

Matthew: 6:19–33

From Catena Aurea:

19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20. But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

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

CHRYSOSTOM. When He has driven away the disease of vanity, He does well to bring in speech of contempt of riches. For there is no greater cause of desire of money than love of praise; for this men desire troops of slaves, horses accoutred in gold, and tables of silver, not for use or pleasure, but that they may be seen of many; therefore He says, Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 13.) For if any does a work with the mind of gaining thereby an earthly good, how will his heart be pure while it is thus walking on earth? For any thing that is mingled with an inferior nature is polluted therewith, though that inferior be in its kind pure. Thus gold is alloyed when mixed with pure silver; and in like manner our mind is defiled by lust of earthly things, though earth is in its own kind pure.

CHRYSOSTOM. Saying, Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth, He adds, where rust and moth destroy, in order to shew the insecurity of that treasure that is here, and the advantage of that which is in Heaven, both from the place, and from those things which harm. As though He had said; Why fear you that your wealth should be consumed, if you should give alms? Yea rather give alms, and they shall receive increase, for those treasures that are in Heaven shall be added to them, which treasures perish if ye do not give alms. He said not, You leave them to others, for that is pleasant to men.

HILARY. But the praise of Heaven is eternal, and cannot be carried off by invading thief, nor consumed by the moth and rust of envy.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont, ii. 13.) By heaven in this place I understand not the material heavens, for every thing that has a body is earthly. But it behoves that the whole world be despised by him who lays

up his treasure in that Heaven, of which it is said, The heaven of heavens is the Lord's, (Ps. 115:16.) that is, in the spiritual firmament. For heaven and earth shall pass away; (Mat. 24:35.) but we ought not to place our treasure in that which passes away, but in that which abides for ever.

CHRYSOSTOM. But forasmuch as not every earthly treasure is destroyed by rust or moth, or carried away by thieves, He therefore brings in another motive, For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. As much as to say; Though none of these former losses should befall you, you will yet sustain no small loss by attaching your affections to things beneath, and becoming a slave to them, and in falling from Heaven, and being unable to think of any lofty thing.

JEROME. This must be understood not of money only, but of all our possessions. The god of a glutton is his belly; of a lover his lust; and so every man serves that to which he is in bondage; and has his heart there where his treasure is.

6:22–23

22. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

CHRYSOSTOM. Having spoken of the bringing the understanding into captivity because it was not easy to be understood of many, He transfers it to a sensible instance, saying, The light of thy body is thy eye. As though He had said, If you do not know what is meant by the loss of the understanding, learn a parable of the bodily members; for what the eye is to the body, that the understanding is to the soul. As by the loss of the eyes we lose much of the use of the other limbs, so when the understanding is corrupted, your life is filled with many evils.

JEROME. This is an illustration drawn from the senses. As the whole body is in darkness, where the eye is not single, so if the soul has lost her original brightness, every sense, or that whole part of the soul to which sensation belongs, will abide in darkness. Wherefore He says, If then the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! that is, if the senses which are the soul's light be darkened by vice, in how great darkness do you suppose the darkness itself will be wrapped?

JEROME. Those who have thick eye-sight see the lights multiplied; but the single and clear eye sees them single and clear.

CHRYSOSTOM. Or; The eye He speaks of is not the external but the internal eye. The light is the understanding, through which the soul sees God. He whose heart is turned to God, has an eye full of light; that is, his understanding is pure, not distorted by the influence of worldly lusts. The darkness in us is our bodily senses, which always desire the things that pertain to darkness. Whoso then has a pure eye, that is, a spiritual understanding, preserves his body in light, that is, without sin; for though the flesh desires evil, yet by the might of divine fear the soul resists it. But whoever has an eye, that is, an understanding, either darkened by the influence of the malignant passions, or fouled by evil lusts, possesses his body in darkness; he does not resist the flesh when it lusts after evil things, because he has no hope in Heaven, which hope alone gives us the strength to resist desire.

HILARY. Otherwise; from the office of the light of the eye, He calls it the light of the heart; which if it continue single and brilliant, will confer on the body the brightness of the eternal light, and pour again into the corrupted flesh the splendor of its origin, that is, in the resurrection. But if it be obscured by sin, and evil in will, the bodily nature will yet abide subject to all the evils of the understanding.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Otherwise; by the eye here we may understand our purpose; if that be pure and right, all our works which we work according thereto are good. These He here calls the body, as the Apostle speaks of certain works as members; Mortify your members, fornication and uncleanness. (Col. 3:5.) We should look then, not to what a person does, but with what mind he does it. For this is the light within us, because by this we see that we do with good intention what we do. For all which doth make manifest is light. (Eph. 5:13.) But the deeds themselves, which go forth to men's society, have a result to us uncertain, and therefore He calls them darkness; as when I give money to one in need, I know not what he will do with it. If then the purport of your heart, which you can know, is defiled with the lust of temporal things, much more is the act itself, of which the issue is uncertain, defiled. For even though one should reap good of what you do with a purport not good; it will be imputed to you as you did it, not as it resulted to him. If however our works are done with a single purport, that is with the aim of charity, then are they pure and pleasing in God's sight.

AUGUSTINE. (cont. Mendac. 7.) But acts which are known to be in themselves sins, are not to be done as with a good purpose; but such works only as are either good or bad, according as the motives from which they are done are either good or bad, and are not in themselves sins; as to give food to the poor is good if it be done from merciful motives, but evil if it be done from ostentation. But such works as are in themselves sins, who will say that they are to be done with good motives, or that they are not sins? Who would say, Let us rob the rich, that we may have to give to the poor?

6:24

24. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

GLOSS. (non occ.) Otherwise; it had been declared above, that good things become evil, when done with a worldly purpose. It might therefore have been said by some one, I will do good works from worldly and heavenly motives at once. Against this the Lord says, No man can serve two masters.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xxi.) Or otherwise; in what had gone before He had restrained the tyranny of avarice by many and weighty motives, but He now adds yet more. Riches do not only harm us in that they arm robbers against us, and that they cloud our understanding, but they moreover turn us away from God's service. This He proves from familiar notions, saying, No man can serve two masters; two, He means, whose orders are contrary; for concord makes one of many. This is proved by what follows, for either he will hate the one. He mentions two, that we may see that change for the better is easy. For if one were to give himself up in despair as having been made a slave to riches, namely, by loving them, he may hence learn, that it is possible for him to change into a better service, namely, by not submitting to such slavery, but by despising it.

GLOSS. (non occ.) Or; He seems to allude to two different kinds of servants; one kind who serve freely for love, another who serve servilely from fear. If then one serve two masters of contrary character from love, it must be that he hate the one; if from fear, while he trembles before the one, he must despise the other. But as the world or God predominate in a man's heart, he must be drawn contrary ways; for God draws him who serves Him to things above; the earth draws to things beneath; therefore He concludes, Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

JEROME. Mammon—riches are so termed in Syriac. Let the covetous man who is called by the Christian name, hear this, that he cannot serve both Christ and riches. Yet He said not, he who has riches, but, he who is the servant of riches. For he who is the slave of money, guards his money as a slave; but he who has thrown off the yoke of his slavery, dispenses them as a master.

GLOSS. (ord.) By mammon is meant the Devil, who is the lord of money, not that he can bestow them unless where God wills, but because by means of them he deceives men.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 14.) Whoso serves mammon, (that is, riches,) verily serves him, who, being for desert of his perversity set over these things of earth, is called by the Lord, The prince of this world.

Or otherwise; who the two masters are He shews when He says, Ye cannot serve God and mammon, that is to say, God and the Devil. Either then man will hate the one, and love the other, namely God; or, he will endure the one and despise the other. For he who is mammon's servant endures a hard master; for ensnared by his own lust he has been made subject to the Devil, and loves him not. As one whose passions have connected him with another man's handmaid, suffers a hard slavery, yet loves not him whose handmaid he loves. But He said, will despise, and not will hate, the other, for none can with a right conscience hate God. But he despises, that is, fears Him not, as being certain of His goodness.

6:25

25. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 15.) The Lord had taught above, that whoso desires to love God, and to take heed not to offend, should not think that he can serve two masters; lest though perhaps he may not look for superfluities, yet his heart may become double for the sake of very necessities, and his thoughts bent to obtain them. Therefore I say unto you, Be not ye careful for your life what ye shall eat, or for your body what ye shall put on.

CHRYSOSTOM. He does not hereby mean that the spirit needs food, for it is incorporeal, but He speaks according to common usage, for the soul cannot remain in the body unless the body be fed.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Or we may understand the soul in this place to be put for the animal life.

JEROME. Some MSS. add here, nor what ye shall drink. That which belongs naturally to all animals alike, to brutes and beasts of burden as well as to man, from all thought of this we are not freed. But we are bid not to be anxious what we should eat, for in the sweat of our face we earn our bread; the toil is to be undergone, the anxiety put away. This Be not careful, is to be taken of bodily food and clothing; for the food and clothing of the spirit it becomes us to be always careful.

AUGUSTINE. (De Hæres. 57.) There are certain heretics called Euchitæc, who hold that a monk may not do any work even for his support; who embrace this profession that they may be freed from necessity of daily labour.

AUGUSTINE. (De Op. Monach. 1) For they say the Apostle did not speak of personal labour, such as that of husbandmen or craftsmen, when he said, Who will not work, neither let him eat. (et seq. 2 Thess. 3:10.)

For he could not be so contrary to the Gospel where it is said, Therefore I say unto you, Be not careful. Therefore in that saying of the Apostle we are to understand spiritual works, of which it is elsewhere said, I have planted, Apollos watereth. (1 Cor. 3:6.) And thus they think themselves obedient to the Apostolic precept, interpreting the Gospel to speak of not taking care for the needs of the body, and the Apostle to speak of spiritual labour and food. First let us prove that the Apostle meant that the servants of God should labour with the body. He had said, Ye yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us in that we were not troublesome among you, nor did we eat any man's bread for nought; but travailing in labour and weariness day and night, that we might not be burdensome to any of you. Not that we have not power, but that we might offer ourselves as a pattern to you which ye should imitate. For when we were among you, this we taught among you, that if a man would not work, neither should he eat. What shall we say to this, since he taught by his example what he delivered in precept, in that he himself wrought with his own hands. This is proved from the Acts, where it is said, that he abode with Aquila and his wife Priscilla, labouring with them, for they were tent-makers. (Acts 18:3.) And yet to the Apostle, as a preacher of the Gospel, a soldier of Christ, a planter of the vineyard, a shepherd of his flock, the Lord had appointed that he should live of the Gospel, but he refused that payment which was justly his due, that he might present himself an example to those who exacted what was not due to them. Let those hear this who have not that power which he had; namely, of eating bread for nought, and only labouring with spiritual labour. If indeed they be Evangelists, if ministers of the Altar, if dispensers of the Sacraments, they have this power. Or if they had had in this world possessions, whereby they might without labour have supported themselves, and had on their turning to God distributed this to the needy, then were their infirmity to be believed and to be borne with. And it would not import whatever place it was in which he made the distribution, seeing there is but one commonwealth of all Christians. But they who enter the profession of God's service from the country life, from the workman's craft, or the common labour, if they work not, are not to be excused. For it is by no means fitting that in that life in which senators become labourers, there should labouring men become idle; or that where lords of farms come having given up their luxuries, there should rustic slaves come to find luxury. But when the Lord says, Be not ye careful, He does not mean that they should not procure such things as they have need of, wherever they may honestly, but that they should not look to these things, and should not for their sake do what they are commanded to do in preaching the Gospel; for this intention He had a little before called the eye.

CHRYSOSTOM. Or we may connect the context otherwise; When the Lord had inculcated contempt of money, that none might say, How then shall we be able to live when we have given up our all? He adds, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life.

GLOSS. (interlin.) That is, Be not withdrawn by temporal cares from things eternal.

JEROME. The command is therefore, not to be anxious what we shall eat. For it is also commanded, that in the sweat of our face we must eat bread. Toil therefore is enjoined, carking forbidden,

JEROME. He who has given the greater, will He not also give the less?

HILARY. Otherwise; Because the thoughts of the unbelievers were ill-employed respecting care of things future, cavilling concerning what is to be the appearance of our bodies in the resurrection, what the food in the eternal life, therefore He continues, Is not the life more than food? He will not endure that our hope should hang in care for the meat and drink and clothing that is to be in the resurrection, lest there should be affront given to Him who has given us the more precious things, in our being anxious that He should also give us the lesser.

6:26–27

26. Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27. Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

AUGUSTINE. (De Op. Monach. 23.) Some argue that they ought not to labour, because the fowls of the air neither sow nor reap. Why then do they not attend to that which follows, neither gather into barns? Why do they seek to have their hands idle, and their storehouses full? Why indeed do they grind corn, and dress it? For this do not the birds. Or even if they find men whom they can persuade to supply them day by day with victuals ready prepared, at least they draw water from the spring, and set on table for themselves, which the birds do not. But if neither are they driven to fill themselves vessels with water, then have they gone one new step of righteousness beyond those who were at that time at Jerusalem, (vid. Acts 11:29.) who of corn sent to them of free gift, made, or caused to be made, loaves, which the birds do not. But not to lay up any thing for the morrow cannot be observed by those, who for many days together withdrawn from the sight of men, and suffering none to approach to them, shut themselves up, to live in much fervency of prayer. What? will you say that the more holy men become, the more unlike the birds of the air in this respect they become? What He says respecting the birds of the air, He says to this end, that none of His servants should think that God has no thought of their wants, when they see Him so provide even for these inferior creatures. Neither is it not God that feeds those that earn their bread by their own labour; neither because God hath said, Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will

deliver thee, (Ps. 50:15.) ought the Apostle therefore not to have fled, but to have remained still to have been seized, that God might save him as He did the Three Children out of the midst of the fire. Should any object in this sort to the saints in their flight from persecution, they would answer that they ought not to tempt God, and that God, if He pleased, would so do to deliver them as He had done Daniel from the lions, Peter from prison, then when they could no longer help themselves; but that in having made flight possible to them, should they be saved by flight, it was by God that they were saved. In like manner, such of God's servants as have strength to earn their food by the labour of their hands, would easily answer any who should object to them this out of the Gospel concerning the birds of the air, that they neither sow nor reap; and would say, If we by sickness or any other hindrance are not able to work, He will feed us as He feeds the birds, that work not. But when we can work, we ought not to tempt God, seeing that even this our ability is His gift; and that we live here we live of His goodness that has made us able to live; He feeds us by whom the birds of the air are fed; as He says, Your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much greater value?

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 15.) Ye are of more value, because a rational animal, such as man is, is higher in the scale of nature than an irrational, such as are the birds of the air.

AUGUSTINE. (De Civ. Dei, xi. 16.) Indeed a higher price is often given for a horse than a slave, for a jewel than for a waiting maid, but this not from reasonable valuation, but from the need of the person requiring, or rather from his pleasure desiring it.

JEROME. There be some who, seeking to go beyond the limits of their fathers, and to soar into the air, sink into the deep and are drowned. These will have the birds of the air to mean the Angels, and the other powers in the ministry of God, who without any care of their own are fed by God's providence. But if this be indeed as they would have it, how follows it, said to men, Are not ye of more worth than they? It must be taken then in the plain sense; If birds that to-day are, and to-morrow are not, be nourished by God's providence, without thought or toil of their own, how much more men to whom eternity is promised!

HILARY. It may be said, that under the name of birds, He exhorts us by the example of the unclean spirits, to whom, without any trouble of their own in seeking and collecting it, provision of life is given by the power of the Eternal Wisdom. And to lead us to refer this to the unclean spirits, He suitably adds, Are not ye of much more value than they? Thus shewing the great interval between piety and wickedness.

GLOSS. (non occ.) He teaches us not only by the instance of the birds, but adds a further proof, that to our being and life our own care is not enough, but Divine Providence therein works; saying, Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 15.) Or it may be connected with what follows it; as though He should say, It was not by our care that our body was brought to its present stature; so that we may know that if we desired to add one cubit to it, we should not be able. Leave then the care of clothing that body to Him who made it to grow to its present stature.

HILARY. Otherwise; As by the example of the spirits He had fixed our faith in the supply of food for our lives, so now by a decision of common understanding He cuts off all anxiety about supply of clothing. Seeing that He it is who shall raise in one perfect man every various kind of body that ever drew breath, and is alone able to add one or two or three cubits to each man's stature; surely in being anxious concerning clothing, that is, concerning the appearance of our bodies, we offer affront to Him who will add so much to each man's stature as shall bring all to an equality.

AUGUSTINE. (De Civ. Dei, xxii. 15.) But if Christ rose again with the same stature with which He died, it is impious to say that when the time of the resurrection of all shall come, there shall be added to His body a bigness that it had not at His own resurrection, (for He appeared to His disciples with that body in which He had been known among them,) such that He shall be equalled to the tallest among men. If again we say that all men's bodies, whether tall or short, shall be alike brought to the size and stature of the Lord's body, then much will perish from many bodies, though He has declared that not a hair shall fall. It remains therefore that each be raised in his own stature—that stature which he had in youth, if he died in old age; if in childhood that stature to which he would have attained had he lived. For the Apostle says not, 'To the measure of the stature,' but, To the measure of the full age of Christ. (Eph. 4:13.) For the bodies of the dead shall rise in youth and maturity to which we know that Christ attained.

6:28–30

28. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xxii.) Having shewn that it is not right to be anxious about food, He passes to that which is less; (for raiment is not so necessary as food;) and asks, And why are ye careful wherewith ye shall be clothed? He uses not here the instance of the birds, when He might have drawn some to the point, as the peacock, or the swan, but brings forward the lilies, saying, Consider the lilies of the field. He would prove in two things the abundant goodness of God; to wit, the richness of the beauty with which they are clothed, and the mean value of the things so clothed with it.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 15.) The things instanced are not to be allegorized so that we enquire what is denoted by the birds of the air, or the lilies of the field; they are only examples to prove God's care for the greater from His care for the less.

CHRYSOSTOM. He forbids not labour but carefulness, both here and above when He spoke of sowing.

GLOSS. (non occ.) And for the greater exaltation of God's providence in those things that are beyond human industry, He adds, I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

JEROME. For, in sooth, what regal purple, what silk, what web of divers colours from the loom, may vie with flowers? What work of man has the red blush of the rose? the pure white of the lily? How the Tyrian dye yields to the violet, sight alone and not words can express.

CHRYSOSTOM. As widely as truth differs from falsehood, so widely do our clothes differ from flowers. If then Solomon, who was more eminent than all other kings, was yet surpassed by flowers, how shall you exceed the beauty of flowers by your garments? And Solomon was exceeded by the flowers not once only, or twice, but throughout his whole reign; and this is that He says, In all his glory; for no one day was he arrayed as are the flowers.

HILARY. Or; By the lilies are to be understood the eminences of the heavenly Angels, to whom a surpassing radiance of whiteness is communicated by God. They toil not, neither do they spin, because the angelic powers received in the very first allotment of their existence such a nature, that as they were made so they should ever continue to be; and when in the resurrection men shall be like unto Angels, He would have them look for a covering of angelic glory by this example of angelic excellence.

JEROME. To-morrow in Scripture is put for time future in general. Jacob says, So shall my righteousness answer for me to-morrow. (Gen. 30:33.) And in the phantasm of Samuel, the Pythoness says to Saul, To-morrow shalt thou be with me. 1 Sam. 28:19.)

GLOSS. Some copies have into the fire, or, into an heap, which has the appearance of an oven.

CHRYSOSTOM. He calls them no more lilies, but the grass of the field, to shew their small worth; and adds moreover another cause of their small value; which to-day is. And He said not, and to-morrow is not, but what is yet greater fall, is cast into the oven. In that He says How much more you, is implicitly conveyed the dignity of the human race, as though He had said, You to whom He has given a soul, for whom He has contrived a body, to whom He has sent Prophets and gave His Only-begotten Son.

GLOSS. He says, of little faith, for that faith is little which is not sure of even the least things.

HILARY. Or, under the signification of grass the Gentiles are pointed to. If then an eternal existence is only therefore granted to the Gentiles, that they may soon be handed over to the judgment fires; how impious it is that the saints should doubt of attaining to eternal glory, when the wicked have eternity bestowed on them for their punishment.

6:31–33

31. Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32. (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

GLOSS. (non occ.) Having thus expressly cut off all anxiety concerning food and raiment, by an argument drawn from observation of the inferior creation, He follows it up by a further prohibition; Be not ye therefore careful, saying, What shall we eat, what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?

GLOSS. (non occ.) There is also a further needless solicitude wherein men sin, when they lay by of produce or money more than necessity requires, and leaving spiritual things, are intent on these things, as though despairing of the goodness of God; this is what is forbidden; for after all these things do the Gentiles seek.

CHRYSOSTOM. He said not 'God knoweth,' but, Your Father knoweth, in order to lead them to higher hope; for if He be their Father, He will not endure to forget his children, since not even human fathers could do so. He says, That ye have need of all these things, in order that for that very reason, because

they are necessary, ye may the more lay aside all anxiety. For he who denies his son bare necessities, after what fashion is he a father? But for superfluities they have no right to look with the like confidence.

AUGUSTINE. (De Trin. xv. 13.) God did not gain this knowledge at any certain time, but before all time, without beginning of knowledge, foreknew that the things of the world would be, and among others, both what and when we should ask of Him.

AUGUSTINE. (De Civ. Dei, xii. 18.) As to what some say that these things are so many that they cannot be compassed by the knowledge of God; they ought with like reason to maintain further that God cannot know all numbers which are certainly infinite. But infinity of number is not beyond the compass of His understanding, who is Himself infinite. Therefore if whatever is compassed by knowledge, is bounded by the compass of him that has the knowledge, then is all infinity in a certain unspeakable way bounded by God, because it is not incomprehensible by His knowledge.

GLOSS. (interlin.) Or, He says his righteousness, as though He were to say, 'Ye are made righteous through Him, and not through yourselves.'

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 16.) To wit, these temporal goods which are thus manifestly shewn not to be such goods as those goods of ours for the sake of which we ought to do well; and yet they are necessary. The kingdom of God and His righteousness is our good which we ought to make our end. But since in order to attain this end we are militant in this life, which may not be lived without supply of these necessities, He promises, These things shall be added unto you. That He says, First, implies that these are to be sought second not in time, but in value; the one is our good, the other necessary to us. For example, we ought not to preach that we may eat, for so we should hold the Gospel as of less value than our food; but we should therefore eat that we may preach the Gospel. But if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, that is, set this before all other things, and seek other things for the sake of this, we ought not to be anxious lest we should lack necessities; and therefore He says, All these things shall be added unto you; that is, of course, without being an hindrance to you: that you may not in seeking them be turned away from the other, and thus set two ends before you.

CHRYSOSTOM. And He said not, Shall be given, but, Shall be added, that you may learn that the things that are now, are nought to the greatness of the things that shall be.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 17.) But when we read that the Apostle suffered hunger and thirst, let us not think that God's promises failed him; for these things are rather aids. That Physician to whom we have

entirely entrusted ourselves, knows when He will give and when He will withhold, as He judges most for our advantage. So that should these things ever be lacking to us, (as God to exercise us often permits,) it will not weaken our fixed purpose, but rather confirm it when wavering.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

6:19 Treasures on Earth

Preparation for the Discourse on Riches.

Chrysostom: Previously he had only said that we must show mercy. Here he also points out how great is the mercy we must show. He says, "Don't store up treasure." It would have been impossible to introduce his discourse on disdain for riches without much preparation. So he broke the discourse up into small portions. Having readied the hearer's mind, he brings up the tougher subject in a way that is plausible. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 20.2.

Treasures That Corrupt.

Augustine: If someone does something with the intent of gaining earthly profit, that one's heart is upon the earth. How can a heart be clean while it is wallowing in the mud? On the other hand, if it be fastened upon heaven it will be clean, for whatever is heavenly is unpolluted. A thing becomes defiled if it is mixed with a baser substance, even though that other substance be not vile in its own nature. Gold, for example, is debased by pure silver if mixed with it. So also is our mind defiled by a desire for the things of earth, although the earth itself is pure in its own class and in its own order. Sermon on the Mount 2.13.44.

6:20 Treasures in Heaven

Treasures That Abide.

Augustine: Let us not think that in this text the word heaven signifies the universe of heavenly bodies, for the word earth includes every kind of body, for one ought to disregard the whole world when laying up treasure in heaven. Therefore the reference is to that heaven of which it is said, "The heaven of heaven is the Lord's." Moreover, since we ought to fix our treasure and our heart on that which will abide forever

and not on something which will pass away, the heaven here mentioned means the spiritual firmament, for “heaven and earth will pass away.” Sermon on the Mount 2.13.44.

6:22–23 Light and Darkness

As Mind Is to Soul, the Eye Is to the Body.

Chrysostom: Now Christ leads us to an analogy more within the reach of our senses, that we may not be confused. He has already spoken of the mind as enslaved in captivity. Now he shifts his attention to the eye and to lessons on outward things lying directly before our eyes, so that we might grasp it easily and that we may learn from the body what we did not learn from the mind. For what the mind is to the soul, the eye is to the body. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 20.3.

Seeking the Right Intention.

Augustine: We know that all our works are pure and pleasing in the sight of God if they are performed with a single heart. This means that they are performed out of charity and with an intention that is fixed on heaven. For “love is the fulfillment of the law.” Therefore in this passage we ought to understand the eye as the intention with which we perform all our actions. If this intention is pure and upright and directing its gaze where it ought to be directed, then unfailingly all our works are good works, because they are performed in accordance with that intention. And by the expression “whole body,” Christ designated all those works that he reproveth and that he commands us to put to death. For the apostle also designates certain works as our “members.” “Therefore,” Paul writes, “mortify your members which are on earth: fornication, uncleanness, covetousness,” and all other such things. Sermon on the Mount 2.13.45.

When Understanding Is Quenched.

Chrysostom: If your eyes were completely blind, would you choose to wear gold and silk? Wouldn't you consider your sound health to be more desirable than mere externals? For if you should lose your health or waste it, all the rest of your life would be unhappily affected. For just as when the eyes are blinded, some of the ability of the other members is diminished, their light being quenched, so also when the mind is deprived, your life will be filled with countless evils. As therefore in the body it is our aim to keep the eye sound, so also it should be our aim to keep the mind sound in relation to the soul. But if we destroy

this, which ought to give light to the rest, by what means are we to see clearly any more? For as he who destroys the spring may also dry up the river, so he who has quenched the understanding may have confounded all his actions in this life. So it is said, “If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is the darkness?” For when the pilot is drowned, when the candle is put out, when the general is taken prisoner, what sort of hope will remain for those that are under his command? The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 20.3.

6:24 God and Mammon

Serving Two Masters.

Chrysostom: Now Jesus calls mammon here “a master,” not because of its own nature but on account of the wretchedness of those who bow themselves beneath it. So also he calls the stomach a god, not from the dignity of such a mistress but from the wretchedness of those enslaved. To have mammon for your master is already worse itself than any later punishment and enough retribution before the punishment for any one trapped in it. For what condemned criminals can be so wretched as those who, once having God for their Lord, do from that mild rule desert to this grievous obsession for money? Even in this life such idolatry trails immense harm in its path, with losses unspeakable. Think of the lawsuits! The harrassments, the strife and toil and blinding of the soul! More grievous, one falls away thereby from the highest blessing—to be God’s servant. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 21.2.

Cleansing Away Duplicity.

Augustine: “He will be devoted to one and disregard the other.” He does not say that one will hate the other, for scarcely anyone’s conscience could hate God. But one disregards God—that is to say, one does not fear God but presumes on his goodness. From this negligent and tormented confidence, the Holy Spirit recalls us when he says through the prophet: “Son, do not add sin to sin; and do not say, ‘The mercy of God is great.’” Note when Paul says, “Do you not know that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” For whose mercy can be accounted as great as the mercy of him who forgives all, if they convert to him? He makes the wild olive a partaker of the fatness of the original olive tree. At the same time, whose severity can be accounted as great as the severity of him who has not spared the natural branches but has broken them off because of unbelief? Therefore, whoever wishes to love God and to beware of offending him, let such a one cleanse the upright intention of his heart from all duplicity. In this

way, he will “think of the Lord in goodness and seek him in simplicity of heart.” Sermon on the Mount 2.14.48.

6:25 Do Not Be Anxious

Take No Thought About Your Life.

Chrysostom: Note that he did not simply say, “Don’t be anxious for your life,” but he added the reason and so commanded this. After having said, “You cannot serve God and mammon,” he added, “Therefore I say to you, don’t worry.” Therefore? Why therefore? Because of the unspeakable loss. For the hurt you receive is not in riches only; rather, the wound is in the most vital parts, in the subversion of your salvation, casting you as it does away from the God who made you, cares for you and loves you. “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life.” Only after Jesus has shown the hurt to be unspeakable, then and not before does he make the instruction stricter. He not only asks us to cast away what we have but also forbids us to take thought even for the food we need, saying, “Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat,” not because the soul needs food, for it is incorporeal. He spoke figuratively. For though the soul as such needs no food, it cannot endure to remain in the body unless the body is fed. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 21.2.

6:26 The Birds of the Air

More and Less Important.

Augustine: These examples are not to be analyzed like allegories. We must not inquire about the allegorical significance of the birds of the air or the lilies of the field. These examples are proposed so that more important things may be suggested from things of less importance. Sermon on the Mount 2.15.52.

6:27–30 Lilies of the Field

God’s Providence and Our Anxieties.

Chrysostom: Do you see how Jesus clarifies what has been obscure by comparing it to what is self-evident? Can you add one cubit, or even the slightest measure, to your bodily life span by worrying about it? Can you by being anxious about food add moments to your life? Hence it is clear that it is not our diligence

but the providence of God, even where we seem to be active, that finally accompanies everything. In the light of God's providence, none of our cares, anxieties, toils or any other such things will ever come to anything, but all will utterly pass away. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 21.3.

The Value of Life.

Chrysostom: Note the acceleration of images: just when the lilies are decked out, he no longer calls them lilies but "grass of the field." He then points further to their vulnerable condition by saying "which are here today." Then he does not merely say "and not tomorrow" but rather more callously "cast into the oven." These creatures are not merely "clothed" but "so clothed" in this way as to be later brought to nothing. Do you see how Jesus everywhere abounds in amplifications and intensifications? And he does so in order to press his points home. So then he adds, "Will he not much more clothe you?" The force of the emphasis is on "you" to indicate covertly how great is the value set upon your personal existence and the concern God shows for you in particular. It is as though he were saying, "You, to whom he gave a soul, for whom he fashioned a body, for whose sake he made everything in creation, for whose sake he sent prophets, and gave the law, and wrought those innumerable good works, and for whose sake he gave up his only begotten Son." The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 22.1.

Balancing Counsel and Reproof.

Chrysostom: It is not until he has clearly revealed his affection that he proceeds also to reprove them, saying, "O you of little faith." For this is the quality of a wise counselor. He balances counsel and reproof, that he may awaken persons all the more to the force of his words. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 22.1.

6:31–33 Seeking God's Kingdom and Righteousness

Ends and Means.

Augustine: At first he makes it abundantly clear that these things are not to be sought as if they were for us the kind of blessings for the sake of which we ought to make all our actions good actions but that they are necessities nevertheless. Then Jesus says, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well." In this sentence he clearly shows the difference between a good that ought to be sought as an end and a value that ought to be seen as a means. Our final good is therefore the kingdom of God and his justice. We ought to seek this good and fix our aim upon it. Let us perform all our

actions for the sake of it. Yet, since we are waging war in this life in order to be able to reach that kingdom and since this life cannot be maintained unless those necessities are supplied, he says, “These things shall be given you besides, but seek you first the kingdom of God and his justice.” Sermon on the Mount 2.16.53.

Seek First.

Augustine: When he said that the one is to be sought first, Jesus clearly intimates that the other is to be sought later—not that it is to be sought at a later time but that it is to be sought as a thing of secondary importance. He showed that the one is to be sought as our good, that the other is to be sought as something needful for us, but that the needful is to be sought for the sake of the good. Sermon on the Mount 2.16.53.