

Moths, Rust and Thieves

Matthew 13:34 “*All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them.*”

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Mt 6:19 “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*”

We may note this parable as a double parable, for it speaks of three points of illustration; moths, rust, *and* thieves. Actually, upon examination, we see there are three points of interest- the moth, rust, and thieves, each having its own distinctive feature. Yet, all three merge into the same lesson of teaching us *the futility of laying up treasure on earth*. We are about to learn we are not to hoard up our treasure on earth. Instead we are told to lay up a “treasure in heaven.”

The moth

Let us look first at the **moth**. The moth is spoken of in the Bible by James, Job, and Isaiah. James 5:2 says “*Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten.*” Job 13:28 says “*And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth as a garment that is moth eaten.*” The moth is an insect capable of eating clothes. Actually, it is the larvae laid by the moth that consumes and consequently damages the garment. This tells us it is the *stored* garment that is in trouble. The garment that is worn frequently is not at risk. The moth attacks where there is *laid-up* clothing.

Do you have so much clothing you can't possibly wear it all and some is stored? In Bible times, and even today, folk invested their money in expensive garments. Many made garments their treasure. Have you placed your money in clothing? Some folk have so many

clothes they could not possibly live long enough to use them all. A man can wear one shirt at a time, and a woman can wear one dress at a time. So, some of the clothing must be placed in storage. Soon, the moth comes, deposits the larvae, and the damage begins. Therein is the danger of laying up treasure on earth.

John the Baptist said in Luke 3:11, “if you have two coats, give one to the poor man who has no coat.” We store and hoard things. One of the biggest selling items in the market place is storage boxes and bins. If you have to store something, is it because you have too much of it?

The moth will eat a poor man’s garment as well as a rich man’s garment. Earthly possessions of the rich as well as the poor are targets of the moth. The moth will eat a black man’s garment as well as a white man’s garment. No man is immune. Store garments because you have too many and the moths will visit. This is the Lord’s message. This applies to whatever you have too much of, be it clothes or other treasure.

The rust

The next item of destruction mentioned is **rust**. Moths attack clothing and rust attacks metal. Maybe you are not placing your treasure in garments but in metals. Rust can render metals worthless. Like the stored, seldom-used garments, it is *stored* metal that is subject to attack by rust. Do you have so much metal that you can’t get around to using it all? Watch out for rust!

Do you own a tool, or any item for that matter, made of metal that you seldom use? When you go get that tool, it is sometimes rusted. I have a handsaw that I seldom use, for I use electric saws. On rare occasions when I get that handsaw out of the tool chest to use it, it is very rusty. I have seen tools and equipment that had one thing wrong with them- they were so seldom used that they “rusted up,” as we say. They no longer operate properly. They are bound by rust. We have so much we can’t get around to using it enough to keep the rust off. Use it- it won’t rust! Use your treasure for the Lord’s work. It is needed.

I have met folk who would rather let something rust than to let someone borrow it. Again, seldom use of the item is a problem. We have so much we can't use it. Have you noticed in the community a building that is vacant? This society is so plentiful and wasteful, huge buildings set empty. I am appalled at how quickly a vacant building can run down. The windows crack. The paint peels. Too many earthly treasures mean one thing- some are stored and not used and rust may take hold.

The thief

The third item mentioned is the **thief**. All three items mentioned are, in fact, thieves. The moth and rust do not have to break in. They have a way of getting to our goods without breaking in. The thief has to break in. In Bible times the wealthy often buried their treasure in the ground. Aware of the presence of thieves, a logical thing to do was to dig a hole in the ground and place the treasure there. This was not, however, a fail-proof way. The thief would still manage to find the hidden spot, dig down and abscond with the treasure. There were no banks in Bible times. There were no safe deposit boxes. There were no vaults. A hole in the ground was used to store wealth.

I actually doubt there is any place a thief cannot gain access to. Some of the most secure locations in the world have fallen victim to thieves. Whatever place of security you may know, somewhere there is someone shrewd enough to gain entry. Some may say "I know a place where neither thief nor moth nor rust can enter." May I enlighten you? *Old Age* is a moth and *disease* is rust and *death* is a thief. You will leave this world empty handed. Your bank account will be pried out of your hands by death! Disease can empty your vault when the hospital collects from you.

There is nothing wrong with money. How many times has the verse been misquoted which says "the **love** of money is the root of all evil?" Martin Luther said "what a man loves, that is his god." I know plenty of Baptist and plenty of church members who love money. Their God is their paycheck. Again, there is nothing wrong with money. To love money is SIN. It is okay to get money; when money gets you there is a problem!

Too, this parable is not written *only* to the rich. But, it is written to a poor man who loves his ten-dollar bill and to the rich man who loves his thousand-dollar bill more than loving God.

“For where your treasure is there will your heart be also” said the Lord in verse 21. How many men in the Bible had wealth and yet loved the Lord? There were few. Why is this? The Lord just gave us the answer- *where you treasure is there will your heart be also*. When we have money in the bank, we may find ourselves loving the bank more than the church. Most of the time, love for the treasure wins out over love for God. The “average Christian” can be turned against God by money.

Place your treasure in heaven. If your treasure is in heaven, your heart will be there also. That is the right place for the heart. Why let moths eat things and rust corrode things we don't need when someone else needs them? You may ask “how can I send my treasure to Heaven?” Load up a box of clothes and give them to the needy. God will record that in Heaven! You have just transferred your treasure to Heaven! See how easy that was? Moths and rust and thieves can't get to them there. We trust the banker who sends us a piece of paper monthly, but we can't trust God with our wealth?

I know one place secure. That place is heaven. *“Lay up for yourselves treasures in **heaven**.”* The Scripture says *“lay not up”* on earth. Heaven has no moths or rust and, for sure, no thieves. Don't feed the moths- send it on to heaven. Don't make a thief's day. When he uncovers the hole, let him find it vacant! Send treasure on to heaven. It will wait for you there.