

# Luke 12:13-23 - The Danger of "You Deserve More"

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[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to be here with you this morning. I invite you to turn your Bibles to Luke chapter 12. Now, I'm going to assume that the members of Southwood are similar to almost all the other members in the Presbyterian Church in America, that when Will mentions something like the Committee on Discipleship Ministries or Coordinator, it's sort of like Charlie Brown's teacher, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah, and you really don't know anything about that. What I find is I go to different churches, and that's part of my job as Coordinator for the Committee on Discipleship Ministries, or we call it PCA Discipleship Ministries, is I have to tell them who I am and what I do.

This is the way I like to do it. Now, you're members of Southwood Presbyterian Church, and you have a session, a group of elders that oversees that, but as you think about the ministry of Southwood, the ministry of Southwood is done through committees.

Most churches have a missions committee or a worship committee or education committee, discipleship committee. Well, that happens at the local church.

[ 1 : 24 ] Then you have at the regional level the presbytery, and Southwood is a member of Providence Presbytery, which is basically North Alabama. But then the highest level in our denomination is called the General Assembly, and that's all the churches in the United States and Canada that are part of the Presbyterian Church in America.

So just as you do ministry through committees at the local level and at the presbytery level, you also do ministry through committees at the General Assembly level.

And I am part of one of those committees. Now, what does Discipleship Ministries do? Many people in the PCA know about Mission to the World.

That's one of our committees. It helps local churches do international missions. Others know about Mission to North America, which comes along, that's the committee of the General Assembly, comes alongside a local church to do church planting or mercy ministry or chaplaincy ministry. And then I know you're a supporter of the committee that helps local churches do campus ministry. That's called Reform University Fellowship.

[ 2 : 37 ] Which committee of the General Assembly helps the local church do discipleship within its walls? That's the Committee on Discipleship Ministries.

So what we do is we help local churches do children's ministry, youth ministry, men's ministry, women's ministry, older adult ministry, and leadership training and development.

Now, you would think, oh, that's a lot of work. We only have 10 people in our office. So the way we do it is by connecting people to people and people to resources.

In fact, we had two of your members come join us last weekend. We had a women's leadership training. 300 women from all around the PCA got together in Atlanta, and we talked about this whole idea of passing on the faith from one generation to another, particularly in women's ministries.

Because women's ministry is a part of what we do at CDM. Karen Hodge is our coordinator for women's ministry. She's based out of Chicago. It's a pleasure, as I serve as coordinator, to maintain contact with people in the local church.

[ 3 : 47 ] Will Spink is one of the young pastors that I contact to say, tell me what's going on in the local church. Tell me how ministry in the PCA needs to work.

And I'm very thankful for Will. It was a great pleasure to be on his reference list, and I am so excited for you as a congregation here at Southwood. God has given you a wonderful man, godly man, with

a godly wife, and I look forward to seeing what he's going to do with you in the years to come. This morning, I hope to be part of God's instrument, and be one instrument in the hands of God to connect you with his word. Again, we're looking at Luke chapter 12. Many of you, we know about sibling rivalries.

Happens often in families. You know, you have the little children. It's one of those things that they're in the car, maybe they're in the home, and say, stop touching me, stop touching me. And here's the line, don't cross the line.

You know, that sibling, or it can be, go the route of, mommy likes me better than you. And that happens with children, but you know, it can also happen with adults.

[ 5 : 00 ] Think about it. How many of you are Downton Abbey fans? We have any, okay, we have a number of you. If you're watching this final season, there's a lot of sibling rivalry going on.

It's actually been through the whole thing, but it's now especially Lady Mary and Lady Edith, and going back and forth on that. But, you know, it happens in families, but it also happens in church families.

It also happens as we think about the broader culture, how people deal with each other, this competition, this rivalry. The text shows us sibling rivalry with adults.

Jesus, in Luke chapter 12, he's teaching on God's provision. In verse 7, he talked about how you are more value than sparrows. And then he goes on to say, the Holy Spirit will give you what you need to say if you're ever brought before the authorities.

And then right after that, in verse 13, here's this man, presumably a little brother. He makes a request. Follow along with me as I read.

[ 6 : 05 ] Luke chapter 12, beginning in verse 13. Someone in the crowd said to him, him being Jesus, teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

But Jesus said to him, man, who made me a judge or arbiter over you? He said to them, take care and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

He told them a parable saying, the land of a rich man produced plentifully. And he thought to himself, what shall I do for I have nowhere to store my crops?

And he said, I will do this. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years.

Relax, eat, drink, be merry. But God said to him, fool, this night your soul is required of you.

[ 7 : 23 ] And the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.

And he 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.

Lord, pray with me. Father, this is your word. The grass withers and the flowers fade, but your word stands forever.

We ask that you will open our eyes and soften our hearts. That we may see the wonderful things you have for us. By your grace, show us Jesus.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord. For you are our strength and our redeemer.

[ 8 : 39 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. This 2015 book called The Entitlement Cure, John Townsend told the story of an energetic and extroverted young sales manager.

She was in her late 30s. She had a situation where her sales figures were lagging. Not only hers individually, but also her sales team.

And so her boss brought John Townsend in to sort of deal with this as he worked with different people. And as he was talking to her, she replied this way.

She said, My boss didn't make his expectations clear. He didn't give me enough staff, nor did he give me enough data. That's why my sales figures weren't what they needed to be.

Well, John Townsend had met with the boss before he met with the employee. And he knew from hard evidence that the boss had given him that what the hard evidence said contradicted what her thoughts were.

[ 9 : 49 ] And he replied to her. He said, You're friendly. You're warm. You work hard. And she interrupted him and said, That's right.

That should be enough. I'm warm. I'm caring. I hold this office together with my relational skills. I deserve to be appreciated for what I do.

Even if my sales figures lag, I deserve to be appreciated. As Townsend reflected on the conversation, he said, basically her argument was, I am owed special treatment.

That there's that internal voice within her saying, You deserve more. And that's the voice of entitlement.

The voice of discontent. That discontent. It's part of all of our lives. Because it flows out of our fallen nature.

[ 11 : 03 ] We see it here in the text as Jesus is dealing with this man in the crowd. He's teaching the crowd. And this man comes to him bringing this family squabble. But Jesus refuses to join in with the family disagreement.

Rather, he addresses the deeper issue with a warning and a parable. We see the basic issue there in verse 15.

As Jesus says, covetousness is the problem. Covetousness. You could call it greed or desire for more. It's what the 10th commandment talks about. Thou shalt not covet. It's that wanting something that doesn't belong to you because it's just this driving force where you aren't happy because you don't have.

And so this message here is beware this insatiable hunger for more because that leads to discontent. Brothers and sisters, think about our current political environment.

And the messages that are being presented by candidates on both sides of the aisle. It's coming to the people of the United States and saying, you deserve more.

[ 12 : 18 ] You are discontent. And it's stirring it. And all of us can fall prey to it. In the wider culture and in our world, even in the church.

What it is, it's a situation where God is not central. And so God is pushed aside and something else comes onto the throne of our lives. God is replaced by a worldly thing.

And often that worldly thing is ourselves. Our desires. Our needs. Our... Just us. And it leads to vanity. To use the image that Will used earlier.

We try to live our lives with that fork or that slotted spoon. Getting things out of life. And it just leads to more and more discontent.

The antidote for discontent as we're being presented here in this text is to pursue something. To pursue and embrace the treasure of a God-centered life.

[ 13 : 22 ] This call to live with God at the center is necessary because of our fallen condition. That with which we struggle. It's also this call because worldliness affects us in so many ways.

But then also this call for a God-centered life flows because of the greatness of the alternative that God provides. So we think through this.

Note something right here at the beginning. Who is the audience? The audience. Now many people when they read this text, they sort of take a surface view and say, Well, the primary audience for this text...

These people need to hear it. It's the rich people that need to hear. The interesting thing about life and humans is we always think that others are rich and we're not so rich.

We always see ourselves as below somebody else. That's just mankind's human nature. But what's being presented here is a refining of our view because nowhere Jesus' words are directed.

[ 14 : 28 ] Verse 14, he addresses the man who had the question. And that man felt like he was being put out. He was poor and so that's why he was coming to Jesus.

But then verse 15, note what it says. It says, Said to them. It's the wider crowd. And then you have verse 22 where it says it speaks to the disciples, those who were followers of Jesus.

Now, what's the message in all this? The message is this. All of us struggle with this. All of us have that fallen nature and we're struggling with this discontent, wanting to remove God and place something else in the center of our lives.

And it's because of that bent of our fallen nature we must embrace the treasure of a God-centered life. Verse 13, the man wants to inherit. He wants his inheritance.

Now, understand the background here. In Deuteronomy chapter 21, we see about how the Jewish culture was to deal with inheritance. And that is the older brother was to receive a double portion.

[ 15 : 36 ] It's found in Deuteronomy chapter 21. Now, we don't know what exactly the problem was in this particular case. We don't know. Maybe the older brother wasn't even going to give him his smaller portion.

Or it may be the younger brother just wanted equal. We don't know. The text doesn't tell us. But what we do know is the younger brother or this brother wasn't happy. In verse 14, Jesus refuses to serve as the judge in this particular case.

But yet, at the same time, in his response, Jesus does render a judgment on the man's situation. And then he broadens the application. In verse 15, Jesus implicitly states that the man is covetous. The man is greedy. Verse 21, he brings up the idea of guilty of misplaced priorities, which leads to the parable of the fool.

[ 16 : 47 ] But understand something. As Jesus is addressing this one man, he's also addressing everybody else, including us. Here's something we need to keep in mind.

Offentimes, we view our culture and we see people. We say, well, that person's, they're just discontent or they're struggling with a sense of entitlement. When we see it in others, we have to watch out.

Because it's never far from any of us. And we must be watching and avoid thinking, I'm above that. Because that mentality, that covetousness, it flows out of our fallen nature. And we must acknowledge our nature with which we still struggle.

Even though we're redeemed, we still struggle with it. And so we repent and seek God to be the center. As we go on and analyze Jesus' response, we also see symptoms of worldliness, where it can creep into our lives, which make it necessary for us to be intentional in seeking a God-centered way of life.

[ 18 : 10 ] Really, you could put it this way. What Jesus points out is the vanity of a self-centered life. Verse 13, we see man's attempt to use Jesus as leverage.

That's what he's trying to do. He's saying, Jesus, you make the decision. And what happens is, the worldly view means it sort of pushes us to seek to gather influential allies.

We want this person to support our cause. We want these authors to support our point. We look for those types of things as trying to use them to gain leverage against somebody else.

Years ago, I heard the testimony of a businessman. He was a very successful businessman. He came to a point where he had these years of making connections in his business.

He knew some very powerful people. In fact, he was a big golfer, and he had met many of the people on the professional golf tour. And so, he was sort of in that whole lifestyle where he would, knew the celebrity friends, and he would have all of these invitations to go to this party or this meeting or this conference and all of that.

[ 19 : 34 ] And another thing about him, though, is he had trouble sleeping at night. And he remembers he was on a trip or actually coming back from a trip.

And in that trip, it just hit him. He was sitting in his first class seat, and he had just left a golf tournament with many of the very well-known professional golfers.

And as he was sitting there on the plane, it just hit him how much he was in bondage to pride in the pursuit of influence.

And he remembers saying to himself, I hate this. I must decrease.

And Christ must increase. Now, I'll be honest with you. When I heard him tell that story, there was something in me that said, Yeah, but I would like to have all that influence and know all those people.

[ 20 : 50 ] But I was deaf to what he was saying. He said, I had it. And it didn't satisfy. Because God was not at the center.

We'll go on down to verse 15. In verse 23, there's another aspect where worldliness grabs us, and that's in a life that's defined by possessions. Now, a lot of this we think of money or something like that, but it could also be influence or anything that we have or that we control.

Job, awards, social status, causes. That can come into our lives, and we put God aside so that can have center stage.

Again, I heard a testimony of a missionary. And he was preaching a sermon, and he talked about that for 20 years, he had been one of those missionaries that was in one of those really dangerous parts of the world where you have to say, I can't tell you where I'm ministering because it would be very dangerous for me.

He served there for many, many years, very high risk, but because after 20 years, the people who oversaw the mission agency said, we need somebody like you with your experience to come help us teach the new missionaries going out.

[ 22 : 22 ] So they pulled him off the field and put him in the home office. And after he had been there a few years, he said, I hate being at the bottom.

And what he meant by that is that he noticed that in the Christian community, we have this sort of unspoken pecking order. If you want to know who the really holy people are, those are the missionary.

First of all, you're a missionary. And if you're a missionary in a hard place, then you're really holy. So you have the really holy missionaries, the sort of run-of-the-mill holy missionaries.

Then you have pastors, then you have other believers, and then you have home office people. And he says, I hate being at the bottom.

But what he did, as he was thinking through that, he realized that his identity had been wrapped up in his work and in his position rather than identity defined by God.

[ 23 : 28 ] And he said it was a symptom of the worldliness that was shaping him. So another thing there in verse 17 through 19, that's a me-centeredness.

It's an interesting characteristic of this parable that Jesus tells. In those five verses, the word I or me is used 12 times.

Basically, the man in the parable has this view. I have a problem. I will fix it. I will enjoy. And Jesus is addressing this.

Jesus did that very intentionally because that's what we do. We have a me-centeredness as we think about our lives. It's a sign of worldliness pulling us away.

And you have in verse 19 this enjoyment, this sensual pursuit of pleasure, what some have said the credo of the hedonist, relax, eat, drink, and be merry.

[ 24 : 39 ] But think about our life and our culture today. What is the highest thing that you can achieve? Retire early and do what you want to.

Think about the marketing. It's a major theme in marketing. You deserve this type of car. You deserve this type of vacation. You deserve this type of thing. It's all this idea.

Sometimes it just has the idea of hang on until Friday because you deserve this kind of weekend. And so the good life is good food, good drink, and do nothing.

Well, there's nothing wrong with good food and good drink and good do nothing. Well, you need to do something because we're created to work. But the idea is sometimes those things, that leisure, can be what we pursue rather than the Sabbath which God had designed.

As we think about our lives, enjoyment can sometimes take center stage. But then there's another thing in verse 22, another symptom, and that is anxiety about our lives.

[ 25 : 50 ] Even the basic, where we worry about food, we worry about clothing, we worry about this and that. All of that Jesus is presenting, those are hooks of the world that are in you. But then the most tragic symptom, and perhaps the most common, is the one that's seen in the parable.

And that is a dullness to God or a dullness to spiritual reality. You see, with the parable, Jesus says, the land produced plenty.

Now, understand that in the Jewish mindset, particularly we see this in Psalm 104, it is God who brings the bounty. But note the mindset of the man.

In the man's mind, it's just something that happened. What luck! I've got all of this wonderful blessing and all this great thing. There's no acknowledgement of God. There's no giving of thanks. There's no concept of an accountability or a stewardship. And so what does God say? God addresses the man, and what is he calling? Fool.

[ 27 : 02 ] Now, when it says fool there, it's not talking about an intellectual deficiency. It's a moral term. A fool, according to Scripture, is someone who lives with no acknowledgement of God.

It's as if God's not there. Or sometimes you hear it put this way. They are practical atheists.

And brothers and sisters, we struggle with that many times throughout the day. Where we live as fools. As if God does not exist.

And is not caring for us. What happened in this man in the parable's life is something that happens to us as well. Where reality becomes something that we can see.

Something that we can touch. Or something that we can manage. And it's a sign that worldliness has grabbed us.

[ 28 : 12 ] And it's because of the way the worldliness colors our lives that we must pursue this God-centered life. When we see the symptoms, our tendency is to downplay it or rationalize it away.

It's not really that bad. Or I have a reason for doing this. Because a God-centered life is honest. There's this frequent self-examination in a repentance.

Lord, I live as if you don't exist. I live trying to put myself or other things in the center of my life. We have to ask the question. Where do the chains of the world bind us? And when we see it, we say, Lord, deliver me.

Let the salvation that is bondage, that's broken by Jesus Christ, be real in my life today. You know, the irony of this whole situation is this man came to Jesus wanting Jesus to improve his life.

[ 29 : 27 ] And Jesus wanted the same thing. But the man had said, My life will be improved in ways that I define because he was defining good in a worldly sense.

And that's what we do as well. But Jesus wanted more. And it's because of the fullness of the alternative that God offers that we must embrace this God-centered life.

Verse 14. Jesus is more than just a problem solver. Because the context of Luke 12 goes all the way back to Luke 9, verse 51, where Jesus, it's very clear, Luke records that Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem.

He knew he was going to Jerusalem to make the sacrifice for all the brokenness of mankind. And so everything that happens after that Luke 9, verse 51, must be seen in the light of Jesus knowing he's going to the cross.

And that Jesus was going to die for all the pettiness, all the self-centeredness, all the disregard for God. That Jesus was going to be the fulfillment of what Isaiah the prophet had said, that by his wounds we are healed.

[ 30 : 44 ] And part of that healing is contentment. You remember what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4?

Apostle Paul was in jail, and the whole book of Philippians is full of rejoice, rejoice, rejoice. But he says in Philippians 4, he says, I have learned. I know what it is to have plenty.

I know what it is to have want. I know what it is to be free. I know what it is to be in jail. And he said, I can do all things through him who gives me strength.

Do you see the secret of a contented life? It's having Jesus, and knowing he has freed you, and then trusting him to give you strength, whatever the circumstances may be.

Note the grace of the passage that is seen here. Jesus is not harsh with this man. He's direct with him. But in the warning of verse 15, or the rebuke of verse 20, Jesus is revealing the heart of God.

[ 32 : 01 ] God warns us so that man will change. God never abandons us to the chains of worldliness, and so our task, our calling, our response, is to heed the warning.

It's interesting. The end of the parable is uncertain. We don't know what the man in the parable did. Now, we assume that he died that night, and he died apart from God.

Many people assume that. But another thing is, we don't know what happened to the man who brought the question.

The message of verse 20 is that the business decision you thought was so great, Mr. Man in the parable, is really worthless.

Rather, in verse 21, you're to seek the riches of God. And then you consider the man who brought the request. We don't know what happened to him.

[ 33 : 11 ] And that's important because that leads to an even more relevant question. What will you do as you read through the parable?

In what area of your life are you thinking, you know, I deserve more?

It's in that area that you need to look for discontent. And heed the warning that Jesus gives. This parable calls us to put self aside, to put worldliness aside, to put aside laying up treasures for ourselves, and to seek the treasure of God, the treasure that's found only in Jesus Christ.

Let me tell you about David. My first memory of David was finding out he was a custodian at Covenant Theological Seminary.

David was an older man, probably in his 60s. Very rich, deep voice. And I remember thinking something along the lines of, poor guy.

[ 34 : 42 ] I wonder what happened to him that brought him to this place in his life where here he is at seminary and he's a custodian at the seminary, doing menial jobs, piecemealing his master

divinity together.

You can imagine my surprise when not too long after that, I found out he had a law degree from Vanderbilt University. And for 20 years, he had been a music copyright and contract lawyer, deeply involved in the Nashville music scene.

His wife and three kids had seminary degrees and he was president of a mission agency. A mission agency that provided theological training for people in the former Soviet bloc countries.

But yet, as he was doing, he had all that background and he had all that current ministry, he continued his work as a church custodian. Because as he was working there on the seminary campus, taking classes and cleaning bathrooms, he looked for seminary students to encourage and mentor.

And every now and then, he would fly overseas to teach classes. And the amazing thing about David is David knew well the glories of the world. He knew well what it meant to have influence and success, but he also knew the darkness of his own fallen nature.

[ 36 : 16 ] And he saw the many ways that worldliness ensnared him. And so, as he brought Jesus into the picture, he realized what true worth was.

And he pursued a life of humility and repentance. He wanted to be a man who every day was a pursuit of Jesus who had wiped away the stains and the vanity of his past.

David contracted Parkinson's disease. And as the disease began to take over his body, it hindered his speech and hindered his motion, but he still served.

In fact, he and his wife moved from St. Louis move out to Utah to work in a PCA church plant that was reaching out to the Mormon population in Utah.

In September of 2013, Jesus called David home to glory. Jesus called David home to enjoy fully the divine riches that he had tasted on earth.

[ 37 : 50 ] Jesus called David home so that he could hear, well done. A former seminary student summarized well the impact of David's ministry in the example of his life.

A seminary student wrote this, David taught me what it means to live out my theology and challenge my idols of comfort and prestige.

Brothers and sisters, that's the essence of a life that is centered on God. But even more than that, that's the life that Jesus gives to all who put their trust in him.

For no longer is it I deserve more, but Jesus, you deserve more.

May he work that grace in us today. Let's pray. Father, all of us struggle with this nature of selfishness.

[ 39 : 20 ] And oh Lord, we pursue so energetically the things of this world. Lord, thank you that Jesus Christ has freed us from our sin, freed us from the bondage of our idolatry.

Oh Lord, deliver us. Make us quick to examine and repent, knowing that you don't desire us to wallow in guilt, but rather to live in the freedom that Christ provides.

Oh Lord Jesus, do that work, for we pray in your name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](http://southwood.org).