

# Gospel and the Kingdom Part 3

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Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[ 0 : 00 ] to Luke, Luke chapter 12, and we'll be picking our reading up at verse 13. So Luke chapter 12, verse 13.

Now hear God's word. Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

But he said to him, Man, who made me a judge or arbiter over you? And 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. And he told them a parable saying, The land of a rich man produced plentiful.

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.

[ 1 : 10 ] And there I will store 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, and be merry.

But God said to him, Fool, this night your soul is required of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?

So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich towards 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. 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 than the birds? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a simple hour to his span of life?

[ 2 : 13 ] If then you, who are not able to do a small thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? 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, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith?

And 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 that you need them.

Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with 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.

[ 3 : 23 ] For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Well, may God bless the reading of his word to our souls, to our minds, to our hearts.

Let us pray before we come to God's word. Father God, we thank you that you feed us with physical food, and you feed us with the food of your word.

And that produces very tangible and real results in our life, keeping us strong, fit, and healthy, not just spiritually, but physically as well.

That we recognize that David said that when he hid things from you, his bones were heavy and wasted away. And so there is this relationship between what we are spiritually before you and what we are physically in the world.

And so we ask this morning that you build us up and keep us strong for your glory in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, this is part three in Gospel and Kingdom.

[ 4 : 32 ] We have been spending a bit of time over these last two weeks in this section of Luke. There is a turning point, of course, in Luke, as there is in Mark and Matthew and John.

And in Luke, it happens just around about chapter 9, as Jesus is declared that he will suffer and die at the hands of others.

But he lays down his life and the cost then of following Jesus in light of this new revelation, this new information that the disciples must now live and consider and wrestle with in their own hearts and minds.

But in this, Christians are able to live with a joyful confidence. And a joyful confidence is something that we cannot really get from anywhere else.

Joyful, perhaps, confidence in other things, perhaps, but this joyful confidence in following Jesus is something that we have as a result of having faith.

[ 5 : 34 ] In other words, it cannot happen without faith. And so following Jesus, as we have seen, is where we have made particular decisions.

One of those decisions is to count the cost and be willing to pay the cost, a life full of new convictions and new commitments.

It is where we are determined to seek first the kingdom. And everything else has its place, but it doesn't have first place.

We seek first the kingdom and God's righteousness. And this is the only way we can lay up our treasures in heaven, which is the very thing that Jesus tells us to do with treasure.

It's not that we should give it away. We should lay it up. We should lay it up in heaven, but not store it down here on earth. And of course, this joyful confidence of this new way of thinking is a new way of life entirely as a result of following Jesus.

[ 6 : 39 ] It is costly. It makes huge demands over our life. But it leads to a place where we are with God, where we are not occupied with our possessions because we have God and God has us.

And so this joyful confidence is not simply a state of mind, that we're trying to get people into a positive state of mind. And it's much more than that. It's much more transformational than simply a change of mind.

This will affect our hearts. It will affect our decisions. And of course, it'll work its way out into our possessions, which is the very thing that Jesus gets to here.

And so there is a difference, a clear difference between the concerns in life and then the concern of life itself. The concerns in life are many.

Health, wealth, where we will live, what we will do, how we will do it. And all of these concerns can increase over the years.

[ 7 : 48 ] But then there's the concern of life itself. Will we even be alive tomorrow? Many of us don't even think about that. How long will we actually live? It's not something that perhaps preoccupies us.

And yet Jesus is drawing our attention to that part rather than the other part. We are preoccupation with the temporal and tangible material things of this world.

And Jesus is pointing out that we cannot even control how many days we will live. And that is to wake us up. And to realize whose hands we are really in, who really has the control, and who is able, properly able, to take care of us.

Because if we do not know if we will be here tomorrow, we are unable to take care of the cares of tomorrow. So there are multiple lessons here, which Jesus builds upon as he goes from engaging with this man to telling the parable, and then moving into the very clear conviction of why we should not worry and have that joyful confidence.

Because if we seek first the kingdom, God will look after us. God will take care of our needs so that we don't have to take care of them ourselves.

[ 9 : 09 ] It is a unique point in following Jesus, a unique point that we must understand. So let's begin with a summary of the whole section.

It begins with someone in the crowd. We don't know who it is. It could be a man. It could be a woman. But the brother has all the inheritance. And this someone is asking Jesus to intervene. And then Jesus goes on to tell a parable because he's not going to intervene in this matter. But the parable that he tells is about a man who decides to build bigger barns so that in the future he can relax.

He can eat, drink, and be merry. In other words, here is a man who is planning for a good retirement. He is planning to have the period of time in his life where he can almost be passive in every possible way, where the income just flows in and all he gets to do is spend it. He doesn't have to worry about making an income anymore. He can live off the wealth that has been accumulated. But Jesus drives home a very strong and serious point that you don't even know if you're going to be alive in that day to enjoy that inheritance.

[10:37] You don't even know if you're going to be alive when it actually comes to the point of retirement, when it actually comes to the point where you think you can sit back and eat, drink, and be merry, that that point will actually come.

And therefore, you ought to take into consideration what is actually within your control. The basic lesson is, of course, that many of us can be preoccupied with many of the concerns of life that we have no control over.

They are hopes. They are dreams. Many of them are good. Most of them perhaps are valid. Many of them will not be equal to seeking first the kingdom because that is the first thing we ought to do. And this is what Jesus is getting us to see over and over again. The difference between a valid reading of Scripture, a valid understanding, and then the difference between all those that are valid in terms of their equality.

And, of course, some of these things are more important than others. And then Jesus goes on, understanding in light of the parable and the light of the future and the need for needs to be met, to tell his disciples not to worry, that if they put God first, then God will look after them, that if they seek first the kingdom, then they don't have to be worried about these other things.

[12:05] God knows that we cannot serve God in mammon. God knows that we cannot do it. And, therefore, God is instructing us, in light of that, that if we seek first the kingdom, then he will provide us what we need because we can't do both.

We cannot really put God first and, at the same time, try and live out this desired ending where we can be as passive as possible, where we can use our wealth to hedge us as much as possible from many of the concerns of life.

In other words, we are trying to have a life that doesn't have to pay too many costs, and yet the very call of discipleship is incredibly costly.

And so there is a clear connection here between what the man is asking for, tell my brother to give me the inheritance, into the parable, and then Jesus teaching on why we shouldn't worry.

Now, it may not be immediately apparent what that connection is, other than to say that everything is moving towards a future. Everything is future-orientated.

[13:23] Either we can do it on our own, or we can have God do it for us. But those who seek first the kingdom of God will realize they cannot do both.

It's very difficult to put God first and then seek after all of these things as well. And so what God is promising here is that by putting him first, he will take care of your needs.

And that's a promise. That is a clear promise. It gives us the very joyful confidence we need to step out and do kingdom work. It gives us the very joyful confidence we need to count the costs, knowing that every cost is worth paying in light of the kingdom of God.

So Jesus tells us to lay up our treasures in heaven and not to, by implication, to lay them up on earth. And this whole section moves towards teaching us how to do that.

In other words, we all have heard Jesus say, lay up your treasure in heaven. But have you ever paused and asked yourself how you do it? Well, how do I do the very thing that Jesus is asking me to do, telling me to do?

[14:43] And so we know what Jesus has said, but we may not be absolutely clear on how to do that. We know how to store money in the bank. We know how to perhaps store money in assets.

But do we know how to lay up our treasure in heaven, given that that is the more important of the three that I've just mentioned?

Well, we will find out how, because this is the very thing that Jesus leads us to. So let's begin with this idea of wealth and worry, because as we see, the man asking for the brother's inheritance, then the parable, and then this talk that Jesus gives, this message Jesus gives on worry, is a clear connection between wealth and worry.

Now, one of the ways a person builds their wealth in the days of Jesus, and prior to the days of Jesus, and even today, is through inheritance.

In fact, one of the ways where wealth is actually concentrated to the few, and not the many, has always been through inherited wealth, that suddenly you come into a large sum of money, because your parents were rich, or your parents before then were rich, that accumulated wealth, that accumulated wealth rolls down through each generation.

[16:09] And those who have gathered much in previous generations, all that wealth begins to concentrate on a few people in several generations down the line.

And history shows that what Jesus is saying here, that it actually happens. I mean, if you look, for instance, at the French Revolution, prior to the French Revolution, one of the biggest issues with wealth inequality was that wealth concentrated to the few through inheritance.

And if you look at many of the issues today with wealth inequality throughout the world, it is the same pattern all over again. Inherited wealth concentrating to the few, not the many.

And Jesus is addressing this very modern issue, very real issue, in his day. Now, the request is being made, and Jesus is not willing to get involved.

And he's not willing to get involved because there's an important matter that must be addressed. But what this man seems to be overlooking, and this is something really worth paying attention to, is that if Jesus can exercise authority over the brother's inheritance, over what the brother does with his wealth, then that means he can also exercise authority over the man asking for part of that inheritance.

[17:42] In other words, if Jesus can tell this brother what he can do with his wealth or what he ought to do, then Jesus can tell every person what they ought to do with their wealth.

And this is the very thing that this man seems to be overlooking. He wants Jesus to intervene, but he wants him to intervene very much on his side. Not really as an arbiter, but someone who will take his side in the matter.

And he overlooks the fact that if Jesus can intervene, which he can, over the wealth of an individual, then he can also intervene in his wealth.

And that's the same for all of us, that Jesus has both the power and authority to intervene in one person as he does another person. And this is what this man seems to be overlooking.

But Jesus doesn't do that because there are more important issues at stake here, ones that we must come to understand. And Jesus does this by giving us a warning in verse 15.

[18:50] Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness. For one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

And so what this parable now begins to reinforce is the idea that there is a great desire in the lives of people to hedge their future, to remove as many costs as possible, and wealth offers some protection for the future.

In fact, wealth can offer quite a lot of protection for the future. What it cannot do is guarantee that you will actually have a future.

And this is the point that Jesus is making. You are seeking to hedge your future, but it's a future that you may not even have because this night your very life could be taken from you.

And this man wants to get to a place where he doesn't have to worry about the future. He wants to get to the place where he can enjoy a passive income.

[20:04] He wants to get to the place where he can have the years of accumulated wealth stored so that he can then have the good retirement and live off it for the rest of his life.

Now what you will begin to notice is that Jesus moves from this parable into talking about worry. And this is because both the man who stores up wealth for the future and the man who worries, they both have the same thing in common.

And that is both are concerned about the future and both are seeking to figure it out without God. They're just doing it from entirely different ends.

The rich man in his wealth is trying to hedge his future with his wealth, but he does not even know if he will have a future. He cannot guarantee it. That's the one thing that wealth cannot do amongst many other things.

And so too it is with the person who worries. They are also trying to store up information or resources in a way where they don't have to worry about the future.

[21:19] So in both cases the future come into play. And God knows this. God knows that that is a concern especially when we are called to follow him.

So both the rich man and the man who worries both have the same thing in common. They are both concerned about the future but just from very different ends of life.

And it could be that the rich man could also be an incredible worrier. You don't have to necessarily be poor to worry. Worry is just one of those things that seem to affect all of us.

And so there's a very clear lesson being addressed here very carefully by Jesus that what seems to concern us is the future.

What we seem to be preoccupied with and worried about and try and protect ourselves from is actually what's going to happen next. What's going to come tomorrow.

[ 22 : 19 ] What's going to happen in the future. And Jesus gives a very clear lesson that we cannot add anything to tomorrow. We cannot determine what tomorrow we will be.

We do not even have enough control over our life to determine whether or not we will even be alive tomorrow. And so suddenly we feel very small indeed when it comes to what we actually have control over.

It's not much. And so the best place to be in is to be in the place where you trust God. Now the issue here is not necessarily that there is a problem with storing your barns full or to have multiple barns filled with wealth of any kind.

In fact we've even got a biblical example of where there are barns commanded to be built and filled on the instruction and vice that Joseph gives to the Egyptians.

But notice that this was in the context of the revelation that there would be seven years of famine. And so the storing up was to take care of the needs of the people within the future that they were just about to live.

[ 23 : 44 ] And God graciously gives Joseph this dream in which he can interpret in which he can then go to the leader of the Egyptians, the Egyptian people, the Pharaoh and tell him this is what you must do.

And so they store in order to give. And so the storing up that happens is to take care of the needy not to take care of themselves which is a very different reason for storing because it has a very clear purpose of serving those in need.

So the issue here with the man storing up his barns wouldn't be a problem if he was going to give it away in times of need. The problem is is that it's followed by his desire to eat, drink and be merry to have a good retirement and a passive income where he doesn't have to worry about many of the concerns in life.

That's a challenge to all of us I feel. So Jesus is introducing this subject of worry for a couple of reasons. Firstly by worrying we become like the man in the parable.

We become like the man in the parable by trying to protect our future by trying to do something about our future even though we have no control over it. Secondly by Jesus introducing worry the subject of worry it leads us into the position where we might just be accusing God of having mixed values that he is like the man in the parable who values things over people and that's clearly not the case hence why Jesus says your father knows that you need them.

[ 25 : 35 ] He tells us to look at the flowers of the field he causes us to look at the birds of the air he causes us to observe how God provides for them and then he says and are you not of more value than these he points out that God knows that you are more valuable than those and that is the very basis on which God will provide you what you need.

God doesn't have his values mixed up like the man in the parable and by worrying we might just be telling God that that's what we think about him that that's what we actually think he is like that that somehow we understand our present condition better than God and our worry causes us to think wrong thoughts about God incorrect thoughts and Jesus must address that and so he addresses it firstly by saying don't worry you can't worry doesn't add anything to your life secondly don't worry because God values you he values the birds how much more will he value you and thirdly most importantly that as you seek first the kingdom of God God will provide you what you need he will give you exactly what you need and so as we live we may be very conscious that we live in a world in a society even within churches where we have to look out for ourselves because we're not entirely sure whether or not the

Christian community will actually look out for one another properly understood it doesn't have a good history of doing it and so we become very conscious of the fact that our future is very much in our hands and what Jesus is saying is that it isn't that as you seek first the kingdom of God put God first and God will take care of you because you cannot take care of yourself you cannot do a better

job than God and this is how and why we should be fully committed to the kingdom of God seeking righteousness in pursuing the kingdom the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth we have every reason because we have been given this joyful confidence by which we can go out and just act because God will look after us so what answer does

Jesus to provide that we can be clear on we are not meant to store we are meant to give and we're not to worry how does Jesus take care of all of those well as I've said he tells us to seek first the kingdom and notice the order that as you seek first the kingdom God will take care of your every need to give you an example of how this works it's very similar to James 1 about the man who doesn't pray because he doesn't believe the Lord will answer and then when he doesn't get what he wants he says see I told you so see you don't answer my prayers but God has already declared that if you're taking that kind of attitude with him where you're approaching him with no faith at all then you will receive exactly what you're expecting to receive which is nothing because God gives to those who come to him without wavering in faith boldly asking and so it is the same here with seek first the kingdom of God we may be tempted to accuse God of not providing our needs but there is another question that needs to be asked or at least probed and prodded and that is are we actually seeking first the kingdom of God which is the first part of this promise the first part of the promise of God providing our every need is seek first the kingdom there is a relationship between the two so Jesus answers our worries he answers our concerns he also answers the question of value Jesus does this by telling us not to store but to give and we all want to have that provision ahead of time we all want food in the barns we all want money in the bank but then without it we feel paralyzed and Jesus is giving us the answer to both issues what to do with our possessions and what to do with their worry seek first the kingdom of God and let God take care of everything else so what does Jesus say what does he move on to well he doesn't just stop with not worry he goes one step further telling us to sell our possessions and give them to the needy not only is

[ 30 : 50 ] Jesus telling us not to worry about the future but he's telling us to give away what we have in the present in other words that being involved in kingdom work involves selling possessions rather than acquiring them so now kingdom life is the very opposite of a worldly life we're not acquiring possessions we are in the business of selling them so that we can give the proceeds to the needy and this is how you lay up treasure in heaven how does a disciple lay up treasure in heaven by giving to the needy that is the only way you can lay up treasure in heaven and it's mentioned in the sermon on the mount it's mentioned here in this section of Luke and that is how Jesus is teaching us to lay up her treasure in heaven the way you lay up your treasure in heaven is by meeting the needs of others those in need in this present time that's kingdom work we know how to store in barns we know how to store money in the bank well if you want to know how to lay up your treasure in heaven then it is to meet those in need in the present time what we will need to do is then recognize a few simple truths number one that is that what

I need will often be what others need that what I need will often be what others need but what I give myself beyond what I need then I'm not likely to then give that to others so what I need is what others need but what I give myself beyond what I need is not necessarily what I will then give to others because I'm able to recognize that that's not a need in other words if there is nothing wrong with one Christian having a nice big house and a nice car or two cars and plenty full holidays and a number of other things then it follows that there's nothing wrong with every Christian within the congregation of God's people to pursue those things now imagine if that were to happen who would be seeking first the kingdom who would actually have the time to put the kingdom of God first if all of our time was based on this accumulation it takes time to accumulate things and some people have to work much harder to get the same and the equivalent of someone else who has perhaps inherited money and so the playing field is not even and so if we measure what we are allowed to have and other people have less then they could be pursuing those things rather than giving them away the kingdom of God is not about accumulating possessions it's actually about selling them so that we can give to the needy and so this brings us back as we conclude to this matter of inherited wealth and the person who asked Jesus to intervene in this matter of inheritance that if

Jesus can exercise his authority over one man's health wealth he can exercise his authority over all people and their wealth but Jesus never does this never does it what he does is he calls disciples to willingly give up what they have to count the costs of following to seek first the kingdom and to trust God to look after them Jesus tells the rich young ruler to give it up and sell it to the poor but he

doesn't exercise authority over him where he has no other choice but to do it it's in his hands he must make that decision and so the call of following Jesus is a call of are you willing are you willing to count the cost are you willing to sell possessions rather than accumulate them are you willing to seek first the kingdom of God and let

God look after you well here's the exhortation as we close the purpose of such a passage in Luke and the purpose of such a message that Jesus gives is not to demonstrate what can be observed and neither is it to explain those observations for Jesus just to show off what he understands it is rather than necessary truth to keep us following Jesus to keep us seeking first the kingdom because life does not consist of the abundance of possessions it is rather about relationship with God and kingdom life is not about accumulation but about laying up our treasure in heaven through selling those possessions and providing for those in need and we do this with joyful confidence because God is able to look after us thank you for listening amen we're going to come to our final hymn and then after which we'll have the final blessing thank you when I survey the wondrous cross of which the friends of glory died my riches gained

[ 37 : 28 ] I count the loss and pour content on all my pride for pleaded Lord that I should boast saving the death of Christ my God all the vain things that show me most I sacrifice

I sacrifice them to his blood saved from his blood his hands his feet so sorrow and love no may go down did as such love and sorrow meet he or folks on doors so rich a crown were the whole round of nature that were and more before to small the stone of love the stone of man the faith so divine and it was so it it was amazing and my love so amazing and love so amazing and so divine it and love so divine it it it was my it is the father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom and so remember that his kingdom people you are not worldly people and so as you go your way may the lord bless you and keep you and remind you who you are both now and forever more amen thank you and the the people and and and you and and and and and and and and and

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 43 : 28 ] Thank you.