

JESUS ON GENEROCITY (MATTHEW 6:19-24)

Video Two

Jesus has already given us one reason to be generous: our possessions can't provide what we ask of them. But he gives us two further word pictures to encourage us on the path of generosity.

Here's the first. Verse 22:

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.

Jesus is asking us to imagine a windowless room. Its only light source is a lamp. If the lamp is working, the room is full of light. But if there's something wrong with the lamp, the room remains in darkness.

Jesus is saying that each of us is like one of these windowless rooms, and our eyes are like lamps. If we are to be filled with light, then, our 'eyes' must be healthy.

But what does this mean?

Jesus is probably talking about the damage that's done to us when our eyes are focused on the wrong thing – when we live in an ungenerous way, holding onto our possessions.

Our eyes are meant to be fixed on the generous God of light! And so, when they're not, we're left in darkness. Turned in on ourselves.

It's tragic. As Jesus puts it in verse 23:

If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Jesus concludes with a final word picture:

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.

Jesus' language is so extreme that we are tempted to write it off as simplistic.

But bear a couple of things in mind.

Firstly, when Jesus refers to 'masters', he's not referring to modern employers. He's referring to the first century household. This household – which included family members and servants – would fully depend upon the head of the household, its master.

It's possible to work for two employers. But no one can serve two masters.

Secondly, consider the language of love and hate. In Jesus' day, if you hated one option and loved another, it simply meant you strongly preferred one over the other – especially if there was a battle between the two.

So, Jesus is warning us. When pressure comes, our priorities get sorted out. Only one can come on top. Will we serve God, or money?

The boy found it impossible to lend his dinosaur T-shirt when he'd lost a game. When we're feeling short of resources and insecure, we too struggle to be generous. We'll serve money – holding it tight to us.

But when we know that Jesus will meet our needs and that generosity is good for us, we're willing to give away what we value – serving God with our money, our time, our talents.

And we show our university, and the watching world, that we're living for a different kingdom.

A kingdom where we are guaranteed eternal comfort and security, because of the generosity of its King.