-III-

9. You see, the bottom line is that God *wants* you and I to be secure in our lives. But finances and earthly “treasures” – of any *amount* or *form* – will *never* provide that.

A–No. The only *real* security in today’s world is the absolute security we have when we walk in a daily relationship with God our heavenly Father –...¹⁴

B–...Because as we do that – and as we learn to handle money and possessions *God’s* way – God promises to take care of us.

10. In the end, you see, “*Finding Security in an Uncertain World*” is merely a search for God Himself. He wants you to find Him. Will you trust Him?

11. [PRAY]

12. [CLOSING SONGS]

ENDNOTES:

1. Because money is such an important part of our lives, it can either be the source of great joy or happiness, or it can be the source of great frustration, disappointments, challenges, and anxiety. For example, finances are still one of the leading causes – if not of divorce – at least of tension in our marriages and significant relationships. And USA Today reported a recent Gallup poll which said – not surprisingly – that nearly 14 million more Americans worried about money in 2008 than the year before, and it was the direct cause of even more physical & emotional anxiety. This survey, conducted by Gallup and Tennessee-based health management company Healthways, taking the daily pulse of Americans' physical, emotional and economic well-being, found that worries about money grew sharply as 2008 progressed: 14 million more people worried about money at the end of the year than at the beginning, says Jim Harter, chief scientist for Gallup who oversaw the research (Reported in USA Today, 3/15/09, www.usatoday.com/money/economy/2009-03-12-economy-american-dream_N.htm).

2. USA Today “Snapshots”, April 14, 2009.

3. For example, read Genesis 28:15, Exodus 6:7, Psalm 46:10, Isaiah 49:23, Joel 3:17, and others.

4. Bloom, cited in Dr. Dale Burke’s sermon “*The Heart of the Matter #3: The Search for Certainty in an Uncertain World*”, preached 10/17/2004.

5. From Dr. Dale Burke’s sermon “*The Heart of the Matter #3: Security*”, preached 10/3/2004. For him, this condition should cause us to ask the question: who do we love more... God? or “stuff”? He goes on to say that a series of things flow out of us, depending on our answer, and that all of this affects the condition of our heart. To help identify which one we track towards more, he suggests we reveal our heart condition by asking a series of questions that test “Who/What do we love?” (based on 1 Timothy 6:9-10). Specifically, looking at the set of words in the column below, which set do we relate more to – the words on the left column? or the right? When we think about money and money-related issues, are we...?

<i>Fearful</i> (Note: if we’re afraid of what’s happening in our economy, maybe it’s because we love stuff too much)	<i>Confident</i> (Note: if we’re confident even amid the shambles of the economy, it’s probably because we’re trusting more in God)
<i>Coveting</i> (i.e., always wanting more)	<i>Content</i> (i.e., content with what we have)
<i>Frustrated</i> (when thinking about money)	<i>Fulfilled</i> (when thinking about money)

<i>Sad</i>	<i>Joyful</i> (especially when we pay bills and balance our checkbook; do we have sadness or joy when we do these things?)
<i>Tight</i> (are we a tight-wad w/what God gives us?)	<i>Generous</i> (is it easy to share what God gives us with others?)
<i>Indulgent</i>	<i>Compassionate</i>
<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Thankful</i>
<i>Pessimistic</i> (regarding money and finances)	<i>Optimistic</i> (regarding money and finances)
<i>Eternally Poor</i> (no or little relationship with God, setting aside only tangible, earthly possessions)	<i>Eternally Rich</i> (e.g., setting aside non-tangible “riches” like loving and serving others)
(Words in this column reveal more of a LOVE OF “STUFF”)	(Words in this column reveal more of a LOVE OF GOD)

Burke points out that the world produces the things on the left hand column, but faith in God can help us move into more practice of the attitude, perspective, characteristics and things in the right column [From Dr. Dale Burke’s sermon “*The Heart of the Matter #3: Security*”, preached 10/3/2004].

6. Alcorn, cited in Dr. Dale Burke’s sermon “*The Heart of the Matter #3: The Search for Certainty in an Uncertain World*”, preached 10/17/2004.

7. If you are putting (or have put) children through college, then you know the same thing – when your money went there, you took an interest in that school you probably didn’t have before (unless you were an alumni, in which case you were invested already)!

8. What’s more is that where we spend our money not only *draws* our heart/affections, but it also *reveals* our heart/affections, as well.

9. Read also 1 Timothy 6:17, “*Do not put your hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God.*”

10. To these other things to base security upon I ask: (1) Can we find security in family or friends? No, they can (and often do) let us down; (2) What about security in our good health or job? No, as the economic events of this year show, we can lose both in an instant! (3) So, what about finding security in “ourselves”? Well, I don’t know about you, but in my experience, absolute self-assurance is an elusive myth, because deep down there *are* (and *will* always be) things beyond my control that are frightening – things that actually *do* prevent me from feeling complete peace and security, even if I give the outer *appearance* that I have it.

11. In the Old Testament Hebrew, God is called “*Jehovah-jireh*” (“*God our Provider*”). Read Psalm 103; Philippians 4:19; and Matthew 6:11.

12. In other words, God *supplies* us with our needs by giving us the tools and resources we need to live life for Him (such as our intellect and talents, that helped us get a good job, so we have a good income, so we could buy the nice car and have the big home, etc.). But then, most of us begin to focus on these things that are *given* to us and place our security in *them*, rather than in the one who is the *giver* of these things. This is like saying that it’s better to have a few dollars in the bank than to be the son of the banker. Yet, our security is always better if we know that we’re the son of the banker, because the banker *owns* the bank.

And that’s what God is – the owner of the “bank” we call “life.” He distributes portions of blessings to all of our lives, but then most of us are so excited about what He gives us that we start worshiping the *gifts* instead of the *giver*. Yet, the Giver (God), not the gifts, are the ultimate source for our security, because the gifts are always uncertain. The Giver, on the other hand, can always be trusted and believed to be true and faithful and secure.

13. **“10 KEYS TO TRUE SECURITY”**

1. Learn to value eternal rewards over temporal riches (Matthew 6:20 & 33)
2. Work hard with a servant spirit (Exodus 34:21; Matthew 20:26)
3. Worship faithfully, giving your “first fruits / tithe” (your *first* 10%, rather than your left-overs) to God’s work through His church (Exodus 34:26; Leviticus 27:30; Malachi 3:10)
4. As God blesses you, learn to give sacrificial “offerings” (anything in addition to and above the tithe) to other worthy causes (Mark 12:44; Luke 21:4)
5. Save consistently (try to save at least 10% each pay period) (Prov. 21:5, 20)
6. Avoid / get out of debt by spending *less* than you earn – pay off your credit cards, and do not carry a balance (Romans 13:8; Proverbs 22:7)
7. Remember that you are a Steward of what you have (not an Owner), and practice consulting your heavenly Father’s will on every financial decision (Psalm 24:1)
8. Learn to be content with what you have, finding peace in God’s promises and presence, rather than in the need for more “stuff” (Hebrews 13:5-6)
9. Believe that God your Father will provide for your daily needs (Matthew 6:11; Philippians 4:19)
10. Be compassionate and generous with what you have, especially towards the poor and needy (Proverbs 11:25; Acts 20:35)

14. Another way of saying this is that financial security is based more on our faith than on our finances – on us asking “*Do I really believe I have a heavenly Father who is committed to me?*” Because if so, then we can all rest secure because we know my Father knows and will find a way to meet all our needs.