

A Study of Luke's Gospel
Week Twenty
Luke 12:16-12:50

Day One

16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. 17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' 18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." ' 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

vs. 16-21 – Jesus told this parable in response to the man who in verse 15 asked Him to settle a dispute between the man and his brother over an inheritance. Jesus warned the man to guard against greed and then told this story.

Remember, a parable is a story with a lesson. The lesson to this story is that greed is dangerous because it takes one's focus off God and onto self. Later Paul instructed the rich on this same issue:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life (1 Tim 6:17-19).

Are you using what money you have to store up treasures in heaven? Are you consumed with making or maintaining your money? Are you rich in good deeds? Has greed crept into your thinking in any way, shape or form?

Day Two

22 Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. 23 Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. 24 Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! 25 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 26 Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"

v. 22 – Having told the parable, Jesus then turned to His disciples for more specific instructions. The first thing He said was, “Don’t worry.” That is a command. It is so hard not to do, however, and I have excused myself many times on the grounds that I had too much on my mind. As I write this, I am in Africa and found out I have a serious water leak back home that will cost \$6,000 to fix. What is God’s word for me concerning this: Don’t worry!

What are you facing right now? A situation with your children? A business problem? God’s command for you is the same as for me: Don’t worry! If Jesus commanded us not to worry, then that must be something we can do—it isn’t a feeling. Being free from worry is a decision.

v. 23 – There is more to life than getting up, going to work, having and raising children, retiring and dying. Life is more than the basics. It is about serving God where you are and extending God’s righteous government starting in your heart and extending to the environment around you.

v. 24 – First the Lord directed their attention to the ravens, an unclean scavenger bird. Yet God feeds them. In fact, God takes care of all His creation. And by implication, mankind is at the top of His list. So why worry? God has everything under control. As I write this, I am unable to get home a few days early to attend the Christian Booksellers Convention. This is the first Convention I have missed in eight years. But I woke up this morning and said, “Lord, I trust you. My books are in your hands. Promote and sell them as you will.” I have tremendous peace, although I am a bit disappointed that I won’t be there to see my friends and associates. But God is in control!

v. 25 – Wow! That is so true. My worry cannot accomplish anything important in my life. So why should I invest any more energy than I already have in that exercise in futility. Rather I should invest my time and energy in laying up treasures in heaven.

v. 26 – Jesus considered adding one hour to your life a very little thing. Spoken like the true Creator that He is! So if you can’t do that, then why spend time worrying about food or other provision?

Day Three

27 "Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 28 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! 29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

v. 27 – After drawing attention to the ravens, Jesus now directed their attention to the lilies. They grow, die, and come back again in all their beauty. God adorns them with

color and life, and they don't have to work for them. It just happens. I think Jesus is implying here that Solomon was quite a "dresser." How would Jesus know unless He had seen Solomon? In some ways, Jesus was dropping a hint about who He was.

v. 28 – Jesus could be intuitive or logical in His teaching. Here was a logical argument that demolished any foundation upon which worry could rest. If God takes care of plant life, how much more is He committed to take care of mankind? Jesus then called them "little faiths." So is worry an evidence of little faith? I think it is. So I guess your worry gauge can tell you where you are on the faith scale. High worry—low faith. Low worry—high faith! Pretty simple.

v. 29 – Jesus was saying to "chill out" where concern about the basics of life is concerned. I would add transportation to the list of needs today. So God is committed to take care of food, clothing, shelter and transportation. We should not be worrying about any of those items.

v. 30 – Unbelievers chase after those things and hoard them to make sure they won't have lack. We must be different, manifesting our trust in our Father to provide for us. Jesus spent a lot of time talking about this issue; that means it is a critical issue. If you can't trust the Lord for daily provisions, how can you trust Him for even greater things? You aren't even permitted to worry about the future.

v. 31 – Your priority must be to seek God's government in every area of your life—mind, emotions, will and body. You must be what I call a "Kingdom person." I didn't write a "Church person." That's not what Jesus said. You must look to apply the governing principles of the King wherever you are, starting with your own life. If you are committed to do that, then God is committed to provide for all your needs. Does this mean that if you don't seek the Kingdom, that He will not provide as He otherwise would? I think so. Do you agree or not agree?

Day Four

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

v. 32 – I entered the phrase "do not be afraid" into my Bible software, and it showed 69 references. Why would God tell us so often not to fear? Because it is so easy for us to do! Someone once said that when God says not to fear, it's already too late! In this context, it is fear of not having the food, clothing, shelter or transport that we will need.

But wait a minute: the previous verse said to "seek the kingdom first." Could this "fear not" reference be a command that we aren't to fear missing the Kingdom. If we are seeking the Kingdom as God commands, we will not miss it. God won't let that happen.

I know of many people who pray, then are fearful that what they have “heard” isn’t from the Lord. This verse says that the Lord is pleased to give the Kingdom to those who are seeking it. So don’t be afraid today that you are “missing God” or not hearing from Him. If you are seeking His will for your life—His kingdom—then it is His pleasure to allow you to find it!

v. 33 – Once fear is dealt with, you can give freely and begin to store up riches in heaven. Why don’t we give more? Why don’t we part with our possessions more readily? We are “afraid” that we will need or miss them, or that God won’t replace them. Once fear is gone, you can be a radical giver. And when you give, God is watching. I have written before that God has a big book and a sharp pencil and He records everything you give and do for Him. He never forgets:

He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done (Proverbs 19:17).

v. 34 – If your treasure is on Wall Street, that is where your heart is also. If your heart is in your art collection or mansion, then that is where your heart will be. Where is your treasure? You can be sure that is where your heart will be. I want my heart and treasure to be in heaven, don’t you? If that is so, then what are you prepared to give? Do you have anything that owns you instead of the other way around?

Day Five

35 "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36 like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. 37 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. 38 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. 39 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

vs. 35&36 – Yesterday we saw Jesus exhort His disciples to store up treasures in heaven through generosity. Earlier we read Jesus’ story of the man who built bigger barns to hold his “stuff” only to die and be required to give an account. Jesus urged His followers to be in a state of readiness where heaven and death were concerned. It is a dangerous attitude that “I have time yet to do what God wants me to do. I can get serious about God later.” Your “later” may be tomorrow. None of us knows how much time we really have.

Jesus uses the analogy of household servants who aren’t sure when their master will return from a wedding feast, but they know it could be at any time. So they are ready and

waiting even though they aren't sure of the exact hour when he will arrive. So we are to be in regards to the Lord's return or our death. We must be preparing for either of those events.

v. 37 – For those who have this attitude and have stored up treasures in heaven for such a day, the Master will honor them.

“I will repay each of you according to your deeds” (Revelation 2:23).

God repays all His “debts.” If He promised to reward or repay, He will do it, if not in this lifetime, then the one to come. Do you believe this? If you do, then what are you doing about it? Try this: pray and ask God if there is anything you have that you need to give away? Afraid to pray that? Then perhaps your treasure owns you instead of the other way around. Afraid to give it away?

One time I struggled over giving away some books in my library. Can you imagine? I was attached to my books! Another time I struggled to give away my coin collection? A few old pennies found their way into my heart and attached themselves there, producing greed! How about your time? Do you jealously guard your “space” even if someone else has a need or your church needs it? Is that a form of greed. Could you give your time away and thus store up treasures in heaven?

v. 38 – We don't know when the Lord “will come” for us. This could be my last day on earth. So I must be in a state and mindset of readiness. Are you? Are you talking about where you will go or what you will give “one day”? I know of people who won't give \$5 because they can't give \$50. They lose the benefit that a \$5 gift could bring them because they lament that the gift can't be larger. Is that you? Then give the \$5 today and store up treasure in heaven. You have no time to lose.

vs. 39&40 – We must be ready to meet the Lord at any time. Is there anyone you need to forgive? Someone to whom you need to express your love? Is there someplace you must go? Something you must do? Then take action today! You don't know how long you have, so act like your time is short. I hope your time here is long, but act like the opposite is true.

Day Six

41 Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?" 42 The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? 43 It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. 44 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 45 But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. 46 The master of that servant will come on a day when

he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

v. 41 – Jesus didn't answer Peter's question directly. He may not answer yours directly, either, but that doesn't mean He isn't answering. I would imagine that He wanted Peter to listen with his spiritual ears to determine what the Lord was saying. Jesus knew that parables required a little extra work and insight on behalf of the listeners.

v. 42-26 – The lesson here is directed toward believers who had the truth but didn't apply it. But those who were lazy or who didn't take full advantage of what the opportunities they had will be assigned a place with the "unbelievers" or unfaithful (which is probably a better translation).

Jesus put quite a bit of emphasis on making the most of every day to store up treasures in heaven. He expected His disciples to make the most of their opportunities to do good. To not do so was foolishness. We see once again that it is not what you believe that is important, but what you do with what you believe. Are you making the most of the opportunities you have to do good and make deposits in your heavenly bank account?

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Galatians 6:7-10).

It isn't too late to open a heavenly bank account and to make deposits. Why not start today to lay up treasures in heaven. It's not too late and certainly not too early to do so.

Day Seven

47 "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. 48 But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. 49 "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!

vs. 47&48 – If God has given you knowledge of something, then it is important that you act on that knowledge.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does (James 1:22-25).

If you don't, your punishment will be greater than one who was ignorant and couldn't do anything. Ignorance of God's law is no excuse, but laziness once one knows God's law is inexcusable.

If you are grateful for what God has given you, then beware! If you are thankful for much, then God expects you to produce something with what you have been given. Peter wrote:

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being **ineffective** and **unproductive** in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins (2 Peter 1:5-9).

Peter wrote that God expects us to be effective and productive in our knowledge of Jesus. Are you effective? Productive? If so, what are you prepared to do to change that?

v. 49 – Fire both cleanses and destroys. While Jesus went about doing good and helping people, He also introduced a cleansing process in the covenant people. Remember what Simeon told Joseph and Mary when Jesus was a baby:

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too" (Luke 2:33-35).

Jesus came to introduce fire and it would burn hot and without prejudice. Are you praying for "Holy Ghost fire" to fall from heaven? If you are, be careful. When you play with fire, it's dangerous. Jesus understood this and warned people not to play with spiritual things, for once their eyes were enlightened, they were responsible for what they then knew.

v. 50 – Jesus referred to His impending suffering as a baptism of sorts—He would be "immersed" in the suffering that would set the world free from its sin.

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"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:38).

Jesus was already feeling the weight of His impending death. This "weight" caused Him to sweat blood in the Garden before His betrayal. Jesus was a man and suffered as we would if we knew that tough times and suffering were ahead of us.

Jesus did not come to make everyone happy; He came to confront us all with God's righteous demands. Jesus paid quite a price to do this and now He asks you and me to produce fruit that will honor the sacrifice He made. Are you ready to do this? I hope so.