

# 09

## *The Safety Net*

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### **WHAT'S THE SAME | THE THIEF**

Last week Jesus tackled fear of the future. Well, now he sprints past tomorrow and goes straight on 'til morning. Welcome to heaven, folks.



Jesus doesn't mince words between betting all our chips on earth's version of security versus plunking it deep into the imperishable purse of a dispossessed life. We will either be robbed or we will be rich. We will either be broken into or we will be busted out.

Jesus doesn't ask for our stuff so he can teach us a lesson about how wealth is bad; he does this to set us free from the anxiety our stuff causes us. If we've learned anything this study, Jesus is a heart man. He wants us to live from the inside out.

So what is he after here? What part of our heart did Jesus save for last?

The part that fears failing.

He wants to help us identify the fraudulent safety nets we've put our trust

in. He wants us to jump without concern for the fall. When we invest in kingdom living, we are “laying up” untouchable treasure that is guarded by the visible glory of God and hidden from the thief indefinitely.

**HE WANTS US TO JUMP WITHOUT CONCERN FOR THE FALL.**

The breaking and entering imagery that Jesus uses in these verses, reminds me of when I was in college and someone broke into my car. My first reaction was to panic over how much had probably been stolen. But after I took inventory of the damage, I realized the thief hadn’t taken anything valuable. He had only taken a backpack full of old clothes. All of the other things that would have been worth his time were overlooked.

This is what Jesus says God does for us. He hides the most valuable thing we can accumulate on this earth from the eyes of the thief: *our treasure in heaven*. Nothing of eternal value can be stolen from us if our faith is in Christ. *Nothing.*

The enemy cannot mess with the immaterial treasure of a heart detached from the world and devoted to the kingdom. It’s off limits to him. The enemy can bust out a window here and there, but he cannot break our bond with our Dad through his Son. We’re hidden. And safe. Even when the thief comes, we are told not to be anxious or fearful of what we may lose.

To be truly free from the fear of failure, Jesus is inviting us to beat the dirty ol’ thief at his own game. He invites us to unlock the door and set the bag of old clothes on the sidewalk for the taking. He commands us to give away anything that may displace God’s hidden, heavenly security with the world’s visible security.

**WHAT’S DIFFERENT | SELLING POINTS**

Luke’s account challenges us to action with the words *sell, give, provide*. Matthew’s account falls more in line with the typical rhythm of Jesus’ “dos” and “don’ts” throughout this sermon. To the disciples, Jesus gives an action. To the crowd of investigators, an observation.

As disciples of Jesus, we need to pay special attention to Luke’s version since it is the first and only time in this study that God gives a very specific activity to combat anxiety and worry.

*Be generous. Give to the poor. Get yourselves a bank that can’t go bankrupt.*<sup>1</sup>

People who follow Jesus should be known as unattached to things of this

world. We should be known for outlandish care of others. We should be known for reckless banking that doesn't guard our bottom line at all costs. But above all, we should be known for seeing people in need as *people*, not as projects. To "give" and "sell" isn't the formula to accrue kingdom points. It is the way to invite more ravens to become kingdom kids. It's the way to be a good friend, like Jesus has been to us.

Yes, it seems counterintuitive that if we want to worry less about failure we should voluntarily cut safety nets to the benefit of others. But Jesus has a way of making the hard thing the right thing. In his brilliance, he tells us that the empty comes either way. It comes when we are stolen from or when we have a willingness to give away what we have for something far better.

Jesus calls this willingness being "poor in spirit." And he says it is these people who inherit the kingdom of heaven. He says that empty is actually full. In the upside down kingdom that Jesus champions, pockets get emptied just by imitating his inverted existence.

So it would make sense that the ones who inherit the kingdom are the ones who have actually invested in it.

**HE SAYS THAT  
EMPTY IS  
ACTUALLY FULL.**

When it comes to investing in the right bank, one of the more disturbing stories in the Bible is that of the rich young ruler. The Bible says this man came up to Jesus asking how he could get eternal life. They went back and forth on all of the moral things a "good" kid does to secure his spot. Apparently, this man was a religious rockstar because he said he had done them all. And then Jesus said, *Well if you really want to be all in, then go sell everything you have and follow me.*

He couldn't imagine doing what Jesus was asking. The rich young ruler had the very same heart disease that Solomon had. And so the he walked away from Jesus really, really sad. His stuff was too embedded in his heart. The wires had become flesh. Machine had replaced marrow. He'd been robbed blind of true riches.

I think this story bothers me because the choice the rich young ruler made didn't happen in that moment with Jesus. It happened in a thousand small choices leading up to that conversation. He pretended to be faithful to God while renting out rooms to anxiousness in his heart. He dressed the part outwardly while moths ate away the fabric of his faith inwardly. He avoided breaking the law, but was still breaking God's heart.

So it's no surprise that Jesus lands the plane of "do not worry" commandments

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on the runway of missional generosity. He wants to give us the same antidote to anxiousness as the rich young ruler: *sell and give*.

To follow Jesus is to become like Jesus. He is inviting us to live and die for the mission of the church just like he did. In the absence of anxiety and in the presence of his Father, he is telling the disciples that it is now their job to redeem the raven—one sacrificial selling point at a time.

**TO FOLLOW JESUS IS TO BECOME LIKE JESUS.** The church is the place where we formally or informally, but nonetheless wholeheartedly, enter into a kingdom currency where people are the most important things and life is enriched. If we want to experience the most joy possible this side of heaven, we will be people of near obscene generosity. Not just with money, but with whatever we have to give.

#### **WHAT THAT MEANS | YOU CANNOT FAIL**

Jesus isn't asking every single one of us to sell everything we have and give to the poor. One commentator said it beautifully, "To produce a class of holy paupers in this way would be to sin against love, for these paupers would be a charge on their hardworking neighbors."<sup>2</sup> Joseph of Arimathea, Zacchaeus, and Joanna were wealthy people in the Bible. They supported and loved Jesus and didn't leave everything material to follow him.

But they held their wealth with loose hands, eagerly willing to use it as they were directed. Through prayer, they partnered with God in the conversation over their things. Their gifts. Their position. Their class. Their privilege. Their community. Their opportunity. They aligned their hearts with God's will in that way. They weren't afraid to fail in the eyes of the world if it meant they were rich in the eyes of God.

If there are portions of our heart that continuously back away from the ledge of wholeheartedly following Jesus into the safety of security, possessions, and position—don't be surprised if Jesus sits you down and tenderly says, "*My friend, sell everything and give.*" He may be doing that very thing right now.

**"MY FRIEND, SELL EVERYTHING AND GIVE."** Devoting ourselves to money, stuff, and security are some of the obvious ways we attempt to combat our fear of failing. But we can also be rich-young-rulers in keeping up appearances, practicing moralism, engaging in religious duty, and even giving to charity. That's why Jesus makes a point in Luke's account to tell the disciples what success really is: an emptying of self to the glory of God.

John Mark Comer, author and pastor at Bridgetown Church in Portland, helps us understand what heavenly treasure looks like while we walk the earth: “Define success as *trust*, not as certainty. And most definitely [do not define it] as its twin, control.”<sup>3</sup>

Certainty and control are at the root of the issue when we fear failing or our treasure failing us. If we are seeking certainty and control, it is evidence that our heart has been compromised. It is a warning bell that reasonable care has gone awry. It reveals we are renting out rooms to anxiousness, perhaps by the hour, and in turn denying God permanent residency.

Worry plays the role of the thief in our soul. It wanders around busting out windows and graffitiing the walls of our mind with worst case scenarios. It rusts out our resolve and we melt into a puddle of panic, paralyzed by thoughts that don’t belong in the temple of the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Friend, you cannot fail because Jesus did not fail in coming to live the life you couldn’t live. You cannot fail because Jesus did not fail in dying the death you deserved. You cannot fail because Jesus did not fail in giving you the gift of eternal life.<sup>4</sup>

You.

Cannot.

Fail.

So let’s be sure the treasure we are storing up won’t either.



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## DISCUSS

What are a few “old bags of clothes” in your life that you might be mistaking for eternal treasure? (Possibilities: security, health, moralism, cash, appearance, happy marriage, successful career, impressive children, home ownership, etc.)

Which of those would be the hardest “bag to set out on the sidewalk” if Jesus asked you to?

What do you think the treasure that God is storing up for you in heaven is like? (Read Isaiah 33:5-6 and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 for help.)

Do you think of Jesus as a safety net or a high risk investment?

Why do you think *sell, give, and provide* are the only action steps Jesus gives us in this passage?

Are you scared of failing financially? In what ways?



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## READ & REFLECT

God is committed to hiding our heart in him and the Psalms are full of this hiding language. Read the following Psalms: 27:5, 31:20, 61:3. What are some of the ways God describes his protective character?

Now, let's revisit the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4:19-20. How much treasure (crops) does Jesus say good soil "seeds" have promised to them?

Imagine if your current salary was increased by 30, 60, or 100 times. How would that feel in your everyday life?

Imagine if your belief in God's protective nature over you increased by 30, 60, or 100 times. How would that feel in your everyday life?

If you feel bold enough to share, what scenario gives you more hope in this current season of life and why?



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## **PEACE PRACTICE | FILL IN THE BLANK**

Think of one thing you spend a lot of your time protecting, either emotionally or physically. Ask for supernatural wisdom in how giving, selling, or serving with that thing may free you from failure and disappointment in that area of your life. Come ready to share stories of how this went next week.

# *First Look*

**Luke 12:34**

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

# *Second Look*

**Matthew 6:21**

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