

The Dawn of Good News

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 February 2005

Preacher: Canon David Short

[0 : 00] Well, we're looking at Luke chapter 12, verses 22 through 34, and if you could turn to that, that would be great.

It's a second part in this two-part series on money. And for those of you who are here because of the sermon title, I want to apologize.

You might think this might be a financial seminar, and you won't get any of the normal sort of financial advice. It'll be a little bit different. I was going to not call it No Worry Finance, I'm going to call it No Worries Mate, but I knew I couldn't pull off an Australian accent for the rest of the sermon. And besides, I think the prayer book says that you're supposed to speak in a tongue that's intelligible to the congregation. So I'm going to stick with English here.

And the reason I'm talking about worry today is because Jesus talks an awful lot about it in this particular passage. It's an important subject because what you see in the book of Acts is a fellowship that's marked by a lack of worry as far as their material possessions.

[1 : 18] There were glad and generous hearts that accompanied their giving. In fact, it was their expression of a deep and abiding trust in God, which we're going to find out is the very opposite of anxiety and worry.

And Jesus tells us in these verses that if you're going to be rich towards God, you are going to have to deal with the problem of anxiety. Because the fatal problem, if you remember about the rich fool, was not that he was rich, but that he became anxious about his future.

And he trusted his possessions to give him security. And God was out of the picture. Now, anxiety is part of our fallen human nature.

We spend a lot of time thinking about what might happen. And our newspapers are filled with horoscopes. And we have all kinds of prognosticators that want to tell us about what the future is. We want to try to control these things ourselves. Winston Churchill reflected on this problem of worry in his own life. And he said, When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of an old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened.

[2 : 40] And you know, that's true. We spend a lot of time trying to control the things that we don't know whether or not will happen. And there's a dangerous thing about that process. It's that process of anxiety.

It actually shifts our trust away from God and back to ourself, back to our resources that we have at our disposal. And the question becomes, How will I cope with this?

How will I pay for this? How will I prevent this? You see, anxiety is all about controlling our future. And there is a deep sinfulness about it that I think sometimes we don't realize.

It's an expression of not trusting in God. And it does look the very opposite of that fellowship in the book of Acts. And so, in these verses, especially if you see verses 22 through 29, Jesus repeats himself four times, not to be anxious.

And interestingly, he particularly focuses on material things. There's lots of things that make us worry in our life, aren't there? And one aspect is material things.

[3 : 52] What will I eat? And the clothes that I will wear. How will I live? And so forth. These are the basic sort of needs, the physical needs that we have. And that is what Jesus focuses on.

And it's interesting that he chooses that, isn't it? It's probably because our money, our possessions, are very important to our identity, our self-identity, our self-worth, and the future as well.

Well, Jesus has four arguments against anxiety. And you'll notice that all of them have to do with trusting God. So look down at verse 24. He says this.

He says, Consider the ravens. And remember, the ravens are birds that in antiquity were not well thought of. They weren't highly valued at all. And he says, Consider those ravens. They neither sow nor reap, and they have neither storehouse nor barn. There's a reference to their rich fool. And yet, God feeds them. And here's the trust part, of how much more value are you than those birds?

[5 : 03] How much more valuable are you than them? And then in verse 25, here's the second argument. Which of you, by being anxious, can add a cubit to his span of life?

A cubit is the distance from your elbow to the tip of your finger. It's a pretty short distance. And of course, you can't. Jesus is saying, that's a completely unproductive exercise to worry about these things.

One person wrote that, worry is like a rocking chair. It will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere. And that's true.

That's what Jesus is saying. God is the one who gave you life. Why be anxious with the rest? There is absolutely nothing that you can accomplish by worrying. And yet, so much time and energy is spent on that.

Then you look at the lilies. And the lilies are incredibly beautiful flowers that you see in North Galilee. Jesus would have been looking around and seeing this.

[6 : 07] And he says this, 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, it's such a transitory nature. How much more? And there's that argument again.

How much more will he clothe you, O men of little faith? How much more? And I want you to notice the basic assumption that Jesus is making here.

He is saying that Jesus sustains and cares for all human life. From the very small things, flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow, to our lives, the lives of great, great significance, Jesus creates and sustains all of them by his hand.

And he's saying here that if God has so beautifully created and sustained birds and grass, he will most certainly sustain and take care of you, who he created and who God has sent Jesus to die for and make his children.

[7 : 18] There's that argument from the lesser to the greater. How much more is he going to take care of you? Well, that's easier said than done because Jesus says in verse 29, do not seek.

He knows that you are going to be tempted to seek after certain things. He says, do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. In other words, he's saying, he's not saying don't think about what you're going to have for supper tomorrow night.

He's saying, don't have tunnel vision. Don't be completely absorbed by the thought of this material gain and acquiring the things necessary in order to have a peaceful future.

And I think of, when I think of tunnel vision, which this is about, I think of visits that I used to make to Winnipeg. And we would stay with an uncle that we had.

And we used to go to church on Sunday mornings, but we never wanted to ride with my uncle because he had a method for getting to church that was a bit unorthodox. There's a main road, if you're from Winnipeg, you know Osborne Avenue.

[8 : 29] And it goes downtown. And there's about two dozen stoplights between their house and the downtown church. And what he does is, he's always late for church, so he wants to try to time all the green lights all the way down Osborne Avenue.

And so he adjusts his speed to try to get it so he can get all of the stoplights in a whole line. Well, the problem is that you're looking down ahead about seven or eight stoplights down, and you're gearing your car towards that.

And when you do that, you actually miss the stoplight that's right in front of you. So if it turns red, you're in big trouble. And you have a white-knuckle road on the way to church.

He is consumed with hitting all the greens and misses the red light in front of him. That's a picture of what Jesus is talking here. Because the living God is right here with us, in front of us.

He is immediate. And we are not to have tunnel vision on the things that are down the line, trying to control those things by the way that we're running our life. In fact, he says, the nations of the world have that kind of tunnel vision.

[9 : 38] They don't know the God who is imminent, who is right here in front of us, creating and sustaining everything about us. And their life is consumed by us striving after these things.

But Jesus says, no, you are to be different. You have a heavenly Father, and he knows that you need these things. And I want you to look at verse 30, because I think that this is the most powerful argument against anxiety.

It's the first time at the end of verse 30 that Jesus talks about God as being our heavenly Father. And I think what's going on here is that his argument against anxiety all leads to this decisive and wonderful fact that God knows us and loves us more than a good earthly father and cares for them. He is saying, you truly are his daughter. You truly are his son. And he is more attentive to you than any parent.

He knows your need better than you do. And Jesus here promises that he will perfectly care for you as a parent cares for a child. He has brought, Jesus, the one who's talking, has brought this kind of relationship with God by his blood.

[11 : 05] And so if anyone has the authority to say that God is your father and knows what you need, it is Jesus. You must listen to that. That is the powerful force that comes against anxiety, that great truth from God's word.

And this is the crucial way of facing the temptation and anxiety. Remembering that your father knows the needs of your, the basic needs of your life and to trust him and that he will care for you. It's the very opposite activity of worry. Well, Jesus ends this passage by telling us what trust looks like. What does it look like for me to really believe in my life that God is my heavenly father, that he really is trustworthy?

What does it look like to spend our time trusting in him rather than worrying? Well, in verse 31, he says that that trust is very, very active.

It is an active trust. And he says, instead, seek. It's the same word for that tunnel vision for the things that we're trying to control about our future, the things of this life, our possessions.

[12 : 14] He says, no, have that kind of attentive and strong seeking after his kingdom, the kingdom that God has given to us in Jesus. seek the kingdom and these things that you worry about shall be yours as well.

In other words, he's saying, seek God's rule. Represent him on earth. Seek to obey him as you live out your life. And the blessings of the kingdom will be given to you.

And so sure is Jesus of that that he says, this is the father's pleasure. This is what he wants more than anything to do. It is to give you the blessings of the kingdom. And that is what will happen to us.

We will know those blessings. You will be changed to be more and more like Christ. You will have his mind and his priorities and you will love the people he loves and love the gospel that he has given to you.

And it's interesting that when Jesus gives an example of what it's like to seek the kingdom, he says, sell your possessions and give alms. In verse 33, seek, sell your possessions, and give alms.

[13 : 21] In other words, he wants us to both loosen our hold on possessions and also give them away to do the work of God's kingdom. And Jesus looks on this as a very good and secure investment.

You know, this is the no worry financing that I'm talking about earlier in the sermon. It has very good returns. He's saying, provide for yourselves purses that do not grow old with a treasure in heaven where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

There's absolutely no risk to this other than the fact that you've given your life to God who has already bought it with Jesus' death. And he's teaching an extraordinary thing here.

He's saying, use your earthly money to get heavenly returns. That sounds actually like a good investment high-wild slogan, but that's literally what he's saying. He's saying, the way that you use your earthly money will have eternal consequences.

It will affect the life of heaven. As we saw with the rich fool, every earthly investment has a very limited lifespan. But when we give money for the cause of the gospel, there are returns that actually extend into eternity.

[14 : 36] We will know of the things accomplished by your giving away of possessions in the new heaven and the new earth. That's a remarkable thing to be able to invest in.

If you look at St. John's schedule, the things that happen in our church throughout the week, you see this happening. And of course, the ministries are what you support when you give money to St. John's.

In the pastoral care ministries and grief share and divorce care and living waters, here you see the strengthening of faith and directing people to persevere and encouraging people on their journey to heaven.

You see healing of brokenness and redeeming people's lives so that they might be effective disciples who comfort one another with the gospel.

These are all things that are the activity of heaven. And you see Sunday school and women at 10, central focus, youth groups, and home Bible studies, all of which are creating disciples through God's word.

[15 : 41] Making people to be like Jesus Christ. Making them people who in turn bring that gospel to friends and family and to the world around us.

Making them disciples who are on their way to heaven again. The heaven will be populated by people who were brought to heaven through the ministries of people that you supported through your giving.

And of course, there's discovering Christ, a ministry that brings people out of darkness into light, into knowing God as their heavenly father. Bringing people to actually seek the kingdom and having everything added to them.

We have a choir that we're hearing every Sunday who encourage biblical faith as we sing out God's eternal truth in partnership with the gospel, with the preaching of God's word.

Again, encouraging us on our way to heaven. And there's Artidzo. You know, the amazing thing about Artidzo is that people are being trained who are going to churches all over North America.

[16 : 47] And they are people who will be committed to preaching God's word, to bringing people into the kingdom of God, helping people to seek after Jesus Christ and his kingdom.

Many, many people, it's a multiplying kind of ministry, will be brought into heaven through their ministry. And on Wednesday night, we're having a big Malawi presentation.

And there, we're talking about giving money to a growing church, supporting a ministry of the gospel where thousands and thousands of people are coming to Christ every month.

And then finally, on Friday night, there's a marriage and parenting night. And here is a ministry of strengthening families and marriages and making the family a place where people are being discipled, long-term discipleship where children are coming to know and love the Lord.

You see, the results of all these ministries are people who are being changed into Jesus' likeness. People being prepared for eternal life with him. So when you invest in this eternal work through the giving of your money, there is a direct impact on heaven.

[17 : 58] And not only that, but there is a direct impact on you as well. because our passage ends by saying that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

In other words, Jesus is saying here that as you give money to the work of the gospel, your heart goes with that money. Your mind gets more and more set on the things that God is doing in this world.

You become more and more attached to the kingdom of God as you give to that kingdom. You know, Billy Graham once said that a checkbook is a theological document.

It shows who and what you worship. And that's very true. If we are about doing things for God and his ministry, then it is a tangible expression of trust that the gospel of Jesus is a treasure infinitely worth giving to.

It's an expression of what we are worshipping. And that trust wonderfully will replace the anxiety that so easily entangles our lives, so easily causes us to have tunnel vision on the things of this world.

[19 : 10] And so I want to conclude by saying, asking this question that I think Jesus asks through this passage, and that is, what is the condition of your mind today? Are you filled with worry, which is a concern that Jesus has, or is your heart in heaven?

God wants through his word to make your mind and your heart a generous heart that is firmly fixed on the things of God and his kingdom. I think it would be good if we close by actually reading a section of scripture which I think summarizes this whole chapter.

If you look in Colossians 3 on page 189, Colossians 3, 1 through 4, Paul outlines exactly what Jesus has been teaching here in four verses that will be very good for us to remember and pray

over in the week to come.

And I invite you to do that on page 189. Let's say verses 1 through 4 of chapter 3 together. Amen.

...

[20:58] ...

.