

Luke 12:22 - 31

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[0 : 00] Okay, now Luke 12, 22 to 32. I would call this passage, What is the More? If you look at the beginning, verse 22, Jesus says, 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. But the question is, what is the more? For all this chapter, Luke 12, Jesus is teaching at the centre of a vast crowd of thousands of people threatening to crush him.

And at the heart of the crowd, he's surrounded by his own disciples. And sometimes he speaks to the crowd, but mostly it's to his disciples. And out there on the edge of the crowd are the religious leaders who really want Jesus dead.

And the key command, as Stephan mentioned, is in verse 31, The Lord is dealing with the pressures and diversions and temptations that would deflect us from this one thing of seeking his kingdom.

If you like, the chapter is like a catalogue of Satan's strategies to steal us away from salvation. Through the love of approval, either through popularity or persecution.

[1 : 29] Or through hypocrisy, focusing on what's outward instead of what you really believe inwardly. Through the threat of violence or execution even.

Being ashamed, tempted to be ashamed of confessing Christ publicly. Or as last week we looked at the love of money and coveting and having so much stuff. And now he comes to anxiety in our lives. Do not be anxious. And Jesus is not talking about free-floating anxiety. Nor is he talking about what we would call clinical anxiety. Clinical anxiety needs the help of good doctors.

What Jesus is talking about is being occupied and being preoccupied with the daily concerns of food and clothing.

Being agitated about the cares of this life and being so agitated about them that it overwhelms your relation with God and his kingdom. And you can see this in the temptation to think we haven't got enough.

[2 : 35] In the context, the immediate context, it is about money. So in the last passage, you remember last week, in verse 13, Jesus is in mid-sentence preparing his disciples.

He's been talking about the audience of heaven and the audience of earth. About how they may be called on to sacrifice their very lives by the power of the Spirit. There is an astonishing interruption from the crowd.

A man calls out, Jesus, my brother won't share my inheritance with me. It's just not fair. Fix it. And Jesus sees straight through this guy in the crowd. And he says, You're saying this is an issue of justice and injustice, but actually it's a cover for your covetousness.

And then Jesus turns to the whole crowd in verse 15 and he says, Take care. Be on your guard against all covetousness. For one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.

Which is almost impossible for us to believe today. And perhaps this guy had a point. Perhaps his brother wasn't sharing nicely with him. But when it comes to material possessions, Jesus does not hold that getting our legal rights is necessarily the best thing for us.

[3 : 50] And Jesus tells this quick and famous parable about the man. A man who we would view as having a very fortunate life in dead. The rich guy.

He has more money than he knows what to do with. He would be on the front cover of Canada's richest entrepreneur. Most admired. Most successful. And he puts all his money that he's made into these blue chip instruments.

And he sits back to enjoy his wealth and his life of leisure. And in his whole life he's only forgotten one thing. And that is God. That his life is on loan from God.

That all his calculations are just focused on himself. In fact everything he owns is on loan from God. He is a fool.

Because he lives as though God is irrelevant. And one night God requires his soul. Now most of us probably don't think of ourselves in his shoes.

[4 : 52] Most of us probably think we don't have enough. But Jesus says at the end of this parable. You need to be rich toward God. What does it mean to be rich toward God when you have a lot of things?

What does it mean to be rich toward God when you feel you don't? So you see Jesus turns to his disciples in verse 22. And he begins therefore. Therefore he says.

Not really a new topic. And in this passage today he goes underneath what drives our wanting more. And our insecurity and anxiety.

Verse 22. Do not be anxious about your life. What you will eat. Nor about your body. What you'll put on. For life is more than food.

And the body more than clothing. And what is the more? There are two things more. In the lives of those who have the privilege of calling Jesus our saviour. And the first is this.

[5 : 49] You have a father in heaven who cares for you. Now sometimes you'll know that Jesus teaches in parables. Sometimes in prophecy. Sometimes in dialogue.

Here Jesus teaches using proverbs. And in the proverbs he adds some commands. And the thing about proverbs is they work on you as you work on them.

They have this simple surface meaning. But as you think about them you go deeper. And the deeper you go the more searching and restoring and beautiful they are.

I mean take this proverb in verse 23. Life is more than food and the body more than clothing. I mean that's completely obvious isn't it? Anyone can tell you that. Even clothing companies who tell you that you can only be your true self if you wear what they sell.

They know it too. It's so obvious. Why does Jesus say it? Well partly because we need to hear it. Again and again and again. I mean being a consumer has increasingly moved to become part of our core identity today.

[6 : 55] Our brands tell us who we are. That the more in life is having more. That we invest meaning in stuff by our consumer choices.

But if only I get that new piece of clothing or that new device or the new kitchen. I'll be a better person. I'll be a different person. I'll have more of life. I create myself through my consumption. If you buy a new iPad and I quote the ad. You can live your best extra life. Apple thinks it can give you the more of life. And I think COVID has only helped us move deeper into the entertainment and consumption idea.

We so need to hear these words of Jesus. We'll take the second proverb in verse. The first proverb in verse 22. Do not be anxious about your life. I mean if you read that on the surface.

It just makes Christianity out to be unreal. A bit airy fairy. But the thing that the Bible teaches is that we'll never be rid of anxiety or fear in this life.

[8 : 04] Which is why Jesus constantly comes back to dealing with it. And so do the apostles. Remember Peter. Cast all your cares on God. Cast all your anxieties on him for he cares about you.

That only works if we are struggling with ongoing anxieties. What does Jesus mean? He wants us to bring our anxieties in front of the greatest reality in all the universe.

His heavenly father. And he brings the great reality of God. The heavenly father's love and generous care to bear on us. With two nature proverbs. One about birds. And one about flowers. And with each of these two nature pictures. He gives us a command. He says consider the ravens.

Verse 24. Consider the lilies.

Verse 27. And the word means look at and draw out the spiritual significance of this. So Jesus starts with the ravens.

[9 : 05] He says they don't plant seed. They don't farm. They don't think ahead. They don't stir up food like squirrels do. Yet he says God feeds them. Jesus is not being sentimental.

He wants us to think this through. And think it through with me. The fact that God feeds the ravens does not mean they have it easy. It doesn't mean their food comes to them automatically or magically as they lie back and enjoy the day.

Nor does it mean that we should stop working for a living. They work hard for their food. The fact that God feeds the ravens does not mean that we as humans ought to stop storing and saving.

So that God would just feed us anyway. I mean God has given us the ability to think and plan and to store. That's the normal way that God does feed us. Jesus is not saying that food and clothing are unimportant.

Totally irrelevant. Nor that ravens never die of disease or hunger. Nor is he implying that believers will never die of disease or hunger. What he says is this.

[10:11] Since God feeds them, like with the sparrows back in verse 6, not one of them is forgotten. Every seed, every feather, every worm that the raven eats is given by God.

Their lives are literally in his hands. And here is Jesus' point, verse 24, of how much more value are you than birds. Here is Jesus, the Son of God, who has come from the Father to bring us back to the Father.

And here we are in Luke 12. And every step is a step close to his execution on the cross. And yet he takes time to teach us about how much the Father loves us. And the question is, what more could he do to show us how precious we are to God than by giving his life for us?

I mean, what more could he say to explain how valuable we are to the Heavenly Father? And before he brings us to the Father, he brings the Father to us so that God is present with us in our difficulties and in our anxiety, saying to us, I am here, I am carrying you, so that we can take all our anxieties about food and clothing and tomorrow and next year and place them on God's shoulders. Wonderful. It's the same with lilies. Where I sit in my study, doing my Zoom calls and preparing, there is a small garden bed in front that my wife has planted.

[11:43] And a couple of times a day I go out and visit the flowers. I've never really been a flower guy, but COVID has changed that. And the tulips are just finishing right now.

Right in front of where I sit for the last two weeks, there's been this series of deep purple tulips. And if you go out and you look inside the tulip, at the bottom of the bowl, there's a white background. And the stamens that reach up are light blue, this most gorgeous light blue. And I've looked at every tulip on our street in the last couple of weeks.

I cannot find another one with light blue stamens. I mean, the sheer beauty and diversity of different flowers, it's God's doing.

But they don't last. I mean, tulips last about two weeks. Here's the question. Does God think it's really worth his time and energy putting such beauty into something that's going to so quickly fade?

[12:45] Answer, yes. Verse 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?

So the whole anxiety about food and clothing and money and the future and the cares of this life, it can be even more spiritually dangerous to us than persecution.

The care for these things can swamp and make us live as though we don't believe in a heavenly father. It's not that food and clothing are unimportant.

But your life is so much more than just these things. Your life is secure in God, your heavenly father. That is our more. It's God, our father. You know, it's not having five homes and beautiful clothings or trying to secure our lives by our clever investing or being authentic to ourselves.

Simple faith that God, our heavenly father, loves us and cares for us. Knowing he sees us, knowing exactly what we need, bringing our anxieties to him day by day so that he can carry us.

[13:58] And finally, he will bring us to that great feast in the kingdom. That's the first more. But there is a second, a little more quickly. The second thing that life is about is the kingdom.

And I've called this point, you have a kingdom, which God the father has given you. And I don't need to say, of course, the kingdom of God is not a place. It's a dynamic relationship.

It's the rule of God over his people. It's a rule of blessing and of new life and of forgiveness and eternal hope. And we enter the kingdom as we hear his word and we humble ourselves and repent and believe in Jesus.

And we see Jesus as the judge of all the earth and the savior of all who come to him. And our present and our future happiness are bound up in Jesus Christ.

So that the mark we've entered into the kingdom is we have a growing sense that this kingdom is more important than anything else in our lives. A growing sense of the privilege of what it is to belong to the king and a desire to see other people brought into the kingdom as well.

[15:06] So there are two key commands at the end of this passage and both have to do with seeking, what we're searching for, what we hope for. Because we're all searchers, we're all seekers, we all live for something.

Verse 29, if you would look at it with me. Jesus says, 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 you need them.

Instead, he said, verse 31, seek his kingdom. And these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, it goes on. It's your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Jesus is saying there's basically two goals in life. One is to be preoccupied with the things of this life, material things of this life. And the other is to be preoccupied with God's rule and his kingdom. And it's the one great feature of the nations, those who don't know God as the heavenly father. It's to live for the here and now, being consumed by consuming, being taken up by anxiety about material comfort.

[16:15] The other possibility is living now in our material world increasingly under the rule of Jesus Christ, living in our clothes and our bodies and with our food, but seeking Christ in his kingdom through these things.

Seeing the reign of Jesus over our marriage or our children or our family or our moral decisions or in our finances or in our lifestyle or in our etc. So, while we're on flowers, I've been thinking a lot about flowers this week.

A month ago, you could walk up and down our street and you could see a lot of crocuses blooming in people's houses. We have crocuses in our garden. They were given by one of Bronnie's friends when Bron's mother died in honour of Bron's mother's memory.

And every time they bloom, they are reminded to us of Bron's mum. So, the same flower that you see in different gardens down the street, when it blooms, means something to the people who've planted it.

But in our yard, it means something a bit different. Just in the same way, you can do all sorts of activities with food and clothing that everyone else does, but for entirely different reasons, seeking entirely different things.

[17:35] And Jesus is just saying the one thing that we are to do in everything that we do is to seek, not ourselves, but to seek his kingdom. You know, here are two different people who are struggling with all the COVID constraints and lockdowns.

Both of them in front of their screens for hours a day, both trying to make ends meet. But one of them is seeking her own good. The other is seeking the kingdom of God day by day. The first is building her treasure on earth.

That's where her heart is. The other is trying to be rich toward God. The first is thinking about my comfort and my wealth and my status. The second is praying your kingdom, your wealth and your glory, oh God.

Seeking the kingdom ought to change how we move through COVID. And it's God's great joy and delight to give us his son and to give us his rule.

And the reason that God has given us our bodies and our lives is so that we would seek him and seek his will and seek his kingdom. Just as Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer that our priority at the heart of our prayers ought to be to pray, your kingdom come.

[18:43] And the thing about seeking is it's not passively sitting there and letting things happen. It's an active, hope-infused looking.

It's having a laser focus, expecting that thing to satisfy you. Instead of giving our energy to anxiety about things, it's giving our energy into seeking God in our decisions and actions.

Last week in Sydney, Australia, they were almost completely out of lockdown. There were five cases of COVID total last week.

Churches were back and were singing. Not complete return to normal, but heading that way. Last Wednesday, that all changed. An unnamed man who had COVID didn't know it, decided that he needed a very good barbecue for his home.

And he crisscrossed the city visiting different barbecue stores. And over two days, as he did that, he ate at various restaurants and took in a movie at a local theatre, finally made his decision and bought a \$15,000 barbecue and then went to a meat store to buy some meat to cook on it.

[19:56] Now Sydney is in a new lockdown, as they trace everyone he came into contact with. Masks are compulsory again. Lots of businesses have had to close down again.

Churches are banned from singing again. However, my favourite comment, and this is a very Australian comment, was this. Quote, not to take COVID lightly, but this guy's barbecue rampage is

commendable, because barbecuing is the Australian national part-time.

I think it's a great picture of what seeking is like. Because you've got this laser focus, and your seeking is going to affect other people, whether you like it or not.

And seeking the kingdom affects people around us. And hopefully the contagion doesn't make people sick, but it gives them the possibility of seeing a new hope and a new life in Christ Jesus. The Lord comes to us in our lives and says, let me share this burden. Seek my kingdom. Let that be the rule of your life.

[21 : 01] Let it be the first thing you think about when you wake up in the morning. You've got a Father in heaven who is with you, who delights to give you the kingdom.

This is more important than all the world can offer, the kingdom. When this world is going to come to an end, it's going to be replaced with this kingdom that's never going to end.

There's nothing more important to life. To seeking his rule in every circumstance. To pray for its development in our character, in our outlook, in our relationships.

To try and extend it more widely into the lives of others. To look for and pray for the coming of that worldwide kingdom. And as we finish, I am so glad for the way that Jesus has done this.

So wise and kindly. He doesn't just give us 12 commandments. You know, get rid of your anxieties by doing these things.

[21 : 59] He gives us something far more wonderful. He reveals to us the Father in heaven who cares for us. He reveals the kingdom which he delights to give us.

So as we head into prayer now, and Stephan's going to lead us in just a moment. I want to begin by praying again the Lord's Prayer. Slowly, as we come to the prayer about the kingdom, his kingdom come.

Let's make that our prayer together today. Let's bow our heads and pray. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen. Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[23 : 09] For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen. Thank you. Thank you. Amen.

Indeed. Thank you. Amen. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.