

June 23, 2019  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: Luke  
Community Baptist Church  
643 S. Suber Road  
Greer, SC 29650  
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*To Ponder . . .*

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Luke 12:22-34.

1. List the kinds of things that make you anxious.
2. In what ways is life more than food and clothing?
3. How has God proven to you that you are more valuable than birds?
4. Does Jesus expect His people to be released from financial responsibility to the point of being carefree?
5. Why does Jesus want us to sell our possessions and give the proceeds to the needy?

**STOP BEING ANXIOUS**  
**Luke 12:22-34**

Certain economists keep telling us that there is going to be a stock market correction in the near future. Some of them believe the correction will be significant in size and impact. All of us who have any knowledge of market history realize that at some point there has to be a correction. The stock market cannot keep setting record highs day after day, week after week. It is the nature of the market to prune itself just like we prune fruit trees so they can experience new growth.

The big question is, “How will you, Mister Investor, respond when the market takes a sizeable, lengthy downturn?” In years past, some investors did not respond well. Some of the bigger, more

serious corrections in the American stock market were on October 24, 1929 (lost 25%), October 19, 1987 (lost 20%), and more recently, September 29, 2008 when the market dropped 777 points in one day.

When these massive corrections hit, it was not unheard of that investors became so distraught that they took their lives in suicide. Each of these market crashes were accompanied by photographs of distraught investors jumping out of high-rise office buildings to their death.

Responses like that might cause us to question whether financial investments are really that important. Obviously, the loss of possessions is very important to some people. In fact, a quick survey of the American culture will lead us to the conclusion that money means everything to way too many people. Money is the American idol. With it we buy all manner of possessions, pleasure, and positions. Money is so much the American way that many Christians have had to come to grips with the important place money has played in their lives. And many more Christians need to come to grips with the matter.

How do you know when money has become your idol, or one of your idols? An article on the *Faith Works Financial* website recently, listed three tell-tale signs that you are out of balance about money, yeah that it has become an idol. First, you think about money continually. Not just every few weeks or every few days. But throughout the day your thoughts focus on money. Second, you talk about money too much. When your friends and relatives hate to see you coming because they know you will want to talk about money, it is likely it is your idol. Third, you are continually planning about money. You think about how you are going to get out of debt, how you are going to invest, what you will do if and when you get a raise, or how everything will be just right once you achieve a certain income.

(<http://faithworksfinancial.org/3-signs-money-has-become-an-idol>)

The lesson Jesus teaches us in this text is that we, His people, need to check our attitude about money. Jesus does not recommend that all of His followers take a vow of poverty. Jesus really does not expect us to divest ourselves of finances to the point that we become a liability to family or society. The lesson is for us to manage the wealth or financial means God gives us with our priority set on

eternal things. The key is to keep our attitude right. We must remember that money and possessions are temporal, and heaven and God's kingdom are eternal. The right attitude will think more about the eternal than the temporal. We establish this attitude by remembering this formula: God provides—you invest. Invest in the eternal.

### **God Cares for Temporal Things (vv.22-28).**

Jesus taught the radical idea that life consists of more than the things we consider to be staples (vv.22-23). Therefore, in light of the real issues of life, He commanded us to stop being anxious. *And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on" (v.23).* The opening word, *therefore*, forces us to look at this challenge in light of Jesus' story about the farmer who was consumed with passing stuff and forgot to think about eternity (vv.16-20). It goes back to the previous *therefore* as in "*don't lay up treasure on earth, but be rich toward God" (v.21).*

The natural conclusion to Jesus' command to not lay up treasure on earth is, "How will we get along?" Or we wonder, "Who will take care of us?" "Are we not responsible to bear our own loads?" (Galatians 6:5). Jesus did not instruct us to stop providing food and clothing for ourselves or to stop caring for our bodies. There are plenty of other Scriptures that establish our personal responsibilities so that we don't become a burden on others.

The issue here is being overrun by anxiety about those matters of everyday provision. The Greek word used here means to be anxious or unduly concerned about something. We could use the word "worry" to translate it. The Greek syntax reveals that this was a command from Jesus for His followers to stop being characterized by worry. Notice the context of that worry is not relationships or general circumstances of life. Rather, the issue is specifically about stuff—pretty basic stuff at that. MacArthur pointed out, "It is an amazing and ironic truth that while ours is perhaps the most affluent, indulged and comfortable society ever, it is also the most stressed out, worried, and anxiety-ridden one. No worry goes unnamed, undefined,

uncataloged, or unmedicated; worries merely go unrelieved." (John MacArthur, p. 138.)

Jesus told us to stop worrying because real life eclipses the mundane issues we seem to worry about. "*For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing" (v.23).* This passing life is all there is in the minds of natural people. What else could there be? And so things that pertain to the body and outward experiences take precedence for most people. We clothe our bodies like they are mannequins, feed them systematically, care for them medically and hygienically, and then the body dies. Sounds like Ecclesiastes.

God created us for more purpose than to take care of and pander these bodies. Life, in God's plan, includes the body and soul. The purpose of the inner being (the soul) and outer being (the body) is to bring glory to our Creator. We bring glory to Him by knowing His character and conforming to it both in our thoughts (soul) and in actions (body). But real life, as God intended, is doable only for God's children, those who are born again by God's grace through faith in Christ.

Born again people are characterized by faith. Therefore, life lived as our Creator intended understands and trusts that God provides our needs (v.24). To illustrate the truth, Jesus taught how God provides for birds. "*Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them" (v.24a).*

Our Lord's command for us to consider ravens should cause us to wonder. On one hand, we wonder that Jesus chose to illustrate our Creator's provision by how He cares for birds. A bird's life does not seem all that important to us. But on the other hand, it is significant that Jesus chose to illustrate the principle with a bird that God considers to be unclean, unsuitable for His people's consumption, a detestable bird akin to scavengers (Leviticus 11:15). The raven is bigger than a crow, more menacing looking, and twice as obnoxious in its cawing. Yet God cares for even them. They do not plant or harvest, but God provides for them.

That God knows and cares for animals cannot be fathomed by human intellect. Stop to think about God's confessions in this matter. He said, "*I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine" (Psalm 50:11).* Jesus reminded us, "*Are not two*

*sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father” (Matthew 10:29).* Do you really believe that God knows every bird, every animal and that God is actually in control of these animals?

If we truly believe that truth, we ought to be very impressed that we are more valuable than a bird. *“Of how much more value are you than the birds!” (v.24b).* Humans in general are more important than animals. This principle should be obvious when we consider the lies Satan has foisted upon our worldly-wise culture. The very same people who protest declaring that a woman has a right to kill her baby, also protest any kind of development or work that disrupts the habitat of mere animals. The same politicians that resist laws to protect babies, pass laws to protect dumb animals. This conflict is one of the best illustrations of how Satan, the father of lies, deceives unregenerated people. Your pet animal, fish, or bird is not your equal or your children’s equal.

Our Creator values us more highly than the dead skunk in the middle of the road and even more highly than the majestic eagle that soars above the earth. Will He not then care for us even in the small details like what we shall wear or what we shall eat? Creator God never, ever has or ever will apply the blood of His beloved Son to cover the sins of a dog or cat. But He loves us and cares for us so deeply that His care exceeds life itself and reaches into eternity. So don’t sweat the small stuff like what is for dinner, or where you will live, or where you will work.

Don’t worry, especially since you can’t do the small things anyway (vv.25-28). This is simply a call for us to be honest about our limitations. Jesus asked, “Who can increase a life span?” Or as our text states it, *“And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?” (v.25).* No one ever added a minute to life by worrying. Here we will do well to address the common translation that addresses adding a cubit to our height. The K.J.V. translates the Greek word *heylikia* as stature. But the word more clearly refers to length of life. That leaves the question, “How does one add a ‘cubit’ to length of life?” The word for cubit most basically means “a measurement.” When we apply it to length of life, or years of life, it has to mean some measurement of time.

The obvious conclusion is that no one adds length of time to a life span by worrying. In fact, worry is a waste of time. Most of the things we worry about never come to pass. And if the things we worry about do happen, they generally do not happen the way we thought they would, or the end result is not what we expected.

If we have no ability to change the small things about life (like how long we will live) by being anxious, why would we be anxious about the big things? *“If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest” (v.26)?* That makes us stop to wonder, “Adding an hour to your life span is a little thing?” Actually it is an impossible thing. Though some would argue that through medicine (which is not the same as worrying) one can add time to life span. But even with medicine, our Creator provides the sum of our life span from the moment of conception to last breath.

If length of life is the small thing, what are the big things? Apparently, the circumstances of life the impact us so mightily are big. Apparently, who we are, how we are identified, what we think, do, and say are the big things. Those **are** the things we worry about.

Jesus’ command is for us, His people, to stop worrying about things. We need to stop because worrying does not profit. Worry steals our time that should be spent on laying up treasure in heaven. Worry distracts our focus away from our loving Heavenly Father. Worry robs us of rest as we stay awake at night. Worry steals our health, which actually shortens life. Worry makes it impossible to be obedient to God. Worry steals our peace, joy, confidence, and trust in God’s promises. In the final analysis, worry is our way of saying, “God I must be in control of this problem!”

The best way to stop thinking that we are in control is to be honest about God’s provision. God makes nature beautiful. *“Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these” (v.27).* In the same way that God feeds wild animals, He clothes mere plants and even weeds. That God did not clothe Solomon as beautifully as He clothes flowers is God’s assessment, not our opinion.

And comparatively, God’s people are more valuable than nature. *“But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he*

*clothe you, O you of little faith!*" (v.28). The purpose of the contrast is to reinforce God's love and concern for His people. If He graciously, willingly blots out our offenses against Himself, will He not take care of our mundane, comparatively unimportant issues? The problem lies in being able to trust God to do what He promises to do. We worry because our faith is little. Instead of worrying about passing things that we really cannot affect, we must focus on eternity.

### **Focus on Eternal Things (vv.29-34).**

In conjunction with the command to stop worrying is this command to stop seeking passing things (vv.29-30). Passing things in this case are food and water. We would conclude that those are pretty basic, right? But Jesus said, "*And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried*" (v.29).

This is not a command toward irresponsibility. God commands us to be diligent, careful, and responsible. Even in paradise, God's plan for His beings was to care for the garden. *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it (Genesis 2:15)*. God still intends for us to work in order to eat. *For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: "If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10)*. God expects diligence in all areas of our lives. Solomon told his son to, *Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest (Proverbs 6:6-8)*. God commends wise planning to make provision. *The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty (Proverbs 21:5)*.

But even with diligence and wise planning, God is still the blessed controller of our circumstances. *The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps (Proverbs 16:9)*. Our Heavenly Father knows what we need. *For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them (v.30)*. The whole world is convinced that life is made up of the pursuit of passing things. Indeed, passing things are necessary to survive (especially the basics like food, clothing and shelter). But

fallen human nature craves more and more, grasps for way more than the basics.

However, the extras, the extreme benefits, the luxuries of life are still passing away. Faith is content to rest in what God provides as we obey Him, exercise diligence, and exercise careful planning just as He has commanded us. And the abundant life is to exercise obedience, careful planning, and diligence toward seeking God's kingdom (vv.31-34).

Jesus pointed out various problems with earthly treasure. First is the problem that moneybags grow old. "*Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old*" (v.33). All moneybags (even the most secure vault, or most secure investment in the world) grow old and ultimately fail. When we die, we leave all the moneybags behind. We need more permanent investments.

Or there is the perennial problem that thieves steal. Jesus told us to put our treasure "*where no thief approaches*" (v.33). Thieves approach for one reason—to steal. Sometimes they break into our houses, and sometimes they hack our credit cards or bank accounts. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus put it like this: "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal*" (Matthew 6:19).

If the thieves don't steal our treasure, the moths and rust will destroy it according to verse thirty-three. The natural laws of entropy rot away our prized possessions. No passing investment is secure.

But the worst problem of all is that treasures captivate the heart. "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*" (v.34). Like the thief who takes our money, earthly treasure takes our hearts. If you want to know where a person's heart is, check out his treasures.

The contrast between earthly treasure that fails, is stolen, or is eaten away and heavenly treasure is that heavenly treasure never fails. "*Provide yourselves . . . with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail*" (v.33b). Heavenly treasure is investment in God's work—works that are recorded in heaven. Heavenly treasure is what only people who have been born again can store up. Heavenly treasure is works we do because God has given us faith and salvation. We are motivated to invest in eternity only after God has given us a new heart.

We can also be motivated to lay up heavenly treasure because we know that while we seek heavenly treasure, God will add “things.” *“Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you” (v.31)*. We are to be focused on living for God’s glory. We are to be concerned primarily with the matters of salvation. His kingdom is God’s rule in our hearts. His kingdom is the living out of the principles He has given in His Word. Our motivation in life is not in gaining the luxuries of this passing world or even the necessities of life. Instead, we focus on God’s work, how He can work through us. And while we are focused on God’s work, He gives us our necessities. More than that, He often gives many more benefits.

Then, while we use and even enjoy God’s abundant gifts, we live in a way that we seek what God is pleased to give. *“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (v.32)*. Our Heavenly Father is pleased to give us salvation from sin. Our Heavenly Father is pleased to give us eternal life. Our Heavenly Father is pleased to give us opportunities to represent and demonstrate kingdom living. Our Heavenly Father is pleased to give us the ability to represent and demonstrate His kingdom.

So, in conclusion it appears that Jesus told us to divest ourselves. He said, *“Sell your possessions, and give to the needy” (v.33a)*. Did He really encourage us to unload all the things of life and take a vow of poverty? No. This is the same challenge Jesus gave to the rich, young, ruler who wondered what he needed to do to get into heaven. *Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21)*. Jesus’ challenge forced the young man to decide if his money was more important to him than Christ’s kingdom, and sadly the answer was, “Yes.”

It is still a choice between passing things on earth or eternal life. This is the same as Christ’s challenge to all of us to take up Christ’s cross. *And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23)*. *“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27)*. And that means among other things: *“So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33)*.

This is the attitude necessary to keep treasures prioritized. *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (v.34)*. It is true that if we can listen to you talk about your treasures, we will be able to tell where your heart is. We all have stuff. In fact, most of us have way too much stuff. Is the stuff of life your treasure or is Christ and His kingdom? Here is a good test. Create a list by asking, “Can I live without \_\_\_\_.” You should come to the end of the list with the answer “Yes” for all things except Christ. That will pretty much eliminate worry from our lives.