

## JESUS ON GENEROCITY (MATTHEW 6:19-24)

### Video One

In a colourful primary school classroom, a five-year old boy is asked to describe his favourite belonging. He talks enthusiastically about his favourite dinosaur T-shirt.

Then he's asked to play two computer games.

What the boy doesn't know is that it's a test.

Researchers have already decided that he will win one game and lose another. Then, after each game, he will be asked if he'd lend the dinosaur T-shirt to a friend.

This experiment is then repeated with many other children.

The results are dramatic.

Children were twice as likely to be willing to share their treasured possession after winning the game than after losing.

This experiment shows us the complex relationship between humans, our possessions and our sense of security.

Our possessions are never just things. We ask them to provide for us in a whole range of ways.

It all means that, if we're to be consistently generous – not just when we're winning at life, but also when we're losing – we really need help.

Jesus aims to set us on this generosity adventure in the next section of his Sermon on the Mount. To do so, he gives us three pictures. Let's consider the first:

In verse 19, Jesus instructs his disciples:

**“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.”**

This picture was familiar to Jesus' hearers. They didn't have bank accounts, so their wealth was tied up in their possessions.

Imagine how heart-breaking it would be, then, to discover that a moth had eaten your valuable cloak. Or that vermin had eaten your store of grain, destroying your income. Or that thieves had stolen items you hoped you might sell to support yourself in old age.

You weren't just losing *things*; you were losing your comfort and security.

So, says Jesus, it doesn't make sense to store up 'treasures on earth' – valuable items that can be lost in one way or another.

Jesus isn't condemning people for having possessions. But he's saying that, if we look to our possessions for ultimate comfort and security, we'll inevitably be disappointed.

Instead, Jesus instructs us:

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

In other words, Jesus says: place your hope for comfort and security in that which will certainly see you through.

The bigger story of Matthew's Gospel helps us see what Jesus means.

In dying for us, Jesus meets our deepest needs for forgiveness and a fresh start. And then he continues to supply our needs. We may not always get everything we *want*, but we can be sure that Jesus will faithfully provide everything we *need*.

When life gets hard, it is not ultimately money or possessions that will see us through – but Jesus sees us through.

Which is why Jesus adds:

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

If you treasure material possessions, and look to them for comfort and security, you'll never give them away – especially when life gets hard.

But if you treasure Jesus, your grip can be prised away even from the possessions you love the most...

Perhaps even your favourite dinosaur T-shirt.