

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 12- Luke 22-34

237- Seeking God's Kingdom- Part 2

April 27, 2014

Luke 12:22-34

22 And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not worry about *your* life, *as to* what you will eat; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on.

23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

24 Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and *yet* God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!

25 And which of you by worrying can add a *single* hour to his life's span?

26 If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?

27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

28 But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more *will He clothe* you? You men of little faith!

29 And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying.

30 For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things.

31 But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

33 "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.

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

To the Glory of God

We worry a lot. We are afraid a lot. We worry about money and about the future and about our marriages and our children and what we will wear and what we will eat and where we will live. We fear about war and then we fear about the peace *after* the war. We worry during the day and at night and all night long. We are very good at worrying and we have made worry and anxiety the national pastime.

Recently, the American Psychological Association said that the number one ailment of the American people is anxiety, fear, and worry. And these people have determined that we cannot *eliminate* anxiety but that we can hope to manage it with a whole host of pills, shots, and therapy.

Now this entire Chapter of **Luke** (Ch. 12) is filled with words from Jesus about *not* being afraid and about *not* worrying. And in every case- the contentment and the peace and the fearlessness and the courage that our Lord wants us to have is not due to the different human resources that we might have- like money or ability or possessions or intellect or looks or status or connections. In every case in this Chapter- the peace and the courage and the fearlessness that these Words encourage and provide is due to the fact that God will always be- and that God will always be for us- even when human resources are small or when they fail completely. For example, in verse 4 Jesus says,

Luke 12:4

... do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

... so here is an example of how the *basis* for our fearlessness stands when all human resources of help fail and you get killed. Jesus says,

"Even then, don't fear, because God will be there for you in your time of death and He will be there with you after your death and will remain with you forever."

Another example is in verses 11&12 that say:

11 When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say;

12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

So we must guard our hearts that we are not relying on human wisdom or memory or creativity or shrewdness or cleverness but that we are truly relying on God- the Holy Spirit. So when you are afraid because you don't know what to say- Jesus whispers to you,

Trust God, and not yourself.

A third example is in the parable of the rich fool who builds bigger and bigger barns when his income increases. And he thinks he has found the way to peace and security and freedom from fear. So he says in verse 19,

"...Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

So his contentment is in what he thinks he can control- his investments and his possessions. But God says to him in verse 20,

"You fool! This very night your soul is required of you..."

... in other words, if a person finds his income rising and rising, and instead of funneling that increase into kingdom ministry- he buys more and bigger things to increase his ease and security (like this rich man), then Jesus says here that God will call that person a "fool" and take away his soul. A fourth example is found in verses 22-31:

22 ...do not worry about *your* life, *as to* what you will eat; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on.

23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

24 Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and *yet* God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!

25 And which of you by worrying can add a *single* hour to his life's span?

26 If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?

27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

28 But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more *will He clothe* you? You men of little faith!

29 And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying.

30 For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things.

31 But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

Here Jesus calls us to replace "thing-seeking" with "kingdom-seeking", and to do it *without* fear and anxiety for not having things. He calls us to be different and unique and set apart from the rest of the world when He said:

"all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek

This is the essence of true Biblical Holiness- that we live our lives separate from the way that the lost pagan world lives their lives- and we live like we really believe that our home is in Heaven and not here on the earth. So the followers of Jesus replace "thing-seeking" with "kingdom-seeking". And they leave the financial "success" of their ventures with God as they focus on the *spiritual* payoff of our labors; we focus on the *righteousness* payoff and the *mercy* payoff and the *Christ-exalting* payoff of our labors- rather than simply the *money* payoff.

And the basis or the foundation of this fearless, single-minded focus on the Kingdom of God in all that we do is not because we are tough or brave or super spiritual- but because we understand God's Promise to be there for us and we trust that God is not a liar and that He is trustworthy. And so in verse 30 when Jesus says:

"Your Father knows that you need these things.

... we trust that this is true and that God has told the truth. But the fifth example of this is the one I want to focus on a little longer this morning and it is found in verse 32 where Jesus says:

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom."

So once again, Jesus begins this statement with these words:

Do not be afraid...

So fear and the anxiety that fear brings is a huge issue with us. So why does the flock of God struggle with fear? **Luke 12** implies clearly that we do- but that we don't have to. And it points to at least four things that we are prone to fear.

- In verse 4 when Jesus says, "**I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.**" This implies that we fear death—especially death by persecution.
- In verse 11 Jesus says, "**When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.**" Here Jesus implies that we are prone to fear public shame and ridicule. We are prone to be anxious about what others will think of us if we don't have the right thing to say.
- In verse 22 Jesus says, "**...do not worry about *your* life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on.**" Here the Lord implies that we are prone to worry about whether our basic physical needs will be met—food and drink and clothing and shelter.

Now in every one of these cases- Jesus' Purpose in bringing them up is to give reasons why His "friends" (verse 4) and his "disciples" (verse 22)— in other words- His flock—do not need to fear these things. He wants us to be free from fear and worry. And so He repeatedly says:

Do not fear . . .

... and He gives us three reasons why we are *not* to fear that have absolutely nothing to do with some kind of inner strength that we might possess or some courage that we can dig down deep and find or some kind of human bravery that we can develop- which is what the pagan world teaches. Our ability to escape the cruelty of fear and worry and

anxiety rests in whether we trust in the Promise of God- a God Who cannot lie- that He has wondrously made to us:

- **Jesus tells us not to fear that Man might kill us because death is *not* the worst thing that can happen to us- hell is.** And God has promised to keep us out of hell and care for us with very detailed tenderness- to the degree that the very hairs of our head are all numbered.
- **Jesus tells us not to fear about what we are to say because He has promised that the Holy Spirit will teach us what to say in an hour of public testing.** Which is just another way of saying that we will never be left alone.
- **Jesus tells us not to fear what we will eat or what we will wear because our Father knows our daily needs and is far more inclined to give us what we need than He is to feed the ravens and clothe the lilies-** yet look how God takes care of them!

So Jesus does not want us to fear—not to fear death, not to fear public shame, and not to fear poverty and want. And He wants us to see that God is the kind of God Whose people do not need to fear.

But there is another thing- a *fourth* thing that we are prone to fear that goes right to the very Heart of God. And it is perhaps the *deepest* fear of all and the one that may lie behind all the others and maybe even *cause* all the other fears. And that's why Jesus keeps it for last. We see it in verse 32:

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

... another translation says:

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

.. meaning that God doesn't simply give us His Kingdom- but that He genuinely *delights* in giving us His Kingdom- to the degree that it gives God great Pleasure to give unworthy sinners His Own Kingdom!

So exactly what fear is Jesus trying to eliminate here by telling us not to fear? He is trying to eliminate the fear that we have that God is not the kind of God Who really wants to be good to His children. And even though we have no reason to think that about God- that is exactly what all the false "gods" of all the other false religions act like. Their "gods" are hard and cruel and mean and uncaring and unloving. And because we are fallen and because we live in a pagan world- our own hearts become hard at times and we treat other people harshly and cruelly- and so we naturally think that God is like us and that God will treat us like we treat other people. But the one true living God of the Bible- the Father of Jesus Christ- never has and never will!

So this is a fear that rises up in the hearts of those of us who are prone to feel that God does not want to be gracious- that He really does not want to be generous and helpful to us. And because we are like that at times- we are prone to think of God as One Who is basically irked with us and ill-disposed and angry.

Sometimes even if we believe in our heads that God is good to us- we may feel in our hearts that His Goodness is somehow *forced* or *constrained* or *obligated*- sort of like a judge who has been maneuvered by a clever attorney into a corner on some legal technicality and he has to dismiss the charges of the prisoner that he really would rather send to jail.

So even though Jesus give us a thousand reasons why we should always look at Him as the Kind and Tender God that He really is- even to the point of not entering Jerusalem on a great stallion- but on a lowly donkey- meek and humble- many still today look upon this lowly Servant-King and feel that this is just a thin veneer, and that really beneath this lowly exterior there is a terrible Power and Authority which is just waiting to burst out against us if we slip up in some way. I truly believe that many think that it is not really the deepest pleasure of this King's Heart to serve His people and meet their needs- but simply to find fault with them so He can damn them.

This is a view of God as always being angry toward even those He has saved that is *not* found in the Scriptures and yet is prevalent in the American Church. These people believe that Jesus rode that donkey of lowliness into Jerusalem as a kind of camouflage and once He gains a foothold on the Throne- He is going to throw off those humble rags and pull out His sword, and storm forth to do what He really loves to do-

which is judge and destroy. And these people allow that some people will be saved- the few who somehow could really please God- but that is *not* really God's Heart's Desire. They see God as being basically angry— *always* angry. And therefore- the best that we can do is stay out of His way and maybe- if we keep the rules well enough- we could sneak by Him when He is in one of His temporary good moods. That is a false picture of God, dear friends.

And this is exactly the picture of God that the Roman "church" puts forth in their Doctrine about Mary. The Romans paint God as being way too fierce to want to listen to the cry of His people and even Jesus is sometimes either too busy or too angry for us to pray to. And so these people have developed an entire system that is false and unbiblical that paints Mary as the go- between- between us and Jesus. So they teach that we go to Mary and pray to her and she goes to Jesus- after all- who can turn down their mother- and then Jesus goes to the Father. But that is not what the Bible teaches at all, dear friends.

This Passage shows us Jesus going to great lengths to help us *not* feel that way about God. And I want to simply spend the time we have meditating on one verse, namely, [Luke 12:32](#), because every little piece of this verse is intended to help take away the fear that Jesus knows we struggle with- the fear that God begrudges His benefits; that He is constrained and out of character when He does nice things- that God is naturally angry and loves to vent His Anger.

Luke 12:32 is a verse about the Nature of God. It's a verse about what kind of Heart God has. It's a verse about what makes God glad- what He *delights* in doing- what He truly *enjoys* doing- and not merely about what God *will* do or what He *has* to do, but what He *delights* to do- what He *loves* to do and what the Almighty takes pleasure in doing.

Let's begin with the word, "gladly". It is a verb in the Greek meaning: *to be a pleasure or to be pleased by*. You could translate it: "it pleased God," or, "God's Good Pleasure". And one of the best places to see the meaning of this word is over in **Philippians** where the noun form of this very same word is put over against its opposite. Please turn with me to **Philippians 1:15**:

Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will;

.

Now the Apostle Paul wrote this Epistle while he was a prisoner in Rome. And during Paul's incarceration- there are professing Christians who do not like Paul and there are Christians who do. And both of these people begin to preach the Gospel while Paul is in prison. But their motives are very different. And in **Philippians 1:15** Paul says,

Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will;

Now the phrase "**good will**" could read, "good pleasure" or that they are preaching the Gospel- "gladly". So what is Paul saying here? He is saying: both groups are preaching the Gospel- but only one group is being driven to preach- not because they love Paul or because they love the preaching of the Gospel- but these people are preaching for only one reason- they hope to increase Paul's pain and suffering through their preaching.

But the other group is preaching because they really love to preach the Gospel and because they love Paul. And so they are doing what they really love to do. So it is out of "good will." Or in other words- they are preaching out of gladness. It is their "good pleasure" to preach. Their heart is not divided. Preaching is not a cloak for envy or rivalry. It is a real genuine delight.

And this is exactly what Jesus meant in **Luke 12:32** when He said:

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

... in other words, God is not acting in this generous way in order to cloak and hide some malicious motive. The word "gladly" or the phrase, "good pleasure" utterly rules that out. God is not saying to Himself, *"I will have to be generous for a while even though I don't want to be, because what I really want to do is bring judgment on sinners."* No, the Lord's meaning is inescapable here:

God is acting here in absolute freedom.

... God is not under any duress or any obligation or any constraint to do something that He really doesn't want to do. So at this very point- when God gives His little flock the Kingdom- God is acting out His deepest

Delight. This is what the word means: God's Joy, His Desire, His Want and Wish and Hope and Pleasure and Gladness and Delight is to give the Kingdom to His little flock.

"Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's *good pleasure*—not His Duty, not His Necessity, not His Obligation- but it is God's Pleasure- to give you the Kingdom." That is the kind of God He is.

So the basis of our fearlessness is not our own human resources, but God's being there for us. Don't fear even though you are only sheep (in the midst of wolves, 10:3) and even though you are little and not great. And remember the basis of your fearlessness is:

We have a Father Who owns and runs the world and He really loves giving the Kingdom to His sheep-like children.

"It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Now here's a question: *What is the threat in verse 32 that makes Jesus say, "Fear not, little flock?"* What are they being tempted to fear in this context? And please don't jump out of these verses to answer the question.

You can find the answer in either direction: going backward a few verses or going forward a few verses. If you go backward- the thing they are in danger of fearing is the Divine Call for them to no longer be like the nations of the world (v. 30) who seek after more things and who build bigger barns.

So if we actually focus on the Kingdom and stop pursuing things and ease and security, will we really be happy? Will we really survive? To this Jesus says, "**Fear not, little flock.**" Don't be afraid to stop seeking things.

Or if you go forward in the text (to v. 33), the thing they are in danger of fearing is giving things away. Look at verse 33:

Luke 12:33

Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.

So if you go backward to verse 30 the fear is not seeking things the way the nations do, and if you go forward to verse 33 the fear is giving things away.

And "seeking the kingdom" (v. 31) includes both of those things:

- We stop doing some things
- We start doing other things

We stop focusing our quest on "things" and we start selling what we don't need and turning our stockpiled resources into ministries of kingdom-bringing love. And in doing this- Jesus says we provide true treasure for ourselves in Heaven. Jesus once said,

Matthew 13:44

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

... and the point of that Parable is that the Kingdom of God is a Treasure more valuable than anything you own on this earth.

But here in verse 33- Jesus says that when we sell our possessions and give them as alms- as acts of love- we are providing "purses for ourselves that do not grow old and a treasure in the heavens that does not fail." That Treasure is the Kingdom of God.

And the sequence of thought is:

Don't seek to have things the way the nations do; seek to have the kingdom.

How?

Sell things and thus provide yourself the Treasure, the Kingdom, in Heaven.

So we see two things here:

- Seek things like the nations and lose the Kingdom.

- Sell things and give for the nations, and you will inherit the Kingdom.

So does this mean that we buy the Kingdom of God? No. Verse 32 is plain:

... your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

... the Kingdom of God is a gift- not a purchase; it's given- not earned. And it is given *gladly*. But it is a gift to those who want it more than they want other things. It's a gift to those who seek it more than they seek other things. It's a gift to those who fear missing it more than they fear not having earthly security. It's a gift to those who trust the King more than the dollar.

We don't buy the Kingdom when we scale down our material lives and sell things so we can give. We show that we value the Kingdom more than things. And we can take our lesson here from a sinful tax collector named, Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus illustrates what this means in **Luke 19**. This man was a very wealthy and evil tax collector. And when Jesus visited his home- his heart was changed and he stood up and said,

Luke 19:8

... Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.

Now what was Jesus' response to this man? Did Jesus say to him, "*No, Zacchaeus, all I want you to do is believe*"? No. Look at our Lord's response in **Luke 19:9&10:**

9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.

10 "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Did Jesus mean that Zacchaeus had bought his Salvation? Not at all. Jesus meant that Salvation had changed Zacchaeus- and the proof was his radically different attitude toward money.

How you handle your possessions shows where your heart is. And where your heart is determines whether you are saved or not. And

whether you are saved or not determines whether you will inherit the Kingdom—the Treasure in Heaven that does not grow old.

Selling your possessions and giving rather than accumulating more and more things for yourself is the pathway to the Kingdom- not your Payment *for* the Kingdom or even your reward *of* the Kingdom. It is the proof that you love the Kingdom more than possessions- that you trust the King more than money.

Now Jesus knows full well that this message strikes fear into the hearts of His disciples. When I say these things- there is fear in many of you that God's Will for you might be a lifestyle very different than the one you are striving for or living in. Jesus knows that this is a fearful message.

And so he says,

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

So the pathway to the Kingdom is the path of falling in love with King Jesus, trusting our heavenly Father, falling *out* of love with things, and taking on a wartime lifestyle that maximizes all income for the Cause of the Kingdom. And since this is the pathway that leads to the Kingdom and since Jesus says our Father will gladly give us the Kingdom- then we can be assured of God's Help to stay on this path.

And that's what Jesus meant in dealing with the rich young ruler in Chapter 18. He told him,

Luke 18:22

... sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

... but he wouldn't do it. And Jesus said,

Luke 18:24

... How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!

... and He compared it to a camel going through the eye of a needle.

And this blew the mind of the disciples and they cried out, "**Then who can be saved?**" Jesus responded,

Luke 18:27

The things that are impossible with people are possible with God."

... in other words: God does the impossible; God alone gets people into the Kingdom; God alone gives the Kingdom. People may be in terrible bondage to things and to the security and the pleasures and the prestige of their possessions that they can't "sell their possessions and give alms." They can't trust God more than the security of things. They can't delight in God more than the pleasures of things. They can't take on a wartime lifestyle that puts a cap on their spending for things and funnels all surplus money into the Kingdom Causes of Compassion and Righteousness and Truth.

But what they cannot do in their own power- Jesus says, God *can* do. What is impossible with men is possible with God. And that's what conversion is: the Sovereign Work of God changing the heart and filling it with the wealth of the Glory of Christ and freeing it from slavery to the vain glory of things.

John 3:3

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Matthew 18:3

Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Being born again and being converted and becoming like a child is a miraculous gift of God. Without it- no one *gets* on the path that leads to the Kingdom and no one *stays* on the path and gets to the Kingdom. The Kingdom is a gracious gift of God. It is not achieved in our strength.

And because it is a gift- there is a broad path that leads away from it. The way that leads into the Kingdom is narrow, and it is the way of selling possessions and giving alms, of putting a cap on the ever-expanding capacity to buy and buy and buy- building barn after barn. The way that leads to life- to the kingdom- leads through a wartime lifestyle that aims not at the security and ease and prestige of accumulation- but at saving the lost and sending missionaries and feeding the hungry and healing the sick and teaching the simple and

dignifying the poor with work and care. And when that lifestyle happens in a person's life- it is a miraculous gift of God.

On October 24, 1795- William Carey received a packet of letters in India. One of the letters criticized Carey for "engaging in affairs of trade" instead of devoting full time to his missionary work. Carey was hurt and angered by the accusation. If he had not worked, he and his family would have starved since the support from England was so slow and small and sporadic in arriving.

He wrote back these words,

“It is a constant maxim with me that, if my conduct will not vindicate itself, it is not worth vindicating . . . I only say that, after my family's obtaining a bare allowance, my whole income, and some months, much more, goes for the purposes of the gospel, in supporting persons to assist in the translation of the Bible, write copies, teach school, and the like . . . I mention . . . [this] to show that the love of money has not prompted me to pursue the plan that I have engaged in. I am indeed poor, and shall always be so till the Bible is published in Bengali and Hindosthani, and the people want no further instruction.” (Mary Drewery, *William Carey: A Biography*, p. 91)

And I believe that's the Call of Jesus to all His disciples.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.