

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

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**
Chapter 12- Luke 12:22-34
236- Seeking God's Kingdom- Part 1

April 6, 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

Now I am probably going about this backward- I do that a lot- but as I was studying this Passage- verses 32-34 jumped out at me, and so I want to tackle them first and then work my way back up. So let's look at those three verses again:

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.

Now the first thing that we need to understand is that the very internal essence of "Spirit and Truth Worship" (which is the only kind of worship that Jesus said in **John 4** that the Father seeks after) is the *treasuring* of God as being infinitely valuable above everything else. So us *delighting* in God, or us *enjoying* God, or us *relishing* God, or us *hungering and thirsting* after God are the *internal* realities that facilitate the *outward* manifestations of our worship.

In other words- all of the outer forms of worship like Bible Study, Prayer, Attending Church, Being Obedient to Scripture- all of these things- are simply the visible and tangible manifestations that show how much we really treasure God. And because that is true- therefore- all of life is meant to be worship- because God said whether you eat or drink or *whatever you do* (which is all of life) - do it all to show how valuable the Glory of God is to you (**1Corinthians 10:31**).

Now money and possessions are a big part of life, and, therefore, God intends for money and possessions to be a big part of worship- since all of life is to be worship. So the way you worship with your money and with your possessions is to get them and use them and lose them in a way that shows how much you treasure God – and not the money itself and not the possessions themselves. And that's what Jesus is talking about here. And so this Passage is really a text about true and genuine worship.

Now there is a place for corporate worship - what we do here together on Sunday morning. And the same definitions hold here as well as everywhere else:

The essence of Worship here is our internal treasuring of God as being infinitely Valuable.

... and the *outward* forms of our worship are simply the physical and tangible acts that express that inner treasuring of God. Now one of those outward acts of corporate worship here at Covenant is what we call "the offering" - a point near the middle of our corporate worship where we worship with our money- by putting it out of our hands and out of our banks and into the Mission and Ministry of Jesus Christ.

And this particular act of worship during our corporate worship service is just one small part of the *larger* pattern of worship with our money that we do every day- in the way we earn our money and the way in which we spend it and save it and give it away.

And what Jesus is saying here has to do with the larger pattern of how we worship with our money on a day by day basis and not simply here on Sunday Mornings- but by implication- it does relate to what we do with our money in corporate worship as well. So let's look at some of the main points in this text, and let it apply to our lives, in general, and to our corporate giving, in particular. Please read verses 32 again with me:

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

Now the first point of this verse is that God commands us not to fear when it comes to money and possessions. Jesus says here, "*Don't worry; don't be afraid.*" But there is another way to make this point that goes even deeper. The *reason* God wants us to *not* be afraid concerning money and stuff is not so that we can become stoics or paupers or learn to live off the labor of somebody else- but so that by not fearing and by not worrying about money and possessions- that would magnify five great things about Him. And so not being afraid would echo how much we treasure these five things about God. In other words,

not being afraid would become a beautiful inner act of worship. So let's look at these five things:

1. Not being afraid shows that we treasure God as our Shepherd. Jesus said in the first part of verses 32:

Do not be afraid, little flock...

... so we are Jesus' flock and that means that He is our Shepherd. And if Jesus is our Shepherd- then **Psalm 23** applies where it says:

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...

... which means I shall not lack anything that I really need, and I will not lust after things that God says "No" to. So not fearing when it comes to money and possessions magnifies the preciousness of our Shepherd.

2. Not being afraid shows that we treasure God as our Father.

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

We are not only God's little flock- but we are also His dear children, and God Himself is our Father. And the significance of having God Almighty as your Father is abundantly clear from **Luke 12:30**,

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

... in other words- your Father really cares and really knows what you need and He has promised to work for you to make sure that you have what you need. Now as we rejoice in that Truth we must guard our hearts that we do not dictate to God what we *think* we need instead of humbly learning what God says we need.

3. Not being afraid shows that we treasure God as King.

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

Jesus can give us the "Kingdom" precisely because Jesus is the King of that Kingdom. And this adds a tremendous element of power to the One Who provides that Kingdom for us.

The word "Shepherd" denotes protection and provision. "Father" speaks of love and tenderness and authority and provision and guidance. And "King" connotes power and sovereignty and wealth. So Jesus is teaching here that if we will trust God as Shepherd and Father and King, and not be afraid about money and things- then we will show how real and precious God is to us in all these ways. And God will be worshipped.

4. Not being afraid shows how free and generous God is.

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

... notice here that the Father *gives* us the Kingdom. He doesn't "sell" the Kingdom or "rent" the Kingdom or "lease" the Kingdom. Also God doesn't simply "lend" us the Kingdom- but Jesus says here that God "gives" it. The one true living God is infinitely wealthy and does not need our payments. Anything we would try to give Him would already be His anyway. The Apostle Paul asked the Corinthian believers a question about this in **1Corinthians 4:7b**

... What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

So God is generous and free with His Bounty. And this is what we magnify about Him when we are not afraid but trust Him with our needs.

5. Not being afraid shows that we treasure God as being infinitely Happy.

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

Now I have been criticized for saying this but I genuinely believe that the Bible teaches that God is the happiest Being in the Universe. And the flip side of that belief is that serving and obeying and devoting yourself to God guarantees that you will be happier than those who do not. And ultimately I also believe that because that is true- that God is not glorified as much as He could be unless and until we delight ourselves in knowing and loving and obeying Him rather than simply going through the motions out of obligation. And evidently God is glorified when we live our lives in such a way that shows that we believe that because Jesus says here that it is the Father's "good pleasure" to give us the Kingdom. In other words- the Father has chosen to *gladly* give us the Kingdom. Now God could have simply given us the Kingdom- and that would have been wonderful. But Jesus says here that it *pleased* God to give us the Kingdom; that God actually took great delight in giving us the Kingdom or that God chose to not simply give us the Kingdom- which would have been amazing in itself- but that He chose to give us the Kingdom "gladly".

So God *wants* to do this. It makes Him glad to do this. Not all of us had fathers like this - who literally enjoyed giving us things- who were made happy by *giving* instead of through *getting*. But we have such a Father and a Shepherd and a King in Heaven- Who genuinely delights in giving His children and His flock and His bond-slaves His Kingdom! So trust God as your Father through the reconciling Work of Jesus Christ and you will find Him to be a Father Who loves to give to you *joyfully*.

Okay- so the first point from this Passage is that we should treasure God as our Shepherd and Father and King- Who is generous and happy to give us the Kingdom of God, or in other words- to give us Heaven and to give us eternal life and joy and everything we need to get there. And if we treasure God in this way- if we trust Him- we will be fearless and God will be worshipped. And this is the foundation of all the rest of this Passage. And everything else is possible because of this amazing and breathtaking Promise. And the second point is this:

Trusting God in this way carries a strong impulse toward simplicity rather than toward more accumulation.

... trusting God to be a Father and Shepherd and King Who genuinely delights in giving unworthy sinners His Own Kingdom runs counterintuitive against everything about human nature.

First of all- it is in the essence of how God gives. And the best way to understand that the way in which God gives is infinitely superior to the way in which we give- is by looking at the contrast.

We give away things that we do not need or things that we do not want or cannot use. A shirt that has no buttons, a chair that only has three legs, an article of clothing that is too small or doesn't suite our taste anymore. We give what we do not want or cannot use or don't need. In other words- we give away our junk. We give what we place little or no value on. We give what is meaningless to us or what we do not treasure.

And as far as giving to God- most of us give what we think we can "afford". We budget our needs and our wants, and then, if and when something is left over- we will pray about giving that to God.

But contrast that with the way that God gives. God doesn't give junk or leftovers or what remains or what He does not value. For example- the Bible says in **John 3:16** that God gave Jesus. So God gave the very best that Heaven had. God gave to unworthy sinners what He valued the most, what He infinitely treasured, what He delighted in and wanted more than anything else. And Jesus says here that God gave us the Kingdom- gladly. It pleased God to give to us what He treasured the most. It brought happiness to God to give to us what He placed His highest value on! Isn't that amazing! And that is the perspective that God has on giving- which is why it is easy for Jesus to say to us in verse 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.

If you read the Bible with any degree of honesty- you will notice that Jesus never hesitated to make huge demands from those who followed Him. For example- Jesus didn't require Peter to simply believe

in Him as Peter was allowed to continue to live his life the way he saw fit, but Jesus demanded that Peter completely abandon his livelihood- and to *physically* follow Jesus in very dangerous places. And here in this passage- Jesus makes some pretty startling demands that seem to many of us to be very dangerous. Like the words,

Sell your possessions...

So just who was Jesus talking to? Verse 22 gives us the answer:

And He said to His disciples...

... now the disciples were by and large not wealthy people. They didn't have a lot of possessions. But still Jesus says to them,

Sell your possessions...

Now notice that Jesus doesn't tell them *how many* possessions to sell. But in contrast- Jesus told the rich young ruler in **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.

Now I have heard a lot of sermons on this and most of them come to the conclusion that God doesn't require any of us to sell everything that we have to enter into Heaven. And if you know anything at all about me- I believe and teach stronger than most people that we are justified by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone and not by any human works at all. Yet even though that is true- Jesus did, in fact, make that demand on that man on that day.

So what we have to say is that nobody before or since has believed in Justification by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone more than Jesus did, and yet Jesus *required* this man to sell *everything* he had and give it to the poor. And notice that Jesus didn't even tell him to give it the Ministry- or to Missionaries- but to the poor!

And most people would say that it was only because this man was very wealthy that Jesus said that. And that is probably true- but my

response is that the poorest one among us here today has inherent wealth than this ruler had- who never knew a single day or air conditioning or traveling 70 miles an hour in a car or flying through the air in a jet or of learning information at the click of a button on the internet.

So I wouldn't be so fast to discount a requirement on our lives like this because in that case- Jesus' *requirement* for this man to have treasure in Heaven was for him to give away everything that he had and give it to the poor. So don't pass this by so quickly. I would say that *whatever* demand Jesus would make on our lives that would guarantee a sinful man to enter into Heaven and be His disciple would be a small price to pay.

Now when Zaccheus met Jesus in **Luke 19:8** he told Him,

... 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.

... so Zaccheus gave away 50% of his possessions. And after he said that- Jesus told him in the very next verse:

Luke 19:9b

... Today salvation has come to this house...

Now am I preaching that we can buy a ticket into Heaven by giving away money? Absolutely not. You can't bribe God into forgiving you of your sins because you give a lot of money. But what I *am* saying and what Jesus is saying is that how you act toward money and possessions is a reflection of how you treasure God. For example- in **The Acts 4:37** it says,

[Barnabas] who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

...so this man sold a tract of land and gave it. Did that mean that he purchased his Salvation by doing this? No. But does it reflect his treasure in God? Probably- unless he did it just for show- and then it will bring damnation to him.

So the Bible doesn't tell us how many possessions we are to sell and give away. But, why all this talk about people selling possessions at

all? Why? Because "NT Giving"- the difference that we saw last week between what the New Covenant brought in is infinitely better than "OT Tithing", which was an imposed tax on the people of God. And because that is true- using your money to show your love for those without the necessities of life and those without the Gospel (the necessity of eternal life) - is so important and so worthwhile and so important- that if you don't have any liquid assets to give- you should sell something so you can give. That is exactly what this says.

But now think what this means in context. These disciples are not cash-poor rich people- whose money is all tied up in stocks and bonds and real estate. Most people like that do, in fact, usually have fairly deep savings. But Jesus didn't say, "*Take some of your savings and give alms.*" He told these people- "**Sell something, and give alms.**" So why did Jesus say that?

The simplest assumption is that these folks lived close enough to the edge that they did not have any cash to give and had to actually sell something so they could give. So did Jesus want James and John and Peter and Andrew to sell their fishing boats? Maybe. But what it does mean is that Jesus wanted His people to move toward more simplification and not toward more accumulation.

So what's the point? The point is that there is a strong and powerful "impulse" in the Christian life- empowered and enabled by the Holy Spirit- toward *simplicity* rather than toward *accumulation*. And this Holy Spirit "impulse" comes from treasuring God as being our Shepherd and our Father and our King *more* than we treasure all our money and possessions. And this "impulse" is a strong impulse for two reasons:

1. Jesus said, "**How hard it is for the rich** (literally: those who have things) **to enter the kingdom of God!**" (Luke 18:24). And in Luke 8:14 Jesus said that riches have the power and the ability to actually "**choke**" the Word of God to the point where the Word of God has little or no effect on us. But part of being born again is that we want to enter the Kingdom vastly more than we want to accumulate things. And we don't want the Word of God to be choked at all in our lives. So there is a strong impulse to simplify rather than to accumulate.

2. **We want the Preciousness of God to be manifest to the world.** And Jesus tells us here that selling things and giving alms is one way to show that God is real and precious as Shepherd and Father and King. So the second point is that trusting God as Shepherd, Father, and King carries a strong impulse toward simplicity rather than toward accumulation. And this brings worship out from the inner, hidden place of the heart into more visible actions for the Glory of God.

So from this we can see that the very purpose of money is to *maximize* our Treasure in Heaven and not on this earth- which is exactly the opposite from what the lost pagan world teaches about money. Now look at **Luke 12:33** again:

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 what is the connection between selling possessions here so you can meet the needs of others (the first part of the verse), and accumulating treasure in heaven for yourself (at the end of the verse)?

The connection seems to be: *the way* in which you make money belts which don't get holes and *the way* in which you gather treasures in heaven that never fail is: by selling your possessions to meet the needs of others. In other words, *simplifying* for the sake of love on this earth *maximizes* your joy in Heaven.

Now please don't miss this utterly radical point. It's the way Jesus thinks and talks all the time. Being heavenly-minded makes a radical and loving difference in this world. The people who are the most powerfully persuaded that what matters is treasure in Heaven, not big accumulations of money here, are the people who will constantly dream of ways to simplify and serve, simplify and serve, simplify and serve. They will give and give and give. And, of course, they will work and work and work, as Paul says in **Ephesians 4:28**,

... so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need.

So the connection with true worship is this: Jesus commands us to accumulate treasure in Heaven- that is- to maximize our joy in God. And He says that the way we are to do this is to sell and simplify for the sake of others. So He motivates simplicity and service by our desire to maximize our joy in God. Which means that all of our use of money becomes a manifestation of how much we delight in God *above* money and things. And I suggest to you that that is true worship.

Now the last point this morning from the text is this:

Your heart moves toward what you cherish,
and God wants you to move toward Him.

Luke 12:14

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

Now this verse is given as the reason *why* we should pursue treasure in Heaven that does not fail:

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

So if your treasure is in heaven where God is- then that is where your heart will be-and your actions on earth in regard to money and possessions will reflect that.

Now what is this seemingly simple verse really saying? The word "**treasure**" I take to mean "*the object cherished.*" And the word "**heart**" I take to mean "*the organ that cherishes.*" So now read this verse with that in mind:

Where the object that you cherish is- there will be the organ that cherishes.

So the "object" that we are to cherish is not Heaven- it is not the streets of Gold or the pearly gates or even our family members and friends who have gone to Heaven before us. That is *not* the object that we are to cherish. The Object that we are cherish is God- Who is in Heaven. So if the object that we are to cherish is God- then your heart will be with God in Heaven- and, therefore, you will be with God. But if the object that you cherish is money and things on the earth- then your

heart will be on the earth and you will be on the earth and cut off from God.

And this is what Jesus meant in **Luke 16:13** when He said,

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

To "serve" money is to "cherish" and "value" and "love" and be "devoted" to money and pursue all the benefits that money can give. The Bible teaches that our hearts are drawn to money. But to "serve" God means to "cherish" and "value" and "love" and be "devoted" to God and to pursue all the benefits that God can give. So, the one is in conflict with the other.

And this is so true that Jesus said that they are mutually *exclusive* to one another so that we must consciously choose to serve one *over* the other; we must consciously choose to love one *over* the other; we must consciously choose to be devoted to one *over* the other precisely because we cannot love and serve both at the same time. And every decision that we make every day is to make that conscious choice of one over the other.

And this is true no matter how many false teachers on the Hay, Wood, and Stubble Television network teach otherwise, and this is true no matter how popular the health, wealth, and prosperity doctrine may be. The Incarnate God said it was not possible to love and serve and be devoted to money at the same time that we love and serve and are devoted to God.

And to consciously choose to love and serve and be devoted to God precisely because we value God over money and possessions is worship- it is our heart cherishing God and seeking Him as being the supreme Treasure above all earthly treasures.

And I close by simply relating these four points to the corporate act of worship that we call "the offering." This moment and this act in our service will be worship for you- and God will be glorified and you will receive the fullness of joy- regardless of the amount - from the widow's mite to the millionaire's thousands - if when you give- you are truthfully saying from the heart:

- 1) By giving- I hereby trust You, God, as my happy, generous Shepherd, Father, and King, so that I will not be afraid when I have less money for myself while supplying the needs of others;
- 2) By giving- I hereby resist the incredible pressure in our culture to accumulate more and more and cast my lot with the Holy Spirit impulse to simple living for the sake of others;
- 3) By giving- I hereby lay up treasure in Heaven and not on earth so that my joy in God will be maximized forever;
- 4) By giving- I declare that since my Treasure is God- Who is in Heaven- my heart goes after God.

Amen. Let's pray.