

How's your heart with Wealth?

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[0 : 00] And as you are, please grab a Bible and turn back to Luke's Gospel, Chapter 12. Well, two weeks ago, there was the biggest Powerball lottery in Australian history, \$200 million jackpot.

\$200 million. That's a lot of money, isn't it? Of course, it's split to however many winning tickets there are. And this time, there were just two people.

And so that was \$100 million each. Can you imagine winning \$100 million? What would you do with \$100 million? I sometimes think about that in my darker moments.

And I give some to the church, make me feel better, of course. But then the things I could buy, the trips I could take, and the people I would help. Yes, yes, yes. But the things I could buy and the trips I could take.

Do you ever catch yourself kind of pondering what you might do? Money has a certain allure to us, doesn't it? It pulls at our heartstrings. In fact, the Western Australian Lottery Commission estimated that half the Australian adult population bought a ticket two weeks ago.

[1 : 19] That's a lot of tickets, isn't it? That's a lot of people. But that's because money has this certain allure to us as humans.

It pulls at our heartstrings, tempting us to love it, which can be dangerous, can't it? As we read elsewhere in the Bible, it can cause people, from cheating on their taxes to get more money, to price-gouging groceries like Coles and Woolies got in trouble for recently, to leading us away from loving God.

And so this morning's passage is like a health check-up for our hearts, if you like. As our passage says at the end, Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

So as we ask ourselves whether we are rich towards God, whether we seek God's kingdom, whether we store treasure in heaven, As we ask ourselves those questions, it will reveal the state of our heart towards wealth.

Now, I didn't pick this passage. It's just what we are up to. We started Luke's Gospel last year, and this is the passage we got up to this year. But perhaps in God's sovereignty, this is a good passage, even in light of Lunar New Year, where people wish each other prosperity.

[2 : 53] Gong xi fa chai, I think, is happy prosperity. I think I messed that up, so apologies to our Mandarin brothers and sisters. But it's not just that culture that is fixated with prosperity, it's the Australian culture.

It's every culture, actually. And so it's a good passage for us to hear. So, firstly, though, let's put it into context. We left, back in Chapter 9 of Luke's Gospel, Jesus has set out for Jerusalem because he knows it's time for him to go to the cross.

But along the way, along the road to Jerusalem, he challenges the crowd and teaches his disciples. And so in Chapter 12, verse 1, you'll have to look in your Bibles there, we see a crowd of thousands gathering together to hear Jesus, and then Jesus teaching his disciples to watch out for the Pharisees' hypocrisy and not to fear persecution.

And it's someone from that crowd that has gathered that calls out a question that kicks off our passage and causes Jesus to warn them about love of money or greed.

So point one in your outlines and verse 13 in your Bibles or on the screen. Someone in the crowd that had gathered said to Jesus, Jesus, teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

[4 : 18] Jesus replied, man, who appointed me, a judge or an arbiter between you? Then he said to them, watch out, be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

Now, we don't know much more about this man's situation, whether the older brother, who would have been responsible for this, hasn't yet divided the inheritance or perhaps didn't divide it in a way that the younger brother liked.

Either way, this man wants more money. And so it prompts Jesus to warn them about the love of money, about greed. Why?

Well, for starters, life is more than money, which is what he says in the rest of verse 15. He literally begins, for or because life does not consist in abundance of possessions.

In other words, there's more to life than stuff, than wealth. In those days, possessions were a measurement of your wealth, a little bit like it still is today. But there's more to life than wealth.

[5 : 24] There's friends and family and, of course, God. I mean, if life was all about wealth, then it would bring us lasting fulfillment, wouldn't it?

But it only seems to bring short-term fulfillment. I heard a 5 p.m. person who was being baptized. It was a couple of years ago now. And they gave their testimony at the 5 p.m. service.

And they said that they used to think life was all about wealth, chasing after it, getting a good career, good job, lots of possessions. But then they noticed their auntie, who has luxury cars and owns lots of property in Singapore.

I mean, that's more expensive than Sydney, right? So she's rich. And yet, he said, she has everything she could possibly want, but she's one of the most unhappy and grumpy people I know. And it got me to think. And that was the trigger point that God used to lead him to Christ. But the point is, life cannot be all about wealth because it doesn't bring lasting fulfillment.

[6 : 29] Life is more than our wealth. As I said, there's friends, family, and of course, God. And so to act as though life is all about our wealth causes us to be greedy and forget God, which is foolish.

And that's what Jesus now goes on to show by way of this famous parable. So verse 16 to 18. And he told them this parable, the ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.

He thought to himself, what shall I do? I have no place to store my crops. Then he said, this is what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. And there I will store my surplus grain.

Now, at this point, I think it's important to realize that he's done nothing wrong. In fact, he's making sure the grain doesn't go to waste. And it's important to realize this because Jesus is not against prudent planning like savings and superannuation.

What he's against is selfish planning that saves just for himself or ourselves rather than giving to others or to God.

[7 : 35] That is, he's against greed that stores just for yourself. And we see this highlighted in the following verses. The man goes on to say to himself, you have plenty of grain laid up for many years.

Take life easy. Eat, drink and be merry. But God said to him, you fool, this very night, your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for?

Yourself. This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves, but is not rich towards God. You see, this man is a fool and he's actually a fool for a few reasons.

First, he forgot he has no control over life. He said, you know, relax, eat, drink and be merry. But do you know what the rest of that saying goes on to say?

Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we... And he did. He did die, didn't he? We have no control over our lives. But second, he also forgot that you cannot take money with you.

[8 : 41] As God said to him there, who will now get what you prepared for yourself? Implying, not you, because you can't take it with you. But most of all, he's a fool because his greed meant he stored just for himself and ignored God.

When it was God who gave it to him in the first place. He's a bit like the fool in Psalm 14. You know, that famous verse, the fool says in his heart there is no God.

And the problem with being selfish and ignoring God, pretending there is no God, is that it leads to judgment. The very fact that we're told his life is demanded from him is a sign of judgment on him.

The founder of Forbes magazine, millionaire Malcolm Forbes, famously said, he who dies with the most toys wins. But you still die, don't you?

And you can't take the toys with you. And what's more, they can lead you away from God and then you'll have to give an account for your life and your selfishness.

[9 : 56] And so the warning is, don't be greedy. For life is more than wealth and greed can make us fools. Where we ignore God and store just for ourselves.

Again, don't mishear Jesus. There's nothing wrong with saving and planning and investing and so on. But there is if we don't give anything back to God.

In fact, if we're not rich towards God as well. I know someone who received some inheritance from a parent and they could have invested it all for themselves and even for their kids and then sat back and watched it grow in interest.

You know, put in a fixed term savings account, the interest rates aren't too bad for that at the moment. But they only saved some of it and gave a chunk of it to a missionary in need and to some others at church in need.

Here are people who are no fools because they didn't ignore God. They were conscious of God and serving and honouring God. They didn't store just for themselves but were also rich towards God.

[11:03] And so here's the first part of our health check-up. If you want to know how your health as your heart is when it comes to wealth then ask yourself am I rich towards God with my wealth?

It's not about the amount it's about the attitude. Or do I just store for myself? The answer will reveal the state of our heart towards wealth you see.

Of course some of us don't have as much wealth as that rich fool. Most of us don't. And certainly the disciples didn't who had left everything to follow Jesus.

And so it can cause us to worry that we don't have enough now and chase after money rather than God's kingdom. And so Jesus now turns to his disciples and encourages them not to worry.

Point to verse 22. Then Jesus said to his disciples therefore I tell you do not worry about your life what you will eat or about your body what you will wear.

[12:07] By worry here Jesus means don't be anxious. Later on in verse 32 he says don't be fearful. So it's more than just being concerned about something. It's being so concerned that it consumes us with anxiety and fear such that we chase after it as more important than God's kingdom.

And here such anxiety is about not having enough now. But Jesus says do not worry. Why? Well he goes on to give three quick reasons.

Verse 23 he says for or because life is more than food and the body more than clothes. It's similar to what we saw before. There's more to life and our bodies than food and clothes.

What's more secondly God will provide for our needs like food. Verse 24 he says consider the ravens. They do not sow or reap. They have no storeroom or barn.

Yet God feeds them and how much more valuable you are than birds. We are of great value to God and so we'll be provided for by God for our needs not wants you understand.

[13:24] I'd love a Ferrari one day. That promise doesn't cover that. And then he says the same thing. He moves from things like providing food to providing clothes.

Just skip down to verse 27 for a moment where he says something similar. This time with clothes.

He says consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these.

And if that is how God clothes the grass of the field which is here today and tomorrow thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, you of little faith.

Again, you see the point, we are of great value to God, so we'll be provided for by God. He'll provide for our needs like food and clothes and so we need not worry.

The third reason is a very practical one. It's back in verse 25 that we just skipped over. He says, who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

[14:31] Here is a practical reason not to let worry consume us because by worrying it's not going to really do anything for us, is it? We can't extend our life by even one hour.

In fact, being consumed by anxiety can reduce our life by more than an hour, can't it? And I love how Jesus calls adding an hour to your life a very little thing.

But it is for him, which reminds us he has the power to provide. But his point in this particular verses is that if we cannot add even one hour to our life, then why stress about the whole of our life?

And so instead of worrying and running after these things, we're to seek God's kingdom instead.

Verse 29. So he says, do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink.

Do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

[15:40] Here, the word seek is actually repeated. So more literally, he kind of says, do not seek what you need. Pagans seek after these things, but seek his kingdom.

But our Bibles have translated helpfully because the word seek here is about what we set our hearts on, what drives us, what we chase after in life.

And so what does drive us and determine for us our priorities? If it's not to be our needs, well, verse 31, it's to be his kingdom.

Now, that sounds like a tall order, doesn't it? To seek God's kingdom even above our needs, like food and clothes?

But we can do that. For God knows our needs, and as we've seen, we'll provide for them. And so we can seek first his kingdom.

[16:39] I was speaking with a church member from St. John's actually, called Candice. She's just earlier this month moved to Sydney to study and do ministry.

But as you probably guessed, the rental cost is ridiculous, and there's still a shortage with the housing crisis, plus she is single, so she doesn't have two incomes to help cover something. And so she was praying with someone about this, another member at St. John's last month, I think it was the beginning of January, and they were just praying together after church and sharing prayer points, and she said, oh, look, I need a place to live, pray for that God will provide something. And it just so happened that the person she was praying with in Melbourne owns an apartment in Sydney, in one of the suburbs that she was hoping to live to get to her ministry, and so was able to offer it to her at kind of mates' rates.

God knows our needs, and we'll provide for them. And so we can seek his kingdom. Of course, that doesn't mean we do nothing, that Candice didn't do nothing, she still searched online for an apartment, she left her name with real estate agents, she made sure she had realistic expectations of what she could afford and so on.

[17:59] It doesn't mean we do nothing, but it did mean her worry about this, because she was leaving in less than a few weeks. Her worry didn't consume her, such that she chased after her needs at the expense of God's kingdom.

And so here's the next part of our heart health check-up for us, perhaps for us if we don't have much now, do we seek and pursue God's kingdom even above our needs?

And the answer again will show the state of our heart when it comes to wealth. But there's another category of disciples, those who have some wealth now, but are fearful of not having enough later, which is probably more like most of us here.

And our fear of not having enough later can sometimes stop us from being generous now. And so Jesus encourages us not to fear. Point three, verse 32.

So verse 32, he says, do not be afraid little flock, for your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor, provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

[19:21] Here is an encouragement not to be fearful. And we know it's meant as an encouragement rather than a buke because he calls them little flock. It's a term of pastoral care.

And so it seems Jesus is speaking to some disciples who do have some wealth now, and not as much as the rich fool of course, and yet they may be fearful of being rich towards God or generous towards others in case they don't have enough later.

You know, what if I need more money for a medical emergency? Actually, I'm hoping to go for another trip overseas or do another home renovation. I can't give to that person.

I need to kind of save up for that. Well, Jesus gently says, do not fear. Why? Well, not only will God provide for your needs and not wants, needs, as we saw earlier, but verse 32, halfway through, for because your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

And God's kingdom is a whole lot more than an overseas trip and home renovation, isn't it? So even if you do miss out on wants, like overseas trip and house renovation or whatever, later, being given the kingdom will more than make up for it.

[20:44] And this frees us then from the fear of missing out in the future, so we can be generous in the present. Again, don't mishear me, we still need to be wise, where it says sell your possessions, it doesn't say sell all your possessions, such that we become burdens to others.

Now, he's just talking about being generous and not storing just for yourself. I like that person at St. John's, who at the start of the year rented her apartment to Candice at mate's rates.

In fact, she wanted to give it to Candice for free, but Candice insisted on paying something. They had one of those gracious fights, you know, those gracious fights, you know, after you, no after you,

but it was with the rental thing.

Now, she still had to, before she rented it, she still had to do her sums and make sure that it wouldn't, you know, make her broke and then make her become a burden, but in God's kindness, she was able to do this.

Her fear of missing out on extra money to pay off the mortgage quicker and buy the next property, she was released from that fear because she knew she was receiving the kingdom and it freed her to be generous in the present.

[21 : 53] And by doing so, she stored up not money in an earthly bank account but treasure in the heavenly one. That's even more secure. As Jesus says, where your purse or wallet doesn't wear out, where thieves cannot get in, where moths cannot destroy, or in our case, where credit cards won't fail because of an Octus outage, or where scammers cannot trick, or hackers cannot steal.

In fact, that's what another member did at the end of last year. She gave quite a considerable amount of money for another family in need. And it's what many of you did last year at Thanksgiving Sunday when we raised over 100,000, and most of which went to people in need.

And by doing so, she and you made a safer investment, for you stored treasure in heaven that's more secure than any earthly bank account.

And so, if you want to store your wealth in the safest place, if you want a wallet that never runs out, then be rich towards God and generous towards others.

In fact, doing so will help your heart be in the right place. Our last verse, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[23 : 17] And so, by storing treasure in heaven helps your heart to be set on heaven, doesn't it? And so, here's the final part of our health heart check-up.

When it comes to wealth and money, are you storing treasure in heaven by being generous to others? Or, are you storing treasure on earth just for yourself?

The answer will show the state of our heart when it comes to wealth. For, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Let's pray.

Our gracious Father, we do thank you that everything we have is from you. So, help us, we pray, not just store for ourselves, but be rich towards you as well.

Help us, we pray, to seek your kingdom even above our needs. Help us, we pray, to store treasure in heaven by being generous to others. Father, please help us to have healthy hearts when it comes to wealth.

[24 : 26] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.