

Where is your treasure?

Pursuing Jesus

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Break up into small groups and discuss what 'success' means to you. You may want to divide your life up in to different areas with success being different in each one.

If you were to list the top five things you are striving for in life at this very moment, what would they be? Where does God fit in? Does He make it on to the list?

We are in the midst of our prayer and self-denial where we focus on the overseas missionaries who we support and deny ourselves in order to support them. The theme is Nga Taonga tuku iho – treasures handed down. We have looked at the gospel is treasure, people are treasure, and ...this week 'Where is your treasure'.

The angle we are looking at is **pursuing Jesus**.

As we look at our pursuit of Jesus let's start way back in the Old Testament and we will look at **1 Kings** chapters **1-11** where we will consider the story of King Solomon.

King Solomon's reign is a fascinating read. It's a story jam-packed with glitz and glamor, and by the end leaves the reader wondering - what just happened? It's a reality story that shows that a strong start to your spiritual life does not guarantee a strong finish. It's a story that is still very relevant today.

This story of King Solomon speaks largely to our materialistic culture. A culture where so often God is pushed aside as we chase the latest craze. It's something that is prevalent all around the world. So many people are missing out on all that God has to offer, because they are too busy chasing the things of this world, that have no eternal value.

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God, and follow all his ways. Keep the decrees, commands, regulations, and laws written in the Law of Moses so that you will be successful in all you do and wherever you go. ⁴If you do this, then the LORD will keep the promise he made to me. He told me, 'If your descendants live as they should and follow me faithfully with all their heart and soul, one of them will always sit on the throne of Israel.'

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⁶Solomon replied, "You showed great and faithful love to your servant my father, David, because he was honest and true and faithful to you. And you have continued to show this great and faithful love to him today by giving him a son to sit on his throne.

⁷"Now, O LORD my God, you have made me king instead of my father, David, but I am like a little child who doesn't know his way around. ⁸And here I am in the midst of your own chosen people, a nation so great and numerous they cannot be counted! ⁹Give me an understanding heart so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great people of yours?"

¹⁰The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom. ¹¹So God replied, "Because you have asked for wisdom in governing my people with justice and have not asked for a long life or wealth or the death of your enemies— ¹²I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding heart such as no one else has had or ever will have! ¹³And I will also give you what you did not ask for—riches and fame! No other king in all the world will be compared to you for the rest of your life! ¹⁴And if you follow me and

obey my decrees and my commands as your father, David, did, I will give you a long life."

Solomon had it all going for him. He was the new king of Israel; he had a great relationship with the Lord, and through his faithful worship, was showered in blessings. His blessings were so great that God himself had promised no other king in the entire world would compare to Solomon during his lifetime.

Wouldn't it be amazing to walk just one day in the shoes of Solomon! It seems that God chose to bless Solomon with an extravagant lifestyle and world fame. Yet still in Proverbs 16:16 we hear what made Solomon truly rich. He writes, *"How much better to get wisdom than gold, and good judgement than silver"*. Later in verse 20 he adds, *"Pay attention to what you are taught and you will be successful; trust in the Lord and you will be happy"*. Despite all the riches Solomon was blessed with, his greatest treasure was his God gifted wisdom and his trust in the Lord.

If right now the Lord appeared to you the same way He appeared to Solomon, and He said to you "Ask for whatever you want me to give you", what would you say? Would you ask for the seen or the unseen?

Blessings

Too often, when we hear about blessings, our mind jumps to think of physical blessings; like the wealth that Solomon accumulated. And it's true, God does bless and meet the needs of people in physical ways, but that is not the only way, that is not the primary way; just read a few lines of the Beatitudes in Matthew and you will quickly realise that the promises of these blessings cannot be seen or touched, but relate to eternal life and the Spirit.

The Beatitudes

- ³God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
- ⁴God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- ⁵God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.
- ⁶God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.
- ⁷God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
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⁹God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

¹⁰God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

Earthly blessings are temporary but spiritual blessings are everlasting. To receive a blessing from the Lord is to receive an undeserved gift from God. It is God saying, "You haven't done anything to deserve this, but I want to give it to you anyway".

This illustrates of the greatest gift God gave us, the sacrifice of His son. We haven't done anything to deserve it, and yet Jesus hung on the cross for us anyway.

As we read 1 Kings we see that Solomon asked for wisdom - not for riches. He wanted wisdom so that he could effectively lead the Lord's chosen people. His heart was in tune with God's heart and he wanted his blessing to glorify God. This is a win – win situation. This is the way that God works – everything he wants us to do is a win – win situation.

As someone said "Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift to God." To honour God with the blessings He has poured upon each of us, is to show that we trust in His provision and are grateful for His loving care.

Chasing the ways of the world

Let's read on. This is where the story turns sour. This is where the wisest man in the world knowingly turned away from God and disobeyed His commands. It's a heart-breaking turn of events, and a clear warning that a strong start to a relationship with God does not always guarantee a strong finish.

Read 1 Kings 11:1-13

11 *Now King Solomon loved many foreign women. Besides Pharaoh's daughter, he married women from Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and from among the Hittites. ²The LORD had clearly instructed the people of Israel, "You must not marry them, because they will turn your hearts to their gods." Yet Solomon insisted on loving them anyway. ³He had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines. And in fact, they did turn his heart away from the LORD.*

It goes on about how Solomon was unfaithful to God and worshiped other Gods and then in verse 9

⁹The LORD was very angry with Solomon, for his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. ¹⁰He had warned Solomon specifically about worshiping other gods, but Solomon did not listen to the LORD's command. ¹¹So now the LORD said to him, "Since you have not kept my covenant and have disobeyed my decrees, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants. ¹²But for the sake of your father, David, I will not do this while you are still alive. I will take the kingdom away from your son. ¹³And even so, I will not take away the entire kingdom; I will let him be king of one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, my chosen city."

To stray from God's laws is to stray from God - and here was Solomon breaking the very first commandment, "You must not have any god before Me".

Solomon put many other gods ahead of the Lord. Rather than receiving the amazing life the Lord had given to him with humble gratefulness, Solomon was led astray and found comfort in all the wrong things. It's something that any one of us can fall victim to, and it is very typical of the world we live in today.

Why is it so easy to lust after the things of this world; things that can disappear in a second? What are we looking for when we pursue earthly treasures? Happiness? Significance? Respect? Are we really prepared to be disobedient to God in an attempt to achieve a superficial lifestyle?

It's not a sin to have or want nice things; the Lord was quite happy for Solomon to experience all that life had to offer. The problem arises when our lifestyle side-tracks us from God's purpose for our lives. When we no longer accept blessings with a thankful heart, but instead are expectant and demanding of more, deep rooted problems arise. These problems ignite common issues like addiction, jealousy, insecurities, anxiety, and rob us of the very happiness and success that we were looking for. It's an issue that was prevalent in Solomon's time, and it's an issue that is prevalent in our time.

I am sure you have all heard the passage from **Matthew 6:24** which says

²⁴"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

Solomon himself in Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, "Those who love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness."

When we fall into the trap of pursuing the things of this world, we will quickly find the pursuit will never end.

Here is another passage to think about - **1 John 2:15-17**

¹⁵Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. ¹⁷And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

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Pursuing Jesus

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God knows our wants and desires, and He is happy for us to ask Him for whatever we need. He is our provider and He knows what is good for us. If God doesn't provide the things we want, it's certainly not because he doesn't care about us. It's more likely because it's not going to do us any good.

Jesus was very aware of the short-lived nature of earthly treasures which is why he said in Matthew 6:19-21,

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures here on earth where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart is also."

As Rick Warren, well known pastor and author has said, "The way you store up treasures in heaven is by investing in getting people there".

Lets pray.

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