

August 11, 2019

Luke 12:22-34:

“So...Where Is Your Treasure?”

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Do not be anxious about your life,” Jesus begins in our text. Our sinful flesh says, “Yeah right.” Perhaps you have a lot to worry about in regard to your needs. Some may even conclude that they have nothing to worry about because their barns are full. So they worry about keeping it. Still, many might feel that their barns are empty, not because they really are, it’s just that they don’t have as much as others or as much as they would like. All of this does not take away from the fact that there are truly the poor among us. What is Jesus trying to say? Well, in short, we are supposed to trust that Jesus will take care of our needs as our hearts are focused on him as the one thing necessary.

Yes. One thing is necessary. That last statement brings Martha and Mary into the mix. Do you remember the account, also from the Gospel of Luke? It’s two chapters before our text (Luke 10:38-42):

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”

Both Martha and Mary were interested in Jesus. Martha welcomes Jesus into her house and wishes to serve him, but she becomes busy and harried over getting everything right for his visit and becomes upset over Mary’s lack of help. Mary is seated at the feet of Jesus, the position of a disciple, listening to his every word. Time with Jesus is more important than preparing a meal for him.

There is an echo of this in what Jesus says in our text, “Life is more than food . . .” Or, we could tap into the words of Jesus when he quotes the Old Testament and says to Satan, “man does not live on bread alone (Luke 4:4).” What is it that makes the bread what it is and what it does? It is God who speaks it to be so. His word is greater than bread. Jesus also says that “. . . life is more than clothing.” Clothing was first invented by Adam and the woman to cover the shame of sin, unsuccessfully. It was God who had to shed the blood of an animal of some sort to create the right clothing for the man and the woman. The right clothing then is the clothing of our Baptism which covers our shame with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He is our clothing.

Jesus gives three examples: ravens, lilies, and grass. In them we find facets about the Christian life that we don’t want to miss. All of them take us to what we have in Jesus.

First, “ravens” pretty much refers to the whole variety of crows residing in Palestine. In the Old Testament they are counted as “unclean,” a symbol of sin. In antiquity, they were among the least respected of birds. They did not think about food for the future but survived on leftovers. They were regarded as careless creatures that even failed to return to their nests. Still, Psalm 147:9 says that God provides food

“for the young ravens when they call.” God provides! He may not provide the way we want him to provide, but he certainly takes care of us in such a way that it means salvation. We are more important to God than the ravens. Besides, can worrying add a single hour to your span of life? The span of our life is connected to the Word of God. His Word is the Word of Life - Jesus the life of all the living.

Secondly, “lilies” may be the purple anemone, which would compare to a king’s purple royal garb. Jesus notes that these flowers neither labor or spin. They are a clothing to themselves that has been made by God. The lilies are more beautifully clothed than Solomon, the wealthiest of Israel’s kings. The clothing that we should be concerned about is the proper clothing that comes from God and covers all sin. What he provides is a royal beauty that lasts.

Third, the “grass” that is here today and gone tomorrow. In the Old Testament, grass is often a figure for being short-lived. Yet the Lord has done something wonderful in us - the grass - with his Word. As Peter writes, “you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God . . . ‘All flesh is like grass . . . but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that was preached to you (1 Peter 1:22-25).” Anxiety over being here today and gone tomorrow demonstrates that one believes that God is not really in control. We are bid to trust that God is aware of our plight, cares about it, and will do something about it - “O you of little faith!” Jesus says.

Jesus says again in verse 29, “Do not be anxious!” And yet, we find ourselves “getting worked up” all the time don’t we? But there is a powerful reason why we should repent of being anxious and push it back. Your Father knows your needs. This is a very intimate reminder of our incredible relationship that we have with God. We are his children and are invited to think of him as any child would think of a good father. The children of God should have confidence that their Father has their best interest in mind. We are not to act like the rest of the unbelieving world. They find their security in having this, that, and the other while we are to have the security of knowing and believing that God is aware and cares for us as a good father cares for his child. It makes sense then that Jesus would go on to say, “seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.”

What an incredible promise! To seek his kingdom is to keep seeking his rule in our lives. And what is his kingdom or to keep seeking his rule in our lives? The kingdom or the rule of God in our lives is the good news of Jesus Christ. I like the way in which the apostle Paul puts it when he writes: “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13-14).” He also writes, “the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power (1 Cor. 4:20).” And again, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes . . . (Romans 1:16).” The one thing that is necessary is faith in Jesus Christ who lived a perfect life for us and died for all of our imperfections. Every day there are those things that war against us - anxiety/worry being one of many.

What a blessed reassurance it is then to hear the words of our Lord when he says: “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 moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Since we are to be assured that the Father is committed, willing, even pleased to give us the kingdom through his Son Jesus Christ, is there really any room to be anxious or worried? Even more, we have nothing to fear even if the devil and the whole unbelieving world would take everything away from us. The Father’s good pleasure rests upon his Son and, consequently, upon those who believe in his Son by grace. In Jesus, who takes away all of our sins, the kingdom is ours forever!

So . . . Where is Your Treasure? Jesus gives a very specific way to evaluate that. Love your neighbor who is in need by sacrificing yourself and helping him in his need. The principle is enlarged in two parables of Jesus. “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it (Matt. 13:44-46).” Luther comments: “The point of the parable is that the kingdom of heaven outweighs in value all else, and that the man who understands this will with pleasure part with all.”

Now, I understand that because of our sinful natures we will find ourselves overwhelmed time and again by things down here. While we can’t stop those emotions from simply being there, we don’t have to allow those emotions to nest in our hair and dominate our lives. We are bid to push back on those emotions with the treasure that is ours through Jesus. We are bid to trust in him even when we feel that things are not well. He is our treasure, and to have him is to have everything. He is always doing good things in our lives even when they don’t always feel so good. Whatever might appear to be loss is always a gain in Jesus as he uses what he gives and takes away to keep us on the road to salvation. But as we have him, he promises that he will provide for our needs when the one thing is necessary is the priority in our lives. We may not always appreciate the way he takes care of us, but he is always aiming for treasure that lasts forever! **So . . . Where is Your Treasure?**

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott