

Treasure in Heaven

Luke 12:13-34

Scarcity

What do we need and want that we don't have enough of?

How do we tend to feel & behave when we don't have enough?

A Christian approach to scarcity should be dramatically different from all other approaches to life!

We seek the transforming work of the Spirit today

Luke 12

Stop fearing people or authorities

Fear = whatever has a huge influence in our lives, in our emotions, our thought life, our words & actions

Fear of people leads to hypocrisy

We tend hide our true selves from others, including our faith in Jesus, our doubts and our struggles, and even our joys

Instead: Fear God!

Let God have the greatest influence in our lives

Because God alone has power over the whole of our being

Luke 12:13-34

13-15: Pursuing more money and possessions ruins life

It was normal to have inheritance disputes

It was also normal to expect a religious teacher to help

But Jesus refused to step into the debate

Why?

Greed = wanting more money and more stuff

Greed is contrary to abundant living

The lie (more money & stuff is better) still lives today!

We can expect Jesus to respond the same way today to prayers motivated by wanting more money and stuff

He doesn't answer greedy prayers (wanting more for me)

Even if the law or 'justice' is on my side

16-21: This man of exceptional wealth actually had nothing

Perhaps half of people in Jesus' day were subsistence farmers

This man had exactly what the man in the crowd wanted

Yet he was not "rich toward God" so he had nothing

Jeff Bezos (Amazon): net worth = \$208,000,000,000

How much will he leave behind when he dies? All of it!

The obvious answer to the man's question ("What shall I do about having too much stuff?") was to give it away!

Yet apparently that didn't occur to him

22-28: "Fearing" money or possessions is senseless & bad!

Fear = controlled by, guided by, worry about, be proud of,

or planning, hard work, skilled investment, careful spending, ...

Because...

1. Focusing on food and clothing makes life an empty shell

2. God takes care of unclean ravens, so why do we worry?

3. Can worry make your life "taller"? Of course not! Actually, worry "shortens" life, and makes it worse

4. God makes flowers beautiful and He makes grass grow. Better than the greatest humans!

God loves all His children so much more than unclean birds and wild flowers and grasses!!!

29-34: Put your treasure in God, and He will incredibly bless!

Retired currencies no longer have any value

There was a window of time when you could exchange the retired currency for Euros

What will a pile of money and possessions be worth once we die? → Nothing!!

Jesus: Exchange it now for the currency of heaven!
God has been pleased to give you the Kingdom
We are owners of the new Kingdom!
Why do we cling to the retiring currency of a dying kingdom??
Antidote for worrying about money and possessions
Trust the loving care of God
Seek His Kingdom
Give to the poor in order to get treasures in heaven

Your heart follows your treasure
So transfer your treasure to heaven by giving it away for the Kingdom of God and for the poor
So that your heart and life will flourish
Otherwise, your heart and life shrivel in decay on earth

The Big Idea: Jesus taught...

**When we give generously for God's purposes
>> seeking His Kingdom and giving to the poor <<
He generously cares for us in this life
and gives us priceless treasures in the new heaven & earth**

Application

Trust in the goodness of God

"Seek God's Kingdom"

Follow God's commands
Love God and love people (even our enemies)
Pursue justice, mercy, and humility
Make disciples of all nations
Grow the Kingdom community = the Church

Be rich toward God means... to use our stuff or give our stuff for these things
When we find ourselves wanting more stuff, or needing our stuff, ask ourselves: "Why not be rich toward God instead?"

"Sell your possessions"

"Put to death...greed, which is idolatry." Colossians 3:5
Greed = fearing money and possessions
Believing that they hold the power of a better life
It treats them as though they are God (idolatry)
Money is not evil
Believing that "more money makes a better life" is evil
Money and possessions promise relief from worry, and they promise a better life
Yet...
As people's money grows, their obsession with money grows too
"The more things you have, the more you have to have, and the more time it takes,
to take care of the things you have!"
In general, money **takes** what it promises to **give**

Creates the opportunity to give
"Stuff" can become Kingdom resources
Possessions have opportunity cost: they demand our attention and other resources

Also "sell our responsibilities and obligations"

Sometimes we give up our time (to work, to get better deals, or...) in order to get more money that doesn't help us
When we give away responsibilities and obligations, we are paid with time that we can give to the Kingdom and those in need

"Give"

To those in need

For God's Kingdom

Cautions

Giving poorly hurts people

So don't give poorly, and don't stop giving

Rather, give well

Boundaries are still wise and godly

"All" is neither stated nor implied in the command to sell

"The way to store wealth in heaven is to give it away on earth."

To those who can't pay us back

To those who are vulnerable and in need

In a way that...

builds genuine relationships for the recipient

honors and empowers the recipient

builds the values of God and the Kingdom of God

helps the recipient know the glory of God

Jesus said: You cannot serve God and money at the same time

"Life is so fragile and uncertain that you can never have enough money to be sure it will all be okay."

So...

~~Gather and save as much as we can~~

Or...

~~Enjoy our time and money, because tomorrow we may die~~

Or...

Trust God by using our time and money to do what He values

Because His time and money and goodness can never run out!

"Generosity flows from confidence in the generosity of God"

Which reality in life shapes our living the most?

Natural consequences [Law]

Foolish living gets bad results

Wise living gets good results

The generous goodness of God who cares for you [Grace]

Especially for those who seek His Kingdom first

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it"

Conclusion

We follow a God who paid everything to rescue us for the new heaven and the new earth

Yet sometimes we act like He might not be able to,

or He might not be willing to,

care for us until then

Reflection Questions for later today or this week...

1. "Greed (wanting more money and more stuff) is contrary to abundant living." Is that true? What does it look like to live this way?
2. Jesus said to be on guard against all kinds of greed. Where are you most tempted to believe that more money or stuff is what will make life better? And where might you be most skilled in being able to disguise it as other things (like good planning and skilled living)?
3. In what sense might it be good to want and seek a pay raise or a job that pays more money? In what sense might it be problematic?
4. Which reality about life shapes our living the most: the law of natural consequences, or the gift grace?
5. How will you give today?

Some opportunities to give money

Christian Services of Lansing:

<https://christianserviceslansing.com>

City Rescue Mission of Lansing:

<https://www.bearescuer.org>

Cornerstone Church in Detroit:

<http://cornerchurch313.org/give>

Naypyidaw Christian Church, Myanmar:

We are looking for a good way to get money to them

Africa Revolution and partners:

<http://africarevolution.org>

Some opportunities to give time

Medilodge worship services:

Contact Jean Eddy, jeddy57@gmail.com

Love Clothing Center:

<http://www.judsonmemorial.org/about/lcc.html>, August 14.

Contact John Tilden, tildenjr@gmail.com

Cornerstone Church in Detroit:

Moving and community service, August 7 (tentative).

Contact Allan Greig, allan@africarevolution.org

Want to pray and process together as you look for good ways to give and serve?

Talk in Life Groups

Talk in our families and friendship

Be in touch with others, including Pastor John johnbell@crosswaymchurch.org