

Here are three very different people:

The first is Jessica Ennis who last Sunday won the Women's Heptathlon and the World Championship. She began in Athletics in 2000 and moved into senior athletics in 2006 when she got a bronze medal in the Commonwealth Games. A serious foot injury ruled her out of the Olympics in 2008 but is now back on track and aiming to win in 2012.

Then there is Stephen Hawking – very different. He has said, "My goal is simple. It is a complete understanding of the universe, why it is as it is and why it exists at all." His studies in [theoretical cosmology](#) and [quantum gravity](#) show that this is what he has been seeking to do.

Then there is Chloe Smith, the youngest MP following her by election victory in Norwich North. Here is someone who set out about 10 years ago to become an MP and you can well imagine that her next goal would be to be Prime Minister.

Three people in different fields but all with a clear aim and who in order to pursue their aim have had to do certain things and probably not do others. You can't imagine Jessica Ennis going out doing lots of socialising, taking holidays, missing training and so on because she knows that will not help her to win gold in 2012. Her aim dictates what she does as I'm sure it does for Stephen Hawking and Chloe Smith.

But what about us?

You may say well I'm not sure I have any real aims in life. I have managed to get out of bed this morning and get here so I consider I'm doing pretty well. Or you may think aims are just for the young and those making their way in life but not for me at my age.

Well if our aim is to be a world class athlete then for most if not all of us let me tell you it is too late! If our aim is to be Prime Minister then let me try as gently as I can to suggest it may not happen and if our goal is, "is a complete understanding of the universe, why it is as it is and why it exists at all" then I think we may be struggling.

Now I don't want to suggest that in anyway any of the aims of these three people are wrong but I do want to point out that in none of them does God seem to feature.

I would want to suggest that if we are followers of Christ then first our goal might be different to these people and in the light of that what we do and don't do might be different.

1. Serving God

From our reading this morning v24, "no one can serve two masters", which means no one can serve as a slave of two masters. It is a statement of where we are at if we are followers of Jesus.

Here is a thing that may have slipped your attention in the sports news. There is a battle on to sign Exodus Geohagan. He is a centre back at Kettering Town and has been playing well and teams like Southampton, Sheffield United and Notts County are wanting him. Of course he can't play for us and say for Notts County as well. If he is transferred then his whole commitment goes to them – it is obvious.

Paul in Col 1:13 reminds us that, "he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves". There has been a transfer. We are in Christ and no longer people of this world and its kingdom but of the Kingdom of God. As such our goal is not to do with this worldly kingdom but to do with the kingdom of God. That's why later on in 6:33 the disciples were told to "seek first the Kingdom of God" and here, in v24, to serve, love and be devoted to God.

Can you see what is being said? Jesus was telling those disciples that in following him they had changed allegiance and that now their goal was to serve God first and only. Their ultimate objective was to please God and be rewarded by him. That would inevitably affect what they did and didn't do. We follow in their footsteps and if we are "in Christ" our goal in life is the same, to please God and be rewarded by him.

So is that the case?

A couple of weeks ago we were looking at Elijah and his challenge to God's people, "how long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God follow him." (1 Kings 18:21). He might say the same to us as we so often try to have a foot in the world and in the Kingdom of God, as we have very earthly goals while still holding onto the hope of heaven.

Jesus' words are clear and the question is who do to love and serve – God or the world?

If we really love God then it will have an effect on our lives and, working backwards through the passage it will affect the way we see things, vs22&23.

2. a sound eye

The eye and the heart are very interlinked and here Jesus is simply saying that if we are devoted to God we will see things with his eyes and therefore see things right. We see the world for what it is and the Kingdom of God for what it is. If we are "in Christ" then hopefully while I "once was blind I now can see".

With proper sight we see true value of things, yes we see the beauty of the world, the wonder of creation and human life, but we see them as God's creation and given to us by him to be enjoyed.

So how is your sight?

I'm sure Josephine Childs won't mind me mentioning that just over a week ago she had a cataract removed and was saying last Sunday the difference it made to her sight. She could see clearly again. It was a remarkable change. The growth of the cataract was so slow that she didn't really understand how her sight was affected until it was removed. That is how it is for us. In a sense coming to faith is like having the scales removed from our eyes as happened to Paul in Acts 9:18. It is like suddenly seeing the world in full technicolour because we are seeing it as God sees it. However, as we go on our sight gets distorted. The world and its pleasures change the way we see things. We begin to desire things of this world.

Some time back I used to have in the glove compartment of the car a pair of sun glasses. On the rare occasions when I went to use them they were covered in dust and needed cleaning off so I could see properly. Friends that is what we need. We need regularly to come to the word of God, to worship with the people of God so that our sight is restored and we see with the eye of God and the dust of the world the cataracts which slowly distort our vision can be removed.

How is your sight? Is it blurred and distorted or are you clear sighted able to see with the eye of God and therefore to seek the goal of pleasing him?

If we are devoted to God serving him we will see things with his eyes and we will want what he wants, which takes us back in the passage to vs 19-21.

If we are devoted to God and our goal is to please him and be rewarded by him then in seeking that goal, in seeking first the kingdom of God some things we will not do and others we will positively seek.

3. storing treasure

Here Jesus spells those out, “do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth,” but instead “store up for yourselves treasure in heaven.”

For the servant of God the goal will be not to store up treasure on earth but in heaven.

What did Jesus mean?

Well he is not forbidding owning stuff or saving for a rainy day but he is saying that his followers should not be involved in selfish accumulation of possessions nor extravagant and luxurious living nor imagining that what we have will satisfy us. In other words he was saying the goal of the Christian is not materialism, that doesn't fit the person who has been transferred to the kingdom of God.

In Stephen Hawking terms it is like saying to him Stephen don't spend your time trying to become a Spanish interpreter and don't try to be a hotel manager. These are incongruous with your goal and will deflect you from your goal.

The Christian should not be over concerned with the things of this world and indeed if their eyes are right they will see that these things like possessions and beauty and so on are temporal. They will not last but instead will recognise the eternal value of the things of God.

We are not to store up things on earth but in heaven.

What did he mean by that?

We perhaps need to ask what goes to heaven? To which the answer is people. We take our character to heaven and in 1 Tim 6:18&19 we are commanded to be rich in good deeds as a way of laying up treasure. John Stott suggests, “It refers to such things as these: the development of Christian character; the increase of faith hope and love all of which Paul said abide; growth in the knowledge of Christ whom one day we shall face; the active endeavour to introduce others to Christ; and the use of our money for Christian causes, which is the only investment whose dividends are everlasting.”

These are the things we should be positively doing as we seek our goal of pleasing God. What does heaven rejoice over – one sinner who repents. We should live “lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God” (1 Tim 2:3-4)

What Jesus was saying is that if we are devoted to God and seeing things with good eyes then we see the value of living holy lives and do it. We will see that sharing faith is important and do it. We will see that money given to God's work is the best way of using what God gives to us. In short Jesus encourages us to be doing things that move us towards our goal rather than hinder us.

Don't store up treasure on earth.

Test yourself out and think of various things what is your latest “treasure” and how does your view of it your attitude to it need to change so that it is not a treasure it is not deflecting you from your goal.

I have to admit I recently acquired a new possession... a soft top car. I have often thought how nice it would be to have one, and it is. But I know that it can easily become a treasure some thing that assumes an inappropriate place in my life and takes up my time, interest and so on. I have to see it with the eyes of God as something which gives pleasure but which ultimately will rust away and be crushed. It is not to be idolised and overvalued.

What about you as you see things and own things are they taking God's place are they what are your prime concern. Are you guilty of storing up of covetous acquisition of things?

Do store up treasure in heaven.

Test yourself again are you eager to grow in the faith?

We can test this a bit by looking at our priorities.

I know many people who have told me that they are too busy to find time to read the Bible and pray. There are so many things happening that they can't make it to church on Sunday or homegroup in the week. I simply have to ask what is most important – actually I don't have to ask it because what they are doing shows me that God is not important. His kingdom is not important and building treasure in heaven is not important. As I was typing this a little box at the bottom of my computer screen flashed up saying “Phil Bentley is online”. It was a message telling me that my son who is in Los Angeles was on line and I could speak to him through something called skype.

It was a message I naturally responded to. I see it as important. But surely so is being with God and with the people of God isn't it?

We have been brought into the Kingdom of God and Jesus encourages us to be storing up treasure in heaven to make it our goal.

So how important is it to us that we are living holy lives, sharing our faith, building the kingdom of God?

As we live our lives which goal are we pursuing – the earthly goal or the heavenly one and which will last?