



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.



Matthew 6:19-21 'Concerning Treasures'

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Aren't ancient illuminated manuscripts beautiful? I marvel at the amount of time and love and devotion the monks offered to God as they created them. This picture shows the title page of Matthew's gospel in 'The Book of Kells' which I once had the joy of seeing when I was in Dublin. It's believed that it was written and illuminated on Iona sometime around the 8th century but was taken to Ireland to protect it from the Viking raids, which were prevalent then.

Unfortunately the Vikings reached Ireland too and amongst their plunder they stole the precious Book. However they were more concerned with the large jewel on its cover, which they kept, and threw the beautifully illuminated Book into a peat bog, from which it was recovered – a bit muddy and curled at the edges – three years or so later.

To the Vikings, the loving and beautiful workmanship to God's glory inside the book was far less important than the precious jewel. Fortunately for us there were others who saw things differently and, over the centuries since, much has been done to restore the damaged book, so we can appreciate it today. What counts as treasure differs greatly from culture to culture, and what is precious to one person may be rubbish to another. But Jesus tells us that *things don't matter*, that what is important is to store up treasure for ourselves in heaven rather than on earth. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Sometimes I think we're rather like those Vikings. We tend to want what we see as valuable, the outer wrappings of things, and we fail to see what is infinitely more precious inside. Once it's God that means most to us, once we live as Jesus did in obedience to God's will, and that comes first in our lives, we see the world in a different way. We are able to look beyond the superficial and to recognize the deeper treasure that God wants to give us, which will last into eternity.

Prayer:

God, our loving heavenly Father, you know us better than we know ourselves; you know that we are all too human and often fall into the temptation of wanting the wrong things in this earthly life. Forgive us, we pray. Help us to recognize the treasure that lies in growing closer to you and in doing your will.

In this time of world pandemic, guide us and heal us in our sorrow and confusion, comfort us in times of fear and help us to comfort each other, even as we keep apart. We hold in our hearts all those who have lost loved ones.

May we follow the light of your love and spread hope. Move our hearts to acts of generosity, may we always be led to share what we have with those in need.

At this testing time may we be signs of your compassion in the heart of your world. In Jesus' name. Amen.