

Is Your Treasure Safe?

Earlier this year, 54 years to the very day since I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour, my house was burgled. Fortunately, and by God's grace, I was at church when it took place. I arrived home to find the back door forced open, a gale blowing through the kitchen and every room ransacked. I was relieved that I was out of the house when they were in it. (The fingerprint expert told me he believed there were three culprits).

Retired Members Corner



After the initial shock you begin to wonder who might have done it. I remembered the story of King Hezekiah in his old age showing neighbours round his house and pointing out all that he valued (2 Kings 20:13). Isaiah warned him that that was not a wise thing to have done. Not long afterwards those so-called friendly neighbours came back and lifted all the King's treasures and carried them off to their own house in Babylon (2 Kings 24:13).

Although some of the things stolen, oil paintings and jewellery, had some value, the most valuable of my treasures are not stored in my house. Many years ago I decided to follow the advice of our Lord who said I should lay not up treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up treasures in heaven. Where your treasure is there will be your heart also (Matt 6:19-21). Rather than buy a valuable painting it is infinitely better, in my view, to sponsor a destitute child in sub-Saharan Africa.

Many of us do not realise how fortunate we are to have been placed in a land where we have free medical care, free education, fresh air, clean water and many benefits we just take for granted. My eyes were opened by my experiences in West and East Africa. In Northern Ireland it is unusual for thieves to break into your house. In Africa you need high walls with barbed wire round your house and a 24-hour guard. Gangs of homeless youths roam the streets – street boys – sleeping on the pavements and living by what they can beg, borrow or steal, including scavenging rubbish tips.

Their situation arises because they are not wanted. Girls are nurtured because they are valuable. A man has to pay the girl's father a dowry if he wants to marry his daughter. Having several daughters can make a father rich. Boys are a drag on the purse strings and are put out to fend for themselves. When I was in Kenya I spent some time in a house with dormitories specially set up to cater for street boys. They were very appreciative of finding folk who were concerned for them. I would take a shopping trolley round a supermarket, fill it up and take it out to the boys – their hands dived into the contents and they had it empty in seconds. Surely that was a better buy than an oil painting.

Recently I read about a pastor who had a similar approach to myself. His wife woke up and said to her husband, "I just had a dream that you gave me a pearl necklace for my birthday. What do you think that means?" The pastor replied "you'll know tonight." That evening he came home with a small package and gave it to his wife. Delighted, she opened it to find a book entitled 'How to interpret dreams'.

The pearl necklace wouldn't have been much use in heaven. Some people lay great store in achieving wealth, social position and worldly pleasure. Moses could have had it all. Brought up in a palace, the son of Pharaoh's daughter, a prince, he preferred to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt (Heb 11:25-26). David would "rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Ps 84:10).

The Bible tells us that in heaven we will be singing a new song, praising the Lamb who has made us kings and priests unto God. What is a king's (or queen's) most precious treasure? – their crown.

How do we ensure we have a crown in heaven? Paul's crown of rejoicing was made up of the converts resulting from his ministry in Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:19). A soul saved is of more value than the whole world; "for what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul" (Matt 16:26). That little child who trusted Christ in your Sunday school class will provide you with a crown of rejoicing. Keep on going, sister; move on brothers.