

Harvest Thanksgiving Service

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[0 : 00] Well, we can turn back to our reading in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 12. You can read again at verse 15, where Jesus said, 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 one's possessions.

We're going to think about the whole of this section from verse 13 to verse 34, but it's really based on that verse, verse 15, where it speaks about the reality that our lives are not just based on the abundance of one's possessions.

It's not about all that we have in the sense of possessions. Because tonight we come to give thanks to God in a particular way, as we think of the service this evening being a harvest thanksgiving service.

But many of us, I'm sure, who gather here this evening, we're not involved directly in the harvest, as it were. We're not depending on what we produce for ourselves, like maybe a generation in the past did.

So maybe we lose sight of the very fact that we have so much to give thanks for. We expect to have food on our table. We take it for granted that we'll have clothes in our homes and the warmth that we enjoy.

[1 : 34] We can become distracted in many ways. But we want to focus this evening on that sense of thanksgiving, recognising that we have so much to give thanks for, that maybe it's not directly our labours that are provided for us, but the labourers who are out there working day and night, that we might have food on our table and clothes to wear in the homes that we have.

So we come this evening to give thanks to God for all that we have. And perhaps when we think of harvest thanksgiving, we can maybe think of particular people who come to our mind.

We think of farmers. We think of those who produce crops in our own nation, and indeed many nations of the world, how much we have on our tables before us that come from all corners of the world.

So we think of farmers. We think maybe of those who go to sea and take goods to us, or catch our goods fishermen, and all of those involved in that kind of work.

They have to deal with all kinds of things in their work. And many of them are wise to their surroundings. They're wise to what's going on.

[2 : 51] And that's what we're looking at here this evening in many ways, is this parable of the rich fool. He was obviously someone who was good at what he was doing, producing a harvest.

He was wise in that. And he was seeing a harvest that was great, and he was wanting to multiply this and to build bigger barns. But in it all, he lost sight of what was truly important, and that was his soul.

And I guess in many ways, we can lose sight of what's truly important in life as well, especially when we take things for granted. And we often need reminding, and reminders given to us to have our focus right.

So as we give thanks, it always leads us to come back to thanksgiving to God. But when you think of those involved in harvest, whether it's farmers, fishermen, they've often got wise sayings, just little sayings that they have, that they've learned and seen over their years of experience.

A farmer once said, an empty barn needs no roof. Well, that's just looking at, if there's no harvest, there's no point in a roof in the barn. We need to have a harvest for that to be so.

[4 : 12] A fisherman once said, there's a time to fish and a time to dry the nets. So there's a time for all things. And there's wisdom in all of these things.

But when you look at the harsh reality of these kinds of lifestyle, you wonder, well, where is their hope? Where is their hope when it comes to the harvest that's going to come or the catch that

they're going to get?

It's often true that they could say, well, it's a life, a profession of hope. We hope we have a good harvest. We hope we get a good catch.

But as we were thinking about recently, the word hope, it has those two different ways of looking at it. We can have a worldly hope where it's based on the uncertainty of things, or we can have it when it's looking to the Lord.

Because when we're saying, when our hope is that we have a good catch and it's in a worldly sense, then there's no room for thanksgiving. When our hope is in a harvest without thinking that God's providing it, there's no room for thanksgiving.

[5 : 26] But our hope is in the Lord. And so tonight, as we come and give thanks for all that we have and all that we enjoy, our hope is in the Lord who provides, whether it's in plenty or in need, it is still the Lord who provides.

And it's the Lord who gives us wisdom. And when you look in the Bible, and especially maybe the book of Proverbs, you find there many wise sayings.

One of my favorites is this, and it ties in with what we're looking at this evening. Proverbs 30, verse 8 and 9. Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.

Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, Who is the Lord? Or I may become poor and steal and so dishonor the name of my God.

There's wisdom in these words. Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. And that's really what Jesus is teaching here in this parable of the rich fool.

[6 : 44] He's reminding us of what's important. He's teaching us of the wisdom or lack of wisdom that we can find in having too much or too little and reminding us of what is truly important.

You see, this passage is reminding us it's not all about having an abundance of possessions. It's about having a perspective on what is important in our lives.

A harvest thanksgiving almost immediately assumes that there is plenty to give thanks for. But it's not always the case. For some, this may have been a good year and there's much to give thanks for.

But for others, it's been a difficult year. A year of sorrow. A year of hardship in many different ways. Maybe we struggled to make ends meet.

But do we not still have a reason to come and thank the Lord for his goodness to us? That he is the one who never leaves us or forsakes us.

[7 : 57] And so Jesus is here teaching in this parable about verse 15 there. Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness for one's life does not consist in the abundance of one's possessions.

He's teaching to be careful whether it's in our plenty. And then as he goes on to speak to them as we go on in this chapter not to be anxious in our need but to remember the Lord who is able to bless and especially to bless with a treasure that never fades.

So we want to look on these things this evening. Too much, first of all, distracts. Too much takes our eyes off the Lord.

So here in chapter 12 Jesus is teaching to this large crowd. He's preaching to them. Thousands have gathered. They're trampling over one another. He's preaching the gospel to them.

He's preaching of the importance of their soul. He's preaching of the importance of their need of God to fear the one who kills the soul, the devil.

[9 : 10] He's talking about there to fear the judgment, to fear all of these things, to see the seriousness of life. But in the midst of this there's an interruption from a man.

And that's what we see in verse 13. And this interruption you'd think he's got an important question to ask on eternity or his soul or what is important in life but we see what is important to him with the thing that he asks of Jesus.

Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. After all he's been hearing the most important thing he has to ask of Jesus is to settle this dispute so that he can have more.

So that he can have his inheritance. Here he is listening to Jesus preach on the most important thing in life his soul and this is what is important.

But how easy it is to be distracted away from what is the most important thing and not just our own soul but the soul of others around us.

[10:29] All that matters to this man is self. his own prosperity. He's after his inheritance. He's after what he wants that he thinks will fulfill his life. And that's what he brings to Jesus. So he's looking for more.

But when you ask yourself this evening what kind of harvest have you had this year? Have you managed to get all that you wanted?

Are you thankful or are you deciding more? You see it's easy for us to end up like this man. To get so distracted away from the important things in the gospel and to think about ourselves. ourselves. To put ourselves as number one. Are we thankful or are we deciding more? We have to be careful.

[11:34] And this goes right back to the beginning of the scriptures. You think about Adam and Eve in the garden. They had everything that they needed. All the trees in the garden were theirs.

Bar one. there was one that they were told not to touch. What did they do? They weren't content until they would have that one as well.

That's the kind of parable that Jesus is teaching here as he teaches of the rich fool. As he goes on to explain about the one who had plenty and was building bigger barns.

Never content. Always wanting more. And when you look at the rich fool produced plentifully what did he start saying in verse 18?

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 you have ample goods laid up for many years.

[12:43] Relax eat drink and be merry. You see the word I I I is all that we see there. He's got his own plans. His life is the abundance of one one's possessions.

And he's thinking about himself. But what does the Lord say to him in verse 20? But God said to him fool this night your soul is required of you and the things you have prepared whose will they be? This man is a fool. And so are we fools if that's what we're putting first. The abundance of our possessions. Psalm 107 the last verse verse 43 let all the wise take note and learn the Lord's love does not cease.

The wise take heed of the Lord's love. the fool just looks to himself. So we have to be careful of the abundance of good things that we have that we don't lose sight of what is truly important.

A preacher called George Truitt in America in the early 1900s. He was quite a famous preacher in his time. And he was alongside all kinds of different people ministering around Texas.

[14:13] Texas was quite a wealthy place at the time. The oil had started flowing and there was so much money and wealth in that place at the time. And he got invited along to a very wealthy man's home in Texas.

And they enjoyed a meal together and after the meal the host led George outside and he started looking around and showing him all that he had.

He pointed in one direction and there was the oil wells that were producing the oil at that time where his wealth was coming from. And he said 25 years ago I had nothing.

Now all that you see is mine. He looked in another direction where herds of cattle were and bragged they're all mine.

He looked another direction and looked to the fields that were full of grain. that's all mine. He looked in the last direction and saw the forest behind him and says that's all mine too.

[15:19] And he paused expecting George through it to have something to say to him in a way of congratulations on making so much wealth for himself.

But instead George put his hand on his shoulder with one hand and pointed up towards the heaven with the other and he said to the man what do you have in that direction?

And the man's head hung and he confessed I hadn't thought about that. He had everything as he looked around. Plenty of wealth.

In his own eyes everything he needed. But the most important thing was missing. What did he have in the heavens? He was a fool too because he had no consideration of that.

So as we think of all that we have we have much to give thanks for. Let us not lose sight of the Lord. Let us not lose sight of our soul that is so precious above everything else.

[16:28] Too much distracts. But as you go on in this we see too that we could think too little can leave us in despair.

And Jesus turns his focus now to his followers and especially the disciples after he's explained this parable to them as he spoke in this parable to them.

In verse 22 down to verse 34 it's headed there do not be anxious. so the opposite problem of having too much is worrying that we've got too little.

You see greed can never have enough but worry is afraid it will never have enough either. Greed can never have enough worry is afraid it will never have enough.

And so worry is something that can come quite naturally to us. We think we're anxious about our harvest we're anxious about what we have we don't have enough we're struggling and when you think of the disciples here we know that they had left everything.

[17 : 39] In Mark chapter 10 verse 28 Peter said to Jesus we have left everything to follow you. So they had left behind so much and they didn't have a lot.

They wandered around village to village town to town sometimes going hungry. But what Jesus says to them is do not worry.

Do not worry. It's easier said than done isn't it if we're struggling. Do not worry. But Jesus here reminds them why they should not worry.

We can give thanks for all the Lord has given us in the past year. And can we honestly say that God has failed us. Is there a point where you say God let me down.

We can probably say it of ourselves in the sense of I have failed the Lord. But can we say the Lord has failed me. We might find ourselves in situations where we don't understand.

[18 : 49] We find hard. But the God that we read of in the scriptures he doesn't fail us. Because he says I will never leave you. I will always be with you.

And so as you go through verse 23 down to verse 34 Jesus is here explaining reasons we have not to worry not to be anxious.

In verse 23 it says for life is more than food and the body more than clothing. Jesus is saying here do not be anxious because life is so much more than this.

It's not all about what you eat or what you wear or all of these things. That's not what's important. Don't be anxious about that. Then in verse 24 he says 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 then than the birds? God views his people as so important as so precious to him.

[19 : 58] You are much more valuable to him than all the birds. And so he's saying do not be anxious. I care for you. I love you. And then he speaks about our lives.

In verse 25, which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to a span of life? If then you are not able to do a smaller thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?

We cannot add to our lives. We worry about our lives, maybe worry about getting older. All of these things can cause anxiety. But God is saying do not be anxious.

You cannot change that. You cannot add to your life span, but he is in control. So we trust him. Then it goes on in verse 27.

He speaks there of the lilies. 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.

[21 : 08] The Lord has so many precious things in this world. He says consider the lilies. Look at the lilies. How beautiful they are.

And how precious we are to him. These lilies have a glory to them. And the Lord is saying do not be anxious because when you're trusting in me you have a glory that's mine as well.

And he goes on then to speak of the care that he takes in 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 or you of little faith.

Is that us? Are we those of little faith? Are we trusting! God who provides for us to clothe us to feed in all of these things.

Then in verse 30 he says for all the nations of the world seek after these things and your father knows that you need them. God knows everything that we need and he provides he will give it to us as we need but he gives it to us as we seek his kingdom first verse 31 instead seek his kingdom and all these things will be added to you.

[22 : 44] So he's reminding us here to trust him. It's not to say that we get everything that we desire but that he'll give us what we need. If you read Alistair Begg's online daily reading today was a great reminder in the midst of Thanksgiving!

Habakkuk chapter 3 and he quoted verse 17 and 18 from Habakkuk chapter 3 which says though the fig trees should not blossom nor fruit beyond the vines the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls yet I will rejoice in the Lord I will take joy in the God of my salvation as the beg went on to say this on that verse Habakkuk was imagining a situation that would amount to great devastation for an agricultural society no fruit no fruit produce yields flocks or herds meant a completely broken economy and a chronic shortage of food yet Habakkuk says that even if confronted with that scenario our greatest concern should be neither pestilence nor plague but that the work of God would be revived ultimately

Habakkuk said he would be found singing trusting the sovereign work of the Lord the God of salvation was all he needed for joy it doesn't depend on the abundance of great possessions but that our joy is in the Lord and that he is the one who has blessed us maybe we feel a sense of fear and anxiety about the future about what lies ahead but even in that we don't want little to leave us in despair but to see that God cares and God knows so he says do not be anxious so too much can distract too little can leave us despairing but thirdly in this we see that God gives us what we need he gives us what we need as

Jesus rounds off this section he does by reminding us what is of greatest importance and should be our greatest delight in life to be part of the kingdom of God fear not it says in verse 32 little flock for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom he gives what we truly need the fool who wanted to build bigger barns his soul was required of him the one who is anxious we can have a sense of despair and lose sight of God but Jesus here is teaching us keep our eyes on what is important fix our eyes on him and his kingdom because that is the most precious thing of all and he goes on to describe it in the way of our treasure he says in the middle of verse 33 that there are 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 so we have something that

God is able to give and it's not the abundance of possessions that counts it's this treasure in heaven but he leaves them with a challenge in verse 34 where your treasure is there will your heart be also and so where is our heart where is our treasure tonight are we looking for the abundance of possessions are we anxious in little things or are we seeking first the kingdom of God that adds everything else for us where your treasure is there your heart will be also David gives us a great lesson in Psalm 37 about this and he says in verse 3 set thou thy trust upon the Lord and be thou doing good and so thou in the land shalt dwell and verily have food delight thyself in

[27 : 45] God he'll give thy heart's desire to thee thy way to God commit him trust it bring to pass shall he there is wisdom for us trust the Lord do good delight thyself in God trust him he'll bring it to pass as we give thanks to God for a harvest as we give thanks to God for all that we've enjoyed from his hand in this past year let's not be distracted by too much let's not be anxious in too little but let us trust the Lord let us continue to do good for he will provide delight ourselves in God he'll give our hearts desire commit our ways to him he'll bring it to pass let us do that as

Proverbs said give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say who is the Lord or I may become poor and steal and so dishonor the name of God Lord give us our daily bread for that is what we need and we find that as we seek the kingdom of God and everything else will be added to us let us pray Lord our gracious God we do thank you that you are a God of abundance you could give us the cattle on a thousand hills and yet you give us what we need and so help us Lord that our desires would not be for an abundance of great possessions but instead that we would just keep praying

Lord give us our daily bread help us to be satisfied with all that you give and all that we have for you are a God who never fails us too much could distract us too little could leave us anxious but our daily bread will keep us looking to the kingdom of God where we find everything else added to us so Lord teach us in all of these things give us your wisdom that we would not be the fool who seeks to build bigger barns but that we would not be overly anxious either and so we would turn away from you in either of these ways that we would fix our eyes on Jesus looking unto him so hear our prayers!

pardon our sins is all we ask we ask in his precious we're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 4 the Scottish Psalter version Psalm 4 Psalm bestowed by thee, more gladness I have found than they even then when corn and wine did most with them abound. I will both lay me down in peace and quiet sleep will take, because thou only me to dwell in safety, Lord does make.

We'll sing these verses to God's praise. We stand to sing.

Who will show us any truth? Is that which can we say?

[32 : 07] Let all thy tantrums shall I, Lord lift us away.

Upon thy heart is so tidy, for gladness I have found.

And they even when corn and wine did most with them abound.

I will both lay me down in peace and quiet secret day, because thou only me to dwell in safety.

Lord does make. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore. Amen.