

Sermon Text for May 25, 2025

By Guest Minister Rev. Vladimir Tatarnikov

Matthew 6:25-34

Where is Our Treasure?

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters!

First, I want to say hello from our brothers and sisters in Belarus. I'm very thankful to be here today in this beautiful church. I thank God that I can be with you and share the good news of the Gospel!

Even with all the hard times and problems in the world, we see that borders and disagreements in politics can't separate us Christians. Today we are together, connected by God's Word and our strong faith that God, who is all-powerful and kind, will never leave us.

Belarus, the country I flew here from, is between two countries at war: Russia and Ukraine. There are economic problems and it's hard to get many things. The borders with Europe are mostly closed, only two are open. At the borders, there are long lines, and the guards ask many questions about where I'm going, why, and when I'm coming back. They ask where I was, they can check my phone, messages, photos, and videos.

But even with all of this, I'm happy to be here with you today. I want to talk not about the hard things, but about the hope that God gives us. It's a hope we often miss.

While I'm here in the United States, I'm traveling a lot with Pastor Bob, going to many meetings, and enjoying the beautiful nature around us.

I remembered a verse from Genesis, chapter 1, verse 31: "God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good."

God made this world and said it was very good.

It's amazing when we see life waking up, growing strong, and spreading everywhere. It's a power we can't quite explain or understand. It fills us with a quiet, real joy. It's like we give in and accept this incredible mystery.

We've been given a great gift - life. Life inside us and life all around us.

Today, we have phones, washing machines, dishwashers, cars – things to make life easier. But somehow, we still don't have enough time. We don't have time for ourselves, our families, or our friends. We just don't have enough time for the most important thing - living itself.

Only when we finally get away from the busy days and rush of life do we start to really see the bright colors of nature, hear the sweet songs of birds, and feel the gentle breeze in the leaves.

But our worries keep us away from all this. Worries, worries, just worries all around.

What do you worry about most? What treasure do you think is most important in your life? Maybe it's lots of money, good food, a big house, or wanting to buy an apartment or house for each of your children.

Maybe there's nothing wrong with wanting these things. Maybe it's okay to have lots of money and houses. But sometimes something happens that changes everything: war, destruction,

fighting, refugees. Then we realize we might have been chasing the wrong things. We worried about the wrong things. And we ask ourselves again: what is the most important treasure in my life?

We can't ignore this question. We can't just push it aside.

Because when we run blindly after something, we miss the most important thing – the life around us. The simple joys: being with family, friends, grandkids, kids. There in Belarus, we see how fragile this world is. When your brother becomes your enemy.

Sadly, our politics often divide people instead of bringing them together.

Feeling empty and let down, we start searching for God in a rush, trusting only in ourselves. We make detailed plans and maps to find Him, draw pictures of Him in our minds, and try to understand His thoughts and what He wants.

But all our searching on our own is sure to fail. It's not us who find Him, but He who finds us.

God will definitely reach out to us, His beloved children, even from the very bottom of our mistakes and disappointments, and pull us out of the deepest hole.

God finds us in Jesus Christ. He shows Himself not as a scary judge and ruler, but as a kind and humble servant. Instead of a throne, He goes to the cross. Instead of a crown, He wears a crown of thorns. His image on the cross is the image of a Father hugging His child.

"Where is God?" we ask, standing among the broken pieces of the history we ourselves create. "Where is God?" we wonder when He suddenly slips out of our pocket and we can't control Him anymore.

"Where is God?" we cry, walking through the "valley of the shadow of death," deafened by the thousands of voices telling us what we should be. "Where is God?" we ask, looking up to the sky, flying into space, searching the deepest parts.

"Here I am," we hear when we become quiet, when all the voices around us become silent. "Here I am," God says to us when we look with wonder into a child's eyes or feel the comforting warmth of old, fading hands.

"Here I am," it sounds within us when we find joy and happiness in small miracles. "Here I am," we answer Him, standing at the cross.

God has time for us. An endless amount of time. Eternity. Money, fame, our successes at work - all these things are temporary, all these things will pass away.

Don't we long to spend eternity with those we love, and for whom we never seem to have enough time?

Dear brothers and sisters!

God's love has no limits. Not even death can control it. God loves us and hugs His children.

Let us pray:

God! Here we are. What do we want to prove to You? To ourselves? You know everything. But beyond knowing, You are patient and wait for us. You are ready to wait and are waiting for us to come to You. We will come, we are coming. We come with boxes, bags, and suitcases full of our problems.

You give us peace. Calm us and help us take off our masks. Help us understand what You are like, teach us to enjoy Your creation and protect it. Let us be filled with Your Spirit and do good things.

May Your Spirit sing to us an eternal song of love. Teach us this song. Teach us to sing and move along with it. Teach us to love and thank You for everything that You give and send to us. Amen.



Vladimir served as seminary intern with Pastor Bob in Moscow and was ordained in 2009 at the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy to serve in the Lutheran communities of Belarus. Since then he has been the pastor of the Lutheran communities of Minsk, Grodno and Vitebsk. He is the only pastor for the Evangelical-Lutheran congregations in the whole of Belarus.