



Unit .23

Session .04

Jesus Teaches About Treasure

Scripture



Luke 12:15-28,31-34

15 He then told them, “Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions.” **16** Then he told them a parable: “A rich man’s land was very productive. **17** He thought to himself, ‘What should I do, since I don’t have anywhere to store my crops? **18** I will do this,’ he said. ‘I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones and store all my grain and my goods there. **19** Then I’ll say to myself, “You have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.” **20** “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared—whose will they be?’ **21** “That’s how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” **22** Then he said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, don’t worry about your life, what you will eat; or about the body, what you will wear. **23** For life is more than food and the body more than clothing. **24** Consider the ravens: They don’t

sow or reap; they don’t have a storeroom or a barn; yet God feeds them. Aren’t you worth much more than the birds? **25** Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying? **26** If then you’re not able to do even a little thing, why worry about the rest? **27** “Consider how the wildflowers grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. **28** If that’s how God clothes the grass, which is in the field today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow, how much more will he do for you—you of little faith? ... **31** “But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you. **32** Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom. **33** Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make money-bags for yourselves that won’t grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. **34** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Intro Options



Main Point:
Jesus teaches on
what it means to
live generously.

Option 1

We all know the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, the main character in *A Christmas Carol*. The miserable old man can't even be moved to be generous on Christmas Day, a time of year when even the greediest penny-pinchers have been known to share a bit more than usual. On Christmas Eve, Scrooge is visited by three ghosts: The Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. These three ghosts uncover the past root of Scrooge's greed, the far-reaching present results of that greed, and the dire future consequences of his greed.

- **If you've read the story or seen the movie, which of the three ghosts do you like the most? Which one is scarier than the others?**

Jesus did not lull His disciples to sleep and send them cautionary dreams. Instead, He told them outright to examine their ideas about treasure. He encouraged them not to base their ideas of treasure on temporal comforts, but to remember that their treasure in Him is far more precious than anything that they own on earth. Of course, when it comes to understanding treasure, there is so much more at stake than our earthly comfort. The final rest for our eternal souls depends wholly upon God sending His treasured Son to die on the cross so that we might turn from our idols of silver and gold and cling to Him.

Option 2

Put your students into small groups to do skits. Have the groups count off by 2s. Be sure they remember whether they are a 1 or a 2.

Each group will now put on two skits. Here's the difference between the 1s and the 2s: the 1s will make their skits about how an abundance of money can help and hinder the kingdom of God; the 2s will make their skits about how a dearth of money can help and hinder the kingdom of God. Try to be as specific and real-to-life as possible in your skits.

Give them time to prepare and then to show their skits. Debrief what they showed. Do they think it's harder to pursue the kingdom with an abundance of money or with little money? Explain that in today's lesson, Jesus will teach on the proper use of money, especially in advancing the kingdom of God.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 12:15-21.



“What’s he worth?” Most of us understand the point of the question; it concerns a person’s monetary status. But how many of us stop to think about what the question implies? Before Jesus launches into a parable about a rich man, He tells his listeners not to measure their worth by the abundance of their possessions. In other words, our worth is not determined by what we do or what we have. We cannot work our way into heaven. We cannot earn the favor that is required to become sons and daughters of the Most High. The God who owns everything is not impressed by our temporal wealth and circumstance. Our earnings, either spiritual or physical, will never amount to the priceless love that God freely gave us through His Son.

- **Why do you think Jesus would take the time to warn His listeners about loving wealth and possessions? What are the dangers of doing so?**

Jesus tells the story of a rich man who has a lot in common with modern-day Americans: bigger is better. He stockpiles his goods and tells himself that he’ll never have to work again; his only job will be to eat, drink, and be merry. And then God tells him that he’s going to die. It’s a morbid story, but it hits on a truth that we all know: you can’t take it with you. We could be buried along with every single treasure we own, and we still wouldn’t be able to cart those treasures up to heaven. They would sit there with no place to go as our souls left this earth the same way they entered it—with nothing in tow. 

Of course, there isn’t anything necessarily wrong with nice things. The woman who prepared Jesus for burial by anointing His feet with an expensive oil (Matt 26:7) wasn’t rebuked for doing so. In fact, she was commended for her faith instead. So, nice things become an issue when we hoard them for ourselves and our glory instead of using them to advance God’s glory and His kingdom. In the hands of the God who blessed us with them, our treasures can be mighty tools for His kingdom. When used for our own selfish gain, they can be an affront to the God we are called to serve. 

- **How can we be sure that we are using our treasures for God’s glory and not our own?**

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 64, DDG)

Stewardship

God’s intention for mankind is that we serve Him as faithful stewards of His creation (Gen. 1:28; 1 Cor. 4:1-2). We are to invest the time, talents, and material possessions God has given us for His kingdom work (Matt. 25:14-29), knowing that God is the true owner of all we have, and that our true treasure is found not on earth but in heaven (Matt. 6:19,21; Luke 12:16-21). Motivated by God’s generosity to us made most clear in the gospel, we are to give God the best of what we have (Prov. 3:9), regularly (1 Cor. 16:2), sacrificially (Matt. 12:41-44), humbly (Matt. 6:1-4), and cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:6-7), praying that God may be glorified in our stewardship of His provisions.

COMMENTARY

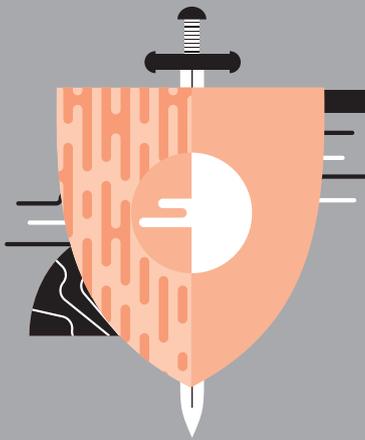
Main Point:
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Luke 12

15-21. “Fool! Ironically, the man who took such great care to prepare for his own (earthly) needs turns out to be a fool. Instead of fulfilling his moral responsibility to care for the needs of others, he is rebuked for laying up treasure for himself and for not being rich toward God. Though this verse does not prohibit wealth, Jesus clearly warns his hearers concerning the dangerous eternal implications of wealth, with its seductive tendency towards complacency, self-sufficiency, and covetousness. Though the rich fool anticipates years of ease—a time to eat, drink, and be merry—instead an eternal destiny apart from God awaits him. As Jesus’ condemning words confirm, ‘This night your soul is required of you.’”¹

“Our Creator instituted the principle of stewardship in creation when He gave humanity the task of exercising dominion over the earth He created (Gen. 1:27–28). Ever since then, all people have been tasked with managing their natural resources for the purpose of advancing God’s kingdom. This is a principle that is easy to forget because we like to think of our paychecks, properties, investments, energy, and time as our own. Yet ‘the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof’ (Ps. 24:1), and everything to which we attach our name and regard as our ‘own’ belongs ultimately to the Almighty. Our possessions are just temporarily ‘on loan,’ as it were, from God.”²

In Defense *(p. 66, DDG)*



“But one of the greatest things about Jesus is that he does not want his people to be anxious. The main point of today’s text is that God does not secure his kingship by cultivating anxiety. On the contrary, the aim of God’s kingship is to free us from anxiety. God doesn’t need to keep us anxious in order to establish his power and superiority. Instead, he exalts his power and superiority by working to take away our anxiety.

If you are born again, if you have turned away from sin and are following Jesus as Lord in the obedience of faith, his will for you this morning is that you not be anxious about anything, but that you enjoy deep serenity and peace and security. Jesus spoke these words in Matthew 6:24–34 precisely for you — to help you overcome whatever is making you anxious this morning.”³

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 12:22-28.



Jesus' words in this passage echo His teachings on prayer: we do not have to worry that God is going to forget us; He already cares for us. Worry is an easy sin for us to fall into. In a time where our society is racked with stress, depression, and anxiety, worry can easily creep in. It enters into our lives without being invited. When we worry about the things of this earth, we show that our focus isn't on the eternal goodness and provision of God over our lives, but is instead on our unknown surrounding circumstances.

- **What do you typically worry about? What are the circumstances that usually accompany your anxiety and worry?**

Jesus points out that the lilies of the field don't even have the capacity for work or worry, and yet they are completely taken care of. In fact, even Solomon, who had very little to worry about materially, was not adorned as gloriously as they were. Jesus offers us valuable insight here: God cares for fragile flowers without eternal souls, so how much more does He care for the souls of His children! He knows that our needs are not just material, but more deeply spiritual. Our bodies are not much more durable than the lilies of the field, but nonetheless we are of exponentially more worth to our Father. Whether we are as rich as Solomon or as the poorest in God's kingdom, our God will supply all of our needs.

- **How should the truth of God's goodness and fatherhood help control and redirect the worry in our lives?**

Read Luke 12:31-34.



God's provision for us extends far beyond our daily bread. In this passage, Jesus reminds His listeners that the eternal provision that God has made for us through the person and work of His Son is far more important than our temporal needs. Through we have a God who cares deeply for the well-being of our physical bodies, He does not promise us ease. In fact, as we learned when speaking about the cost of discipleship, Jesus promises His followers the exact opposite. However, He does promise that our eternal well-being will always be secured.

Jesus tells His listeners that their greatest treasures aren't the things they can hold in their hands; rather our greatest treasures are the things of heaven. The things we can hold in our hands can always be destroyed, lost, or stolen. We can drop them, scratch them, or need to trash them. They can go from being the coolest thing we could possibly own to being found in the trashcan in a short amount of time. Our dearest treasure should therefore be something that nothing can destroy, and that no one can take away. And in case we've forgotten, Jesus reminds us that our heart will be where our treasure is (v. 34). In addition, He has also told us exactly where our hearts should be: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Matt. 12:30). He should reign as number one in our lives as we are called to love Him with our entire being. 

- **Why is it important that we treasure God above all earthly treasures?**

COMMENTARY

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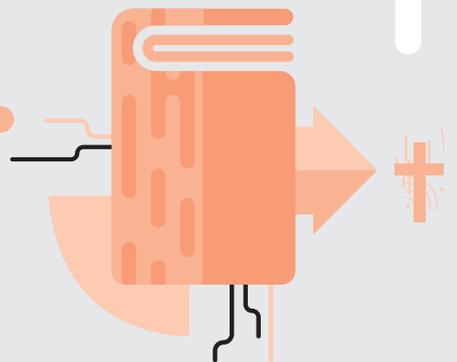
Luke 12

22-28. “Just as with greed, worry can affect anyone, whatever his position in life. An attitude of anxiety is destructive to the physical life and hurtful to spiritual testimony (vv. 22-26). Height (Greek *helikian*, ‘stature, years, maturity,’ v. 25) in this context seems to suggest the span of life. Again Jesus clearly noted the value of every life and the loving care He poured out on all His creation (v. 24). To use your energies in worry over things you cannot control—whether great or small—is futile and inappropriate. God does not overlook the necessities of His children according to His plan for their their lives. When He allows suffering or even deprivation, such is never wasted in the divine economy. Drinking of the cup of His sufferings is never to be taken lightly. The privilege must be embraced for the opportunity of testimony and means of glorifying the Father.”⁴

31-34. “Jesus’ warning here is to beware of the double danger of money. On the one hand, money easily generates greed and covetousness (vv. 13-21). On the other hand, the reality of money easily creates heart-deep anxiety in us (vv. 22-34). The gospel teaches us how to defeat both of these destructive sins. We must seek God’s kingdom first (v. 31), which will often mean letting go of our goods and money (v. 33). Jesus motivates us to this counterintuitive solution by showing us that when we do so, God our father will provide for our needs (v. 31). He does so because as our perfect Father he knows our needs (v. 30). He cares for us deeply and considers us very valuable (v. 24), and it is his good pleasure to give us what we most need for eternal as well as earthly purposes (v. 32). Only this vision of our heavenly Father, combined with the promise of eternal riches (v. 33), can motivate us at the heart level to live free from the love of money (Heb. 13:5) and find eternal joy in following Christ.”⁵

(p. 65, DDG) Christ Connection

When Jesus taught His disciples about money and possessions, He warned about hoarding treasure instead of living with generosity. Jesus left His place of splendor with the Father and lived on earth without wealth so that He could complete the work the Father had given Him to do: establish the kingdom.



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



What is Jesus' purpose in mentioning the ravens in verse 24? What is He teaching us about worry here?

How can we balance the idea of trusting in God to meet all of our needs (not worrying) with our calling by God to work hard in everything we do?

Heart



Is it true that the more money you have the less worry you have? Explain.

How do these verses challenge you when it comes to worrying about things in your life?

Hands



What can we gain in our understanding of treasure based on these passages?

How does our heavenly treasure influence the way we see and handle our earthly treasures?

Main Point: Jesus teaches on what it means to live generously.



Head

Jesus reminds us of the ravens because the fact that He cares so tenderly for creatures who don't know how to worry shows that our worry adds absolutely nothing to His provision for us. Worry actually works against the cultivation of our faith in Him.

Of course, this is not an invitation for us all sit around all day and do nothing. Jesus' teaching about resources in the preceding passage implies that we are expected to work; indeed, it is God himself who inspired Paul to tell his listeners that if you don't work, you don't eat (2 Thess. 3:10). Solomon also tells us to work like the ant (Prov. 6:6), and laziness is a sin often rebuked in the pages of Scripture (Prov. 6:9-12). We are meant to work, even though that work is not what actually provides for us. It is God who gives us work to do, and God who gives us increase through that work. It is God who sustains us in ways beyond our physical needs, as well as God who provides for our needs.



Heart

When you think about it, Solomon is an interesting figure for Jesus to bring up deep in the middle of a conversation about wealth and worry. We know that David's son was one of the wealthiest men who ever lived. Having asked the Lord for incredible wisdom, he applied that wisdom to advancing his kingdom in ways that paid massive dividends. He wanted very little, in large part because he had the common sense to steward his resources well.

We know that money is not a safeguard against worry, but we often live contrary to this belief. Americans live in one of the wealthiest nations in the world, and yet we tend to be consumed by worry. In fact, the more money we have, the more worried we are about how we're going to keep hold of it, manage it, or maximize it so that it can give us the things we want. In other words, the worry doesn't end with having money. Just the opposite—money tends to create more worry within us.



Hands

In some ways, Jesus teaches us that our notion of treasure is usually too narrow. Treasure is not just earthly, monetary wealth. Treasure can also be characterized by heavenly things. These heavenly treasures are of far greater importance than their earthly counterparts, and it is because of this heavenly treasure that we can be generous with our earthly treasure, knowing that it is God who gives us our resources out of a place of abundance in the first place. It is because of this heavenly treasure that we need not fear, even when we lack here on earth.

Because God is the giver of each and every earthly gift we possess, we can hold those gifts in loose hands, knowing that they were always His to begin with. It is thus freeing to view our treasure this way, which was Jesus' intent: to free us from the bonds of the greed that might otherwise try to bind us. The glory of God revealed in Jesus alone is worthy of being our true treasure.