

Making Time for God

The Third Commandment

I'd like to talk to you today about making your life – your whole life – an act of worship. Every moment, every activity. I want to talk to you about what it is that you treasure, because everybody's life gets wrapped around what you treasure.

Jesus once told a story about a man who treasured his wealth. He had so much stuff he had to tear down his smaller barns to build bigger barns to have a place to put it all! The guy thought he was set for many, many years of leisure and luxury. But then something he didn't expect happened. He died. And all he valued he lost. And then Jesus concluded this story by saying, ***“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*** *Matthew 6:21* Jesus is saying that whatever you value most will attract your heart. ***“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***

We are treasuring creatures. When it comes to treasuring, the question is not IF but WHAT. Our treasures are whatever we assign great value to. We think about them a lot. We hold them dear. We guard them. Everybody has treasures. Even little children. And when you're dealing with someone's treasures, you're really close to the core of their soul.

There's a wonderful story dealing with treasures. I'd like to read it for you. It's by Robert Fulton. It'll take few minutes.

“The cardboard box,” he writes, “is marked ‘THE GOOD STUFF.’ I can see the box where it is stored on a high shelf in my studio. The box contains those odds and ends of personal treasures that have survived through many bouts of ‘clean it out and throw it away.’ A thief looking into the box wouldn't take anything. He couldn't get a dime for any of it. But if the house ever catches on fire, the box goes with me when I run.

One of the keepsakes in the box is a small paper bag, lunch size. Though it is sealed with duck tape, staples, and several paper clips, there is a ragged rip in the side through which the contents can be seen. The sack has been in my care for many years. But it really belongs to my daughter, Molly.

When she became of school age, she became an enthusiastic participant in packing the morning lunches for herself, her brothers, and me. Every bag got a share of sandwiches, apples, milk money, and sometimes a treat.

One morning Molly handed me two bags as I left – one with my lunch in it, and the one with the duck tape, staples, and paper clips. “Why two bags?” I asked. “The other one is something else.” “What’s in it?” “Just some stuff,” she said, “take it with you.” Not wanting to hold court over the matter, I stuffed both sacks into my brief case, kissed the child, and rushed off.

At mid-day while hurriedly scarfing down my lunch, I tore open Molly’s bag and shook out the contents. Out came 2 hair ribbons, 3 small stones, a plastic dinosaur, a pencil stub, a tiny sea shell, 2 animal crackers, a marble, a used lip stick, a small doll, 2 chocolate kisses, and 13 pennies.

I smiled. How charming! Rushing off to the important business of the afternoon, I swept the desk clean into the waste basket – left over lunch, Molly’s junk, everything.

That evening Molly came to stand beside me while I was reading the mail. “Where’s my bag?” she asked.

“What bag?”

“You know, the one I gave you this morning?”

“I left it at the office. Why?”

“I forgot to put this note in it.” She handed over the paper.

“Besides, I want it back.”

“Why?”

“Those are my things in the sack, Daddy, the ones I really like. But now I want them back. You didn’t loose the bag? Did you Daddy?”

Tears puddled in her eyes. “Uh, no, I just forgot to bring it home” I lied.

“Bring it tomorrow, OK?”

“Sure thing, don’t worry.” As she hugged my neck with relief, I unfolded the note she gave me. “I love you, Daddy,” it said. I looked at the face of my child. She was right. What was in that sack was something else. Molly had given me her treasures – *her*

TREASURES! All that a 7-year-old held dear – love in a paper sack – and I missed it! Not only missed it, but I had thrown it into the waste basket. It was not the first nor the last time I felt as if my “daddy permit” was about to run out.

It was a long trip back to the office, but there was nothing else to be done so I went [right away]. Just ahead of the janitor I picked up the waste basket and poured the contents out on my desk. I was sorting it all out when the janitor came in. “Lose something?” he asked. “Yes, my mind,” I said. “It’s probably in there, alright. What’s it look like and I’ll help you find it.” So, I told him what happened. “I got kids too,” he said. So together we searched the trash and found Molly’s jewels.

After smoothing out the wadded paper bag and putting everything back inside, I carried it gingerly home, like carrying a wounded kitten. I returned it to Molly. No questions asked. No explanations given.

After dinner I asked Molly to tell me about the stuff in the sack. So she took it all out, a piece at a time, and placed it all in a row on the dining room table. It took a long time to tell – every piece had a story, a memory, or was attached to dreams. Fairies had brought some of the things. And I had given her the chocolate kisses and she had kept them for when she’d need them.

To my surprise, Molly gave me the bag once again, several days later. Same ratty bag. Same stuff inside. I felt forgiven and trusted and loved, and a little more comfortable wearing the title of “father.”

Over several months the bag went with me from time to time. It was never clear to me why I did or did not get it on a given day. I began to think of it as “The Daddy Prize,” and I tried to be good the night before so I might be given it the next morning.

In time, Molly lost interest in the game, took on other interests, grew up. Me, I was left with the bag. She gave it to me one morning and never asked for its return, and so I have it still.

Sometimes I think of all the times in this sweet life when I’ve missed the treasure I was being given. So, the worn paper sack is

there in the box, left over from a time when a child said, “This is the best I’ve got. Take it. It’s yours. Such as I have, I give to thee.”

Friends, each of us have our own little bag. You decide what’s going to go into yours – what you’re going to treasure. Maybe in your bag is a house, or a car, or jewels, or property, or clothes, or a reputation, or grades, or influence. You have your own little bag and Jesus says, be real careful, friends, be real careful what you put in that bag. Because whatever your treasure is – whatever’s in your bag – that’s where your heart’s going to be.

That which you give ultimate value, that which you treasure above all else, is the object of what the Bible calls “worship.” Some of you know that our word “worship” comes from an Old English word pronounced “WORTHship.” It means to assign worth, to assign value to something.

When we worship, we stand before God and say, “Lord, You’re the ultimate value in this universe, and You’re the ultimate value in my life.” “Lord God, You are all I ever want in my bag.” That’s why worship is so important.

Psalm 115 says that whatever you worship, whatever is in your bag, shapes you. The psalm writer said, ***“Their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak; eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear; noses but they cannot smell, they have hands, but cannot feel; feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, so are all who trust in them.”*** Psalm 115:4-8

The Bible says you become like the god you worship. You be real careful, Jesus says, what you treasure, because what you put in your bag will shape your heart. When you worship, you’re determining your values. In worship, you’re declaring your priorities. You’re saying what comes first in your life. And you get shaped by that.

You worship power – you’ll be shaped by arrogance. You worship comfort – you’ll be shaped by apathy. You worship approval – you’ll become a people pleaser. You worship achievement – you’ll become a user of people. You be real careful,

Jesus says, what you treasure, because what you put in your bag will shape your heart.

And therefore, a very, very important Commandment God has given to us is this: ***“Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.”*** Prioritize God. Make time in your life for God. Treasure the love God has for you *so much* that you stop routinely to grow in your relationship with God.

What happens when you worship God? **God’s being and His acts move us to shout praise.**

Praise is natural when you value someone or something or some activity. Don’t believe me? Go watch the Guardians win a baseball game downtown. What if, during the game, you couldn’t talk? Not a word. You couldn’t shout “Yes!” or “WooHoo!” after a great play. Would you enjoy the game as much? No! Praise is natural, and it’s a necessary part of enjoying the game.

The same is true with God. Psalm 29 says,

“The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic. The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning. The voice of the LORD shakes the desert; The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in his temple all cry, “Glory!”

Because of WHO God is and WHAT He’s done, this psalm says, all the people worshipping Him in the temple cry, “Glory!” For us today, this time on Sundays is our temple and ANY time we shout PRAISES to God for the amazing things He does.

Worship is shouting your praise to God. Its shaking the person next to you and saying “Did YOU hear THAT?!!! WOW!!! Do we have a GREAT GOD!!!”

I think, though, if we are completely honest about this, we all have to admit that we make worship less about treasuring God, and so much more about us. We don’t value God’s being and what He has done for us, we don’t love Jesus much and so we really don’t value time we could spend growing in His love. We turn worship *from* being about loving and prioritizing God because He is so amazing and loving, and we turn it into a burden, an obligation.

- **A place to go.** Did any of you say “I’m going to church today”? or if I ask “How long is worship”? we say “a little more than an hour.” And the idea is that we go TO worship then we LEAVE. It’s over, we shut it off. And then we go out to the rest of our day or the rest of our week – and that part of our life has nothing to do with worship. God says every moment we breathe, everything we do should be an act of worship. Worship isn’t one little part of our life – but a constant awareness of thanks and praise for God and His love. Worship is 24/7

- We turn worship into **A chore to do.** Larry the Cable Guy always said, “Git ‘R Done!” We turn worship into a chore when we focus on what we do. Long ago, the people went to worship to DO things like offer sacrifices. And they would go through the motions, without their hearts into it. Bible says:

“You [God] do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Psalm 51:16-17 In other words, it’s not about what YOU do. What God wants is your heart – that you love and trust Him.

- Sometimes we turn worship into **A performance to evaluate.** When you leave here, have you ever heard a conversation that goes something like this: “Wow, was that singer off-key today.” “Did you see what she was wearing?!” “Boy, did the pastor ever flub up today!” When we turn worship into a time to evaluate and judge others, that’s wrong. God says, ***“Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.” Ecclesiastes 5: 1***

- We focus worship on US rather than on God, when we turn it into **A once-in-a-while event.** God says we need worship together every week. ***“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.” Hebrews 10: 25*** So many people these days will take time to worship God ONLY when they don’t have something else going on. We value so many other activities much more than we love and treasure God. What does that say about our hearts? Just think: how would your family feel if you said you’d see them once-in-a-while? If you only came home to your husband or wife

a few times in a whole year, you're going to get thrown out of the house and served divorce papers. And friends, you need to see God more than you need your family.

You need the pick-up, the charge you get from being together to praise God just to make it through your week. We all need to be together to praise God not once-in-a-while, but once in a week, *every* week.

- And we focus on ourselves instead of God when we turn worship into **A thing we like**. What do I mean by that? Just this: Worship is always about GOD and not about us. Worship is NOT about what I like or don't like. "I *like* that music." "I *like* that time." "I *like* that style." Let me be honest: God loves you. But He really doesn't care to check with you about your personal preferences of what you like or find comfortable. Worship is about valuing God. It's not about you!

The wonder of God's love should move you to shout His praise, and **God's wonders move us to humility and confession**.

The prophet Isaiah once saw God in His glory in the Temple. There were angels around His throne calling out God's praise. Do you know how Isaiah responded? He said,

"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" *Isaiah 6:5*

Isaiah gets a glimpse of God and he became real humble.

One of the things worship does is we become more human. We see that we are just creatures. I like to act like I'm God, but when I worship I realize I'm not God. God is God. This moves us to confession. He's holy and perfect and sinless, and we're not. There's NO WAY we should stand in HIS presence. We've got to be cleaned up first before we can come into the presence of such an awesome and holy God and have any relationship with Him. Our sin and our wrongs need to be taken care of, removed. You need forgiveness. God's wonders should move us to humility and confession.

But, the wonder of it all is that **God comes to you!** One of the most amazing things of this amazing God, is that even though we are puny before Him, and even though we are sinfully messed up and

don't deserve Him, still He cares so much for you, that He comes to you. That's what happens when you worship.

God's Word, the Bible, sounds like just words spoken. But we know that God Himself comes to us and works and meets us here. ***"... When you received the word of God ... you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe."*** *1 Thessalonians 2:13* By coming to you, God is saying He values you!

The most wonderful part of worship is ... God Forgives!
"Christ didn't have any sin. But God made him become sin for us. So we can be made right with God because of what Christ has done for us." *2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIRV)* I just can't imagine a God who – a universe of 200 sextillion miles, is just the breadth of His hand. I can't get my mind around a God who can keep all 8 Billion people on earth straight and know each one of us by name.

As amazing as God is, the most amazing thing about God is not His power or brilliance. It's His love. God became one of us, and lived for us, and died for us, in order to forgive us, and make us His own.

There's an old hymn that says: "When I survey the wondrous cross; on which the Prince of Glory died; ... love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."

God's love and forgiveness is so amazing, it just takes our breath away. We just stand in awe and deep gratitude for what Jesus has done for us. This forgiveness is more than just a wish. It's real. God offers forgiveness to you today – no matter who you are. This awesome God, loves you that much! He treasures you!

Seven-year-old Molly put all she treasured in a ratty old paper bag, and then gave it – all of it – in love to her Daddy.

Jesus lived and sacrificed His innocent life for you. He shed His blood on the cross for you. The cross is God's clear message to you, "Here, This is the best I've got. Take it. It's yours. Such as I have, I give to thee."

In response, of all the things you can put in your bag, treasure Jesus most. "Lord, Jesus, You are all I ever want in my bag."

Amen.