

The Father's Provision

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[0 : 00] And Jesus 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.

For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 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? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do a smaller thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?

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.

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?

[1 : 08] And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your father knows that you need them.

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

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

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. I just thought, before we actually look at this passage in Luke's gospel, which we'll come to, I want to pause to mention what I think might be our two biggest dangers at Grace Church Dulwich, and probably in any church, when we come to think about money.

I think our first danger is that we judge one another without being able to see the heart.

[2 : 25] Right? You know, so having good things in itself is not bad, is it? 1 Timothy chapter 4 verse 4 says, everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.

We're in no position to judge each other in our decisions about money. It's a private matter between each one, or each household, and the Lord.

You can't just look at someone's car, or job, or house, or what they spend on their kids' education, and think, well, they're not being sacrificial.

It is a matter between them and the Lord. Does this mean that we can't challenge each other within the context of loving Christian friendships?

No. But we mustn't judge one another. Everything is created by God, everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it's received with thanksgiving.

[3 : 34] So I think our first danger is that, that we judge each other on the error of money. Our second danger is that we hide behind the caveats.

And we don't actually allow God's word to challenge us to radical living as a church and individuals. We hide behind that caveat of good things are from God. Especially perhaps us here in London. We have more than most, don't we?

Be very easy for us to set the bar as slightly lower than the world around and be satisfied rather than letting God's word do its radical work in our hearts.

So I think those are probably the two dangers for us, that we judge each other, but secondly, that we hide behind the caveats and don't allow God's word to go to work in our hearts in a radical way.

[4 : 39] I think I might just come back to those two dangers at points in the next three talks as we think of things further. But our subject today is the Father's material provision for his people both

now and forever.

The Father's material provision for his people both now and forever. It is a wonderful truth that we're going to be thinking about today. Last week we thought about don't do what the world does.

Don't trust in wealth. Don't be a fool. That's the negative. This week we're going to think about the positive. What then does it look like to trust in God in the area of money?

Now we're in a section in Luke's gospel where Jesus begins to teach his disciples that the end of time is coming soon. The final judgment day when he will return on the clouds of heaven.

Just need to set the context of this chapter. He will return on the clouds of heaven bringing judgment and bringing in his kingdom for his people. And he teaches them what it means to live in light of this future that is just around the corner.

[5 : 52] Just come back with me to the beginning of this section in Luke's gospel and to chapter 9 verse 51. Chapter 9 verse 51.

This is the beginning of a new section where Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem to die. When the days drew near for him to be taken up that's taken up to the father again out of this world he set his face towards Jerusalem to die.

And the immediate thing that he does is he begins to teach his disciples about what it means to follow him a crucified saviour who has gone to be with his father. And in verse 58 you see this saying someone comes up to him and says I will follow you wherever you go and Jesus says to him foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

In other words if you want to follow me realise this this world is not your home. This world is not your home. And throughout this section he teaches them about the future lifts their eyes to the future.

You come to chapter 11 and he teaches them to pray as though they were in the wilderness on the way to the promised land. Chapter 11 verse 3 give us each day our daily bread.

[7 : 14] Like the Old Testament people on the wilderness in the wilderness on the way to the promised land Jesus says pray like that. Your home is not in this world.

Our section today if you flick forward to chapter 12 is sandwiched in between passages about his return to judge and bring his kingdom. 12 verse 8 the son of man will come will come again.

And then 12 verse 35 stay dressed for action. A whole section about his return. So we need to understand this passage in its context.

how is the follower of Jesus to relate to money as they journey through the wilderness of this life towards the promised land?

This world is not your home. Two things. Two points Jesus makes. You could summarise them in two words. Relax and seek.

[8 : 22] Relax your father will provide what you need in this life. Seek your riches in heaven. That's where we're going today. Firstly relax your father will provide what you need in this life.

Just look at verse 22. Therefore I tell you do not be anxious about your life what you will eat nor about your body what you will put on for life is more than food and the body more than clothing. 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 and which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to the span of his life if then you're not able to do a smaller thing as that why are you anxious about the rest?

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 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 oh you of little faith?

Through the death of Jesus on the cross the Christian can call God Father do you see that in verse 30? Your Father knows your needs and so Jesus says look around he argues from the lesser to the greater consider the raven the crow these are not the the kind of most impressive birds it's not he deliberately does not go for the eagle or the hawk consider the ten a penny scavenger birds consider the pigeons of London who don't have any storehouses consider the green parakeets of Brockwell Park look around if God so clothes the grass and he clothes it more beautifully than Solomon here is or let me here was a lily right?

[10 : 41] I left the house it was a beautiful purple lily and the wind blew and it just went to pot so there's my terrible illustration here is are these lilacs?

I think somebody said they're lilacs consider the lilacs the beauty of the flower in other words Jesus says look how your father treats the parts of his creation the grass the crows that are much less important to him than his children think of his extravagant careful kindness to those things and then ask how do you think he's going to treat you?

oh you of little faith if he cares about the parakeets of Rockwell Park and makes sure each one of those has enough which he does and if he is carefully clothing the daffodils as they come out briefly and then are gone again how do you think he will treat you as his child?

oh you of little faith we say the word father don't we our father we just prayed our father slips off the tongue father father father father we say but how often we don't really believe that the one that we call father is a father we lie in bed unable to sleep worrying what if I lose my job what if the redundancy comes to me how will I pay the mortgage how we pay the bills that are coming in the bank balance is only going in one direction I'm the same we're all the same well do we believe that the one we call father is actually a father to us verse 30 he is your father if we do we will relax I thought quite hard about the word relax could be misunderstood doesn't mean stop working take it the raven goes to work to look for the worms just doesn't need to store it elsewhere in the new testament we're told to work with our hands if you don't work you won't eat part of the way that god provides for us yes is through giving us a job the work that we do but I still think relax is the right word that's what Jesus is saying don't worry seek his kingdom and these things will be added to you verse 31 relax don't seek after these things the food and the clothing don't worry about them when it comes to material provision in this life yes let go and let god relax your father will provide that is what

[14:07] Jesus is saying many of us here face the constant question of job security whether it's rounds of redundancy or just the pressure of younger brighter people coming up behind I'm keeping my eyes down here it bubbles away what do we say to that we don't need job security do we we've got something better we've got creator of the universe security we've got heavenly father security who needs job security forget about job security who needs that who's got it anyway will our father ever let us get made redundant yes he might but if that happens it will be for our good for his glory and there will be no risk that we'll be left without what we need and so if we're anxious there is an action point here for us go for a walk go for a walk go to

Brockwell Park Dulwich Park watch some pigeons take a look at the pigeons or the crows or the parakeet see how they're doing that's your father who's feeding them and then bend down and look carefully at the flower or two consider that that's your father who did that to that piece of grass go for a walk consider if you're feeling anxious pretty good knee jerk reaction isn't that to anxiety go for a walk relax the one we call father he really is a father and he's also the creator of the universe do you not think he'll provide for you oh you of little faith I suppose pensions are a good thing sensible if we can if we if we can earn now to provide for when we can't work

I suppose they're a good thing I was chatting to a Kenyan friend of mine though on Saturday and he said to me that eight out of ten Christians in Kenya don't have a pension his dad for example I mean my friend who works in London he calls himself a walking pension for his dad most Christians haven't had pensions for the last 2,000 years we're quite privileged to be in a country and earning enough that we can I'm not saying pensions are a bad idea or somehow less godly probably quite a good idea but we shouldn't trust our pensions perhaps they'll get wiped by Trump's tariffs or something so what if they do who cares who cares if they get wiped our heavenly father will look after us in some other way as he has for most of his people throughout the last 2,000 years sit loose to them and don't worry about it relax look again at verse 24 at the ravens they don't have pensions neither storehouse nor barn and yet God feeds them relax your father will provide what you need now in this life well secondly seek your riches in heaven and be content with what you need the language moves in verse 29 from do not be anxious to seeking and so do not seek what you're to eat and what you're to drink nor be worried for all the nations of the world seek after these things and your father knows that you need them instead seek his kingdom and these things will be added to you in other words don't go after what everyone else is going after don't fix your sights on having enough stuff to live on that's what the whole world is flocking to don't do that or if you're in school or going to uni don't follow the rat race that everyone else is being encouraged towards of that career that will make you fly and that you can depend on because you'll earn x amount of money don't don't do what everyone else is doing instead verse 31 seek his kingdom what does that mean well I take it he means seek your riches in heaven in heaven seek your riches in heaven in God's

everlasting kingdom to come why do I say that well he goes on in verse 33 to talk about treasure in heaven and verse 32 that the father will give you the kingdom set your course for heaven and all these other things will be added to you for the journey that's the point seek heaven seek his kingdom a different direction to everybody else lift your eyes to the hills of the new Jerusalem to come and be content with what you need for the journey that's what God is promising isn't it your father will give you what you need food clothing but the picture is of a Christian on a journey home so let me ask this question are we content with what we need for the journey or do we feel like we need more I think so much of our anxiety comes because we really really we want more now than what we actually need he will give us what we need and so secondly seek your riches in heaven content with what you need for the journey now what follows are three amazing verses both why and how to seek look at verse 32 why and how we seek our riches in heaven fear not little flock for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom fear not little flock it's an amazing stunning verse isn't it don't be afraid that as you seek heaven you're going to miss out you know those presents you get for people that you just can't wait to give them you can't wait for them to open because you know it's not only what they want but it's a surprise it's way beyond what they were expecting so I remember back when we got one of the boys the Lego Hogwarts that I just knew was going to blow his mind and I couldn't wait I couldn't wait for him to open it well it seems that this is what this verse is about that God our father is like that with the kingdom it is your father's good pleasure to give you your inheritance that inheritance that can never spoil or fade Peter says the new heavens and the new earth Revelation speaks of the glory of God Paul says in Romans it is your father's good pleasure he cannot wait to give you your inheritance isn't that wonderful like a father with his children what an incredible thought the one we call father really is a father he loves us and wants us to have the best kind of riches riches that will never fail we just have to wait and so

[22 : 46] Jesus says fear not little flock don't be afraid that you'll miss out we do feel like that don't we as we set our course to heaven afraid that we'll miss out Jesus says don't be afraid that you'll miss out while everyone else seems to have their good things now you won't miss out because your father cannot wait to give it to you good things come to those who wait can you imagine the day just think of the day the father father presenting the eternal kingdom prepared since before the foundation of the world look what I've prepared for you my children I love giving this to you I've been waiting to give this to you for so long a promised land beyond our imagination well how do we seek the kingdom how do we seek first this kingdom what does it look like and I think the answer comes in verse 33 just look down with me at verse 33 sell your possessions give to the needy provide for yourselves with money bags that do not grow old with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail where no thief approaches and no moth destroys sell get rid jettison throw overboard that's what it looks like to seek the kingdom of heaven do you understand can you see what it's saying actually I think this verse has been slightly misused at times in the past when I've heard it taught

I've probably taught it wrong myself it's not primarily about mission and evangelism seek first the kingdom although that's involved I don't think that's primarily what Jesus means actually he explains what he means here in verse 33 set your hope on heaven sell it's radical language isn't it sell is more radical than siphon sell not siphon off that bit that you don't need and makes no difference to your lifestyle anyway actively get rid of stuff that you have sell now is Jesus saying here that his church should literally sell all their possessions and wander the streets that we should kind of sell up and go and live in Brockwell Park talking a lot about parks today we could live anywhere couldn't we but is that what

Jesus is saying no I think it's clear in the New Testament that the early church owned houses and had jobs Peter talks about show hospitality but don't use the caveat to dampen the call the principle is radical sell and we get too massive encouragements in verses 33 and 34 as we sell do you see that verse 33 give away what you cannot keep to gain what you cannot lose give away what you cannot keep to gain what you cannot lose give away the stuff that the moths eat and the thief will steal which they do I've been hearing of quite a few cars among us that have been stolen recently we've had a number of cars as a church stolen moths apparently quite a funny fact moths do actually go for the good stuff so you know if you've got your cashmere jumper there's evidence to say they much prefer that to your

Primark sort of fabrics the moths will go for the good stuff when we give away radically we are not throwing away our money or stuff into the ether but we're giving away what we cannot keep what's

dying anyway what's going to fail to gain what we cannot lose does Jesus mean that there'll be some kind of reward or recognition in eternity for what we've given away here it seems so provide for yourselves money bags treasure in heaven what exactly are the riches we're not told although he does use the language of money and treasure perhaps it's material riches that will never spoil or fade houses lands in the new creation from the investments of giving away stuff that we could never keep anyway isn't that wonderful the father gives us the stuff in the first place says give it away and I'll give you the stuff that really matters give away what you cannot keep to gain what you cannot lose and secondly travel light it will keep your heart fixed on heaven do you see that in verse 34 where where your treasure is there will your heart be also now this is the other way round to what we might expect it we might expect it to say where your heart is there your treasure will be I think Jesus means this he means as we put our treasure in heaven our hearts will follow in other words as you sell your possessions and give to the needy we'll talk about who the needy are in a talk to follow but as you sell your possessions and give to the needy as you actively put your treasure in heaven by doing that then your heart will follow it's the other way round isn't it to what we might expect it's hands first and then heart rather than heart and then hands in other words as you give this stuff away your heart will increasingly long for and look to the hope of the new creation the kingdom to come

[29 : 17] I think the picture is of traveling light traveling light like a ship throwing cargo overboard jettison so that the boat can travel at full speed to the destination or like a hot air balloon weighed down by bags of sand and barely lifting off the ground but as you throw the bags overboard it floats up towards heaven if we feel like our heart is sluggish do you feel like that we wish we were more filled with that heavenly focus that joy of the future coming but we just so often we feel sluggish and full of concerns for now weighed down our focus on this world well one reason for that could be that you just need to throw some stuff overboard give away for your own sake isn't that an interesting motivations here there is self interest in both of these motivations invest in heaven for yourself give away for your own spiritual good for your own health it may be that someone here the spirit is prompting to a radical life changing action of selling perhaps it's teaching the savings a lesson

I don't know for all of us it's the principle jettison throw overboard! and as we do this passage speaks of the double grip of the father do you see that both in the present and the future the double grip provision now whatever that's the promise and then riches in eternity the double grip of the father relax brother sister he will provide what you need now seek your riches in heaven content with what you need for the journey and get rid of stuff jettison throw it overboard!

You're only losing what you can't keep to gain what you cannot lose and your heart will follow it will lift like a hot air balloon towards heaven voy!

Thank you.