

Confident Generosity

Luke 12:22-34

We are continuing in our series through Luke's gospel and this morning we are going to look at our next passage, Luke 12:22-34, and today we will go ahead and read the entire passage up front and then walk through it afterwards.

So, let's go ahead and read the text...

Luke 12:22-34

22 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. **23** For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. **24** Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! **25** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? **26** If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? **27** 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. **28** 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! **29** And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. **30** For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. **31** Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. **33** Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. **34** For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Well, this passage is a continuation of Jesus' teachings we looked at last week. Michael walked us through verses 13-21 where Jesus gave the Parable of the Rich Fool. Just as a reminder, the parable was to point out the foolishness of storing up treasure for ourselves rather than being rich toward God, teaching that life is more than just the abundance of our possessions; that one day we will pass away and the

treasures we stored up for ourselves will be useless. It was a warning against covetousness and a call to be generous.

But in response to hearing Jesus' teaching that we ought to be generous with our resources, we might begin to ask questions like, ***if I give to others, especially if I'm giving sacrificially, will I be taken care of myself? If I am generous with my resources to provide for others, will I also be provided for?*** And as anxiety or worry sets in about our futures, we may pull back from being generous, and again, rather than being rich towards God, we will be tempted to store up treasures for ourselves. So this next section is Jesus' attempt to calm the anxious and encourage generosity.

As we will see, we are called to be generous, but more than that we are called to be ***confident in our generosity***. Followers of Jesus shouldn't be people who give with shaky hands. We are to give with confidence, knowing that we will be taken care of ourselves.

So in this passage Jesus gives a number of reasons why you and I shouldn't be anxious in our giving, but rather why we can be confident in our generosity.

You don't have to be anxious in your giving because:

1. Life consists of much more than just the necessities. v. 22-23, 29

Luke 12:22-23, 29

22 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. **23** For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing... **29** And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried.

Again, life is more than food, drink, and clothing...the basics. Notice Jesus goes one step further here than what he said in our previous passage, where he said that life doesn't consist in the abundance of our possessions. And that is something that many Christians can at least understand. We easily say, yes I get it, we aren't to be driven by consumerism or materialism. Now, whether or not we live this way another question, but at least intellectually we would agree that life is more than just stockpiling our resources for ourselves.

But now, he pushes the issue, upping the radical nature of the call to generosity by saying that life doesn't consist of even solely the basic necessities. It is one thing to say, yeah, life is more important than the excess we are prone to, but things like food, drink, and clothing, they are pretty important to life.

What He means here is that Christians live with a keen awareness that life is not merely a natural process, but is an experience that involves the spiritual. We are not just animals seeking to survive, we are so much more. We have a purpose far greater than just getting by, even if it feels that's all we are doing at times. Our lives have purpose and meaning far beyond its physical nature. Life is more than just seeking the next

meal. Our bodies are more than just mannequins to dress up with the latest fashions. Our entire lives, including our physical bodies, are all about the glory of God.

Therefore, the material is meant to serve a greater purpose. They are not an end in themselves.

Paul put it this way in 1 Cor. 10:31...

1 Cor. 10:31

31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

All things, even the basic everyday actions such as eating and drinking serve a higher purpose. So don't overestimate the value of the things of this world...even the basics. We can enjoy them, for sure. I certainly love some good food, but food, drink, clothing, are not the sum of one's life.

Again, you don't have to be anxious in your giving, you can live with confident generosity, because life consists of much more than just the necessities.

Jesus goes on to say, you don't have to be anxious in your giving because...

2. God will take care of You, His child. v. 24, 27-28, 30

And Jesus gave some object lessons to point this out...

Luke 12:24, 27-28

24 Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!...

27 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. **28** 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!

First, Jesus uses ravens as an example. And ravens aren't necessarily the most attractive of birds. They really aren't special because of their beauty or gifting, in fact, ravens were considered unclean birds in the OT. And Jesus says, even the ravens, who don't sow and who don't reap are fed by God. Now, we, unlike the ravens, do actually sow and reap. Ravens are scavengers. We work, we cultivate, we put in effort to provide for ourselves. The point of course being if even the ravens who do none of those things are provided for, how much more should we be expected to be cared for by God.

Then Jesus points out the lilies. And lilies are even lazier than ravens! They don't even scavenge. They just grow. And yet, Jesus says their beauty goes beyond Solomon's riches and glory even at the height of his reign as king over Israel.

But then notice what Jesus says in verse 30 again...

Luke 12:30

30 For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your **Father** knows that you need them.

God's relationship to the ravens and the lilies is limited to that of Creator and creature. God is the Creator of all things, of all the animals and all plants. God is creator over the ravens and lilies, but your relationship with Him is so much more. Yes He is our Creator and we are His creation, but if you've put your faith in Christ, He is your Father and you have become His child.

And this changes the dynamic of the relationship doesn't it? No longer is the relationship merely defined by authority, now it is characterized by love and care.

ILLUS. - Imagine one day getting your dream car. When I lived in Italy I had the opportunity to go to the Ferrari factory and museum. I would have a hard time picking my dream car, but whichever one it is, it is there. Imagine whatever it is for you, whatever the color, the make, the model, convertible or not, you love that thing. And as its owner, you are probably going to take care of it. You are going to wash it, wax it, change its oil, make sure it's kept in good working order. Now, compare that concern you would have with your car with the concern you would have for your child. If you are a parent, you know that there is just no comparison. You know that you would get rid of that dream car in a second if you had to take care of your kids. Why? Because your relationship is different with your kids than with your car, at least it should be.

God sees you more than just another part of His creation, just something else that He owns as the sovereign Lord over the universe. God looks at You like a good Father does his children, eager to provide, willing to sacrifice, joyfully doing whatever needs to be done to provide for his family. So Jesus says, consider how God cares for His creation, don't you think He will be eager to care for His family even more?

Going on, Jesus says you don't have to be anxious in your giving because:

3. Ultimately, worry accomplishes nothing. v. 25-26**Luke 12:25-26**

25 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? **26** If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?

This is a hard lesson to learn for most of us isn't it? When faced with a difficult situation many times our default emotion is worry. We worry because we are not in total control and therefore we can't guarantee that the outcome of the situation will be the one we want.

When it comes to having the basic necessities of life, worrying that we might not have what we need if we are generous, Jesus says worry isn't the answer. Worry doesn't

provide your paycheck. Worry doesn't put food on your table. Worry doesn't provide new shoes for your kids. Now, worry might motivate you to work hard for those things, but you have to understand that even your work is provided for by the Lord.

Worry does not give to us. In reality, worry only takes away. Worry steals our peace, it steals our hope, it steals our sleep, and it steals our time. Worry accomplishes nothing for us. So, don't be anxious in your giving.

Finally, Jesus says you don't have to be anxious in your giving because:

4. You are the heir of a kingdom of unlimited and unending riches v. 31-32

Luke 12:31-32

31 Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. **32** "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

We have a very rich Father in God. He is not a Father who has to work multiple jobs to make sure the bills are paid or a Father who stresses how to make his children's lives better. Our Father is a King and because we are His children we have an incredible inheritance.

And this truth ought to, both, give us comfort as we experience loss in life, as well as encourage us to embrace the sacrifices that generous giving require. This was the encouragement from the apostle Peter in his first letter in our New Testaments. In 1 Peter, Peter is addressing Christians who, because of intense persecution have been scattered to different areas. They've fled to different towns, villages, and cities. They were exiles. And so, these are people who have lost a lot. They've lost homes, opportunities for work, they've been separated from friends and family, so Peter writes to encourage them and give them instruction, and listen to what he says to them, and us...

1 Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, **5** who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

That is an incredible way to begin a letter written to suffering Christians. But, here's the encouragement from Peter for those who had lost everything and were now exiled to different lands: no matter how much you've lost, you have an inheritance that will never be destroyed, never be stolen, and never lose value. And because you are guarded by God Himself through your faith, that inheritance is guaranteed for you.

When we wonder if we should be sacrificial in the way we live, specifically in our giving, we ought to remember the kingdom that we are apart of and the inheritance that is ours. Let's be generous with our resources here, because our real wealth doesn't lie in

our bank accounts, our homes, or the stock markets, it lies in the kingdom of God which our good Father is pleased to give to us. And while the nations of this world “seek” the things of this world, as we saw in verse 30, people of the kingdom of God “seek” the kingdom of God. We set our eyes there. We set our hearts there. We set our hopes there.

SUMMARY - So, in response to the possible anxiety that is to come wondering about our future if we are obedient to Jesus’ teaching to not store up treasures for ourselves in this life, Jesus says, you don’t need to worry, because life is much more than the material, God, our Father, will take care of His children, worrying doesn’t accomplish anything for us, and we have a greater inheritance preserved for us in the kingdom of God.

All in all, we can be confident in our generosity. Now, because we can be confident in our generosity, we should be generous...

In fact, look at verse 33. In light of everything Jesus just said...

Luke 12:33

33 Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

Make no mistake, generous giving is expected of a follower of Christ. In fact, generosity is the fruit of a heart that has been changed by the gospel.

Just one example in Scripture would be Zaccheus. We will walk through his story in more detail when we get to Luke 19 but Zaccheus was a tax collector. And if you remember, tax collectors were pretty wealthy. But one day Zaccheus met Jesus. In deciding to follow Jesus he declared that he would give half of his wealth to the poor and make amends to all those he had wronged financially by paying them back fourfold. Before, his heart bowed to money, but now it bowed to Jesus.

But if you go back to the chapter before, chapter 18, you can read the story of the Rich Young Ruler. That’s a very different story. Unlike Zaccheus, the rich young ruler did not want let go of his money, so he doesn’t follow Jesus.

When God opens our hearts, He opens our hands as well. There should be no Christian scrooges. There should be no person whose heart has been changed by the generous love of God in the gospel that will not in turn, be generous toward others.

So Jesus says sell your possession and give to the needy. Be generous. Now, this brings up some really important questions. Questions like, should Christians give away everything and be poor? Is it wrong for a Christian to save for the future? Is it sin to have a 401k or a savings account?

First of all, the Bible doesn’t teach that Christians should strive for material poverty. There are some people that teach that, but this is just the extreme opposite of what we

would call the prosperity gospel, but rather than gathering riches as a proof of God's blessing, a poverty gospel teaches that the proof of your piety is in the lack of resources one owns.

But the Bible doesn't necessarily commend or condemn the possession of riches or the lack of riches.

For example, wealth is presented as both a blessing and a curse in Scripture.

Deut. 8:18

You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth...

Proverbs 21:5

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

But then Jesus says...

Matt. 19:23

Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven.

Proverbs 30:8-9

8 Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, **9** lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

Scripture doesn't say that Christians should feel guilty for their wealth if God has blessed this way. There are verses that teach both the blessings and the curse of wealth. What Scripture focuses on is the condition of our hearts in the midst of our wealth.

For many, money can be an idol. We know this. We see this all the time. We've experienced it in our own hearts. But Tim Keller points out that money is actually a "surface idol," in that our posture toward money is actually driven by deeper idols.

For example, the drive to build wealth and accumulate more possessions could be **driven by the idol of:**

approval/respect - Life is only meaningful when others think of me as "successful" so I need to make more money, have a bigger house, or nicer car for their approval.

The idol of power - Out of a drive to at least feel more powerful over others you seek to have more than they do.

The idol of control - You can only find joy and happiness in life if you feel like you are in total control and being at least financially stable, if not prosperous, helps you gain control.

The idol of security/comfort - This is what Jesus is getting at in our passage in Luke 12 today. Perhaps for you, the greatest fear in life is being uncomfortable or not secure, so you work as hard as you can to have more money to pad your lifestyle.

So, what Jesus does here is confront our justification for our lack of generosity due to fear of the future, by saying, since you should not fear the future, the obstacle in the way of your generosity has been removed. And since it has been removed, be generous.

And besides, we ought to recognize that looking for security in our riches is foolish anyway. We should be very aware of that due to the season we are in. I mean, because of a global pandemic, a virus that is totally out of our control, our economy has been devastated. Many have lost their jobs, stock markets have crashed, and businesses have closed. I've heard it said, "Money talks...and it usually says goodbye." And that has certainly been the case lately. Finances cannot be the sure ground you rest your life on, because it is not sure ground. Therefore, we should lay up treasure in heaven.

Finally, with our last verse in our passage this morning, Jesus connects our hearts with our money.

Luke 12:34

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

Our hearts, that is, our inner man, that which consists of our affections, desires, hopes, and motivations, our hearts have a close relationship with our money.

According to Jesus, the path of your spending reveals the affections of your heart. So, this is really an opportunity to examine our hearts by the way we handle our money. What do you spend your money on? Are you a saver? Why? Digging into the motivations of your money habits will give you an idea of where your heart truly is.

So we can examine our hearts, but the way we handle our money is also an opportunity to guard our hearts. It's true that the path of your spending reveals the affections of your heart, but we could also say, according to this verse, that the affections of your heart will follow the path of your spending.

As you grow in your generosity, as you give to the church, as you give to people in need, as you give to global missions, your affections for those things will grow as well. Generosity is not only a reflection of our generous Father, it is not only an act of obedience, it is also a remedy for our own selfishness. So examine your heart but also guard your heart with generosity.

CONCLUSION

So as we conclude this morning, I just want to encourage us to let these truths sink into our hearts.

1. The Christian life should be marked by generosity. Again, this is because God has been generous to us, not only giving us life but eternal life through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. Paul says in Ephesians 1 that God has lavished his grace on us. As the gospel roots itself deeper and deeper in our hearts, it bears the fruit of generous giving.

2. We can be confident in our generosity because God provides for us. Jesus says, give. You will not go without because God will provide for every one of your needs. We have a good Father who cares for His own.

So with all of this in mind, let's reject the trappings of our culture driven by materialism and consumerism, and rather, let's be rich in God. Let's live lives of confident generosity as we serve our Lord and Provider.

VERSES

Luke 12:22-34
Luke 12:22-23, 29
1 Corinthians 10:31
Luke 12:24, 27-28
Luke 12:30
Luke 12:25-26
Luke 12:31-32
1 Peter 1:3-5
Luke 12:33
Deuteronomy 8:18
Proverbs 21:5
Matthew 19:23
Proverbs 30:8-9
Luke 12:34

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

In our next passage in Luke, Jesus encourages those who might become anxious about their futures should live the generous life to which Jesus calls them. Not only are we to be generous, but we are to be confident in our generosity.

We don't have to be anxious in our giving because:

1. Life consists of much more than just the necessities. v. 22-23, 29

Describe a life that lives for merely the necessities of life in contrast to a life that lives for the glory of God. Are you ever prone to live just for the basics of life?

2. God will take care of You, His child. v. 24, 27-28, 30

How does God's relationship to you as Father impact your prayer life?

3. Ultimately, worry accomplishes nothing. v. 25-26

Would you say are you a worrier? What types of things do you tend to worry about?

How has worry affected your life?

4. You are the heir of a kingdom of unlimited and unending riches v. 31-33

How can the promise of inheriting your place in the kingdom of God encourage sacrificial giving?

What does it look like to "seek" the kingdom?

THEREFORE: Be generous. v. 33

What is meant by the "prosperity gospel" and the "poverty gospel"? Have you ever heard teaching that leaned to either extreme?

How can we identify when prudent planning and saving has become unhealthy or sinful?

What idols are you tempted to worship regarding your money (approval/respect, power, control, comfort/security, etc...)?

MOMENT FOR REFLECTION: Our hearts are in a close relationship with our money. v. 34

In honest reflection, what does your spending/saving reveal about your heart?

How can you be more generous this week?