

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

October 16, 2019

The Gospel of Luke

Living for Christ in a Dark World – Principles on Stewardship

Topics – Luke 12:13 – 34; Parable of the Rich Man; Stewardship; seek ye first; living for eternity

Text – Luke 12:13 - 34

Congregational Reading – Luke 12:13 - 34

Introduction

We are still in an extended section of Luke's gospel where we are seeing events that are exclusive to Luke. Up until chapter seventeen, the events contained in Luke's gospel are not found anywhere else in the gospels, though some of the same principles are taught elsewhere.

In the beginning of chapter twelve, Jesus was focusing on the importance of standing with the Lord for eternal things rather than appeasing people temporally. Beginning in verse thirteen, the discussion will still be on eternal things as contrasted with the temporal, but the main thrust will be regarding covetousness in the area of money and possessions. It seems that the bottom line is that Jesus wants us to be focused on eternity and the soon return of the Lord, rather than the three score and ten (if we are blessed) that we might get to enjoy on this earth. Our time here on earth is just a very tiny portion of the time that we will spend in eternity.

If you have a steel ball, solid steel, the size of this earth, 25,000 miles in circumference, and every one million years a little sparrow would be released to land on that ball to sharpen his beak and fly away only to come back another million years later and begin again, by the time he would have worn that ball down to the size of a BB, eternity would have just begun.¹

The Person Who Asked Jesus to Settle a Dispute About Possessions (vs. 13 – 15)

While we do not know the exact reason for the conflict between this man and his brother, we do know that Jesus did not want any part of it. Perhaps the man that came to Jesus was cheated out of his share of an inheritance. We do not know the details. What we do know is that Jesus did not settle the dispute, but rather, He warned the man (and everyone else present) to not be too focused on earthly possessions. He states the broad principle that will be taught in the verses that follow. Your life is much more than the things that you own.

On the surface, it may seem that Jesus was being a little harsh with this man, but since we do not know the circumstances let us be careful not to think that Jesus was somehow being unfair to this man.

Apparently this man, like many of us, are focused too much on the things of this earth rather than on the things that really matter, which are eternal. Is God the supplier of needs? Yes. Is God omniscient? Yes. Does God reward in this life as well as in eternity those who are serving

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart and 1501 Other Stories* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 183.

him? Yes. Then let's not worry about possessions. Let Jesus worry about them.

The Parable of the Man Who Lived Exclusively for Possessions (vs. 16 – 20)

Then Jesus tells a parable, which though by definition is a story given to illustrate truth, was probably observed by our Lord thousands of times since man has been on the earth.

The man in the parable was focused exclusively on the things of this earth; his retirement. He made sure that he would have enough to live luxuriously for the rest of his life. His problem was that the rest of his life was not very long. As soon as he had all of his savings in place, God took his life.

This parable is not teaching that it is wrong to save for the future, but it is teaching that we must not save for the future at the expense of being rich toward God. To be rich toward God means that you are concerned about eternity: both yours and the eternal destiny of others. It means that you are a cheerful giver of tithes as well as offerings for special projects and needs. It means that because you give generously back to the Lord, your retirement may just have to be put on hold for a while. You may have to work a little extra or even a little harder to survive in this world while still honoring God with your first-fruits.

The Principles Jesus Teaches Regarding Possessions (vs. 21 – 34)

Jesus talked about money. One-sixth of the Gospels, and one-third of the parables address the subject of stewardship. Jesus was no fund-raiser. He dealt with money matters, however, because money matters. It's a surprise to many people, Christians included, that the Bible has so much to say about this subject.

God has given us three ways on this earth to invest in eternity. Two of them are up for discussion and we approach them with open-mindedness, we can never seem to hear enough about them, but the third seems to be nobody else's business.

The preacher who fails to address *time* and how we spend it is considered derelict in his duty. For time is one of those irretrievable values in life you can only spend once and never capture again.

The pastor who overlooks teaching on *talents* and gifts that help the church body function smoothly and well and even efficiently is not doing his job. The congregation has a right to feel slighted because that subject is not mentioned.

But let the man address the subject of *treasure* and he's back on that age-old subject and just trying to get our money. I find that not only amazing but ridiculous.²

1. Stop worrying about money and possessions.

Why?

Because they are not that important. There are things in this life that are far more

² Ibid, 231.

important.

Because God knows what you need.

2. Don't doubt (v. 29)

That God is.

That God is able.

That God is willing. He loves you.

3. Put God first. (v. 31; Matthew 6:33; Luke 6:38)

4. Be willing to sacrifice today for the cause of Christ. (v. 33)

Conclusion

All of these thoughts regarding eternity really boil down to what we do with our time, treasure, and energy while here on the earth. We need to invest our time and treasure into eternity.

There is a legend about Satan and his imps planning their strategy for attacking the world that's hearing the message of salvation. One of the demons says, "I've got the plan, master. When I get on the earth and take charge of people's thinking, I'll tell them there's no heaven."

The devil responds, "Ah, they'll never believe that. This Book of Truth is full of messages about the hope of heaven through sins forgiven. They won't believe that. They know there's a glory yet future."

On the other side of the room another says, "I've got the plan. I'll tell 'em there's no hell." "No good," he says. "Jesus, while He was on earth, talked more of hell than of heaven. They know in their hearts that their wrong will have to be taken care of in some way. They deserve nothing more than hell."

And one brilliant little imp in the back stood up and said, "Then I know the answer. I'll just tell them there's no hurry." And he's the one Satan chose.—C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*³

³ Ibid.572.