

Luke 12:1-34: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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- [0 : 0 0] Luke chapter 12 verses 1 to 34. In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.
- Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.
- I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear. Fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell.
- Yes, I tell you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, you are of more value than many sparrows.
- And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God. But the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.
- [1 : 0 7] And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven. But the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.
- 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 arbitrator 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 his possessions.
- And 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, 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 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.
- [2 : 3 2] 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 single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do a smaller 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 : 44] For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. In Luke chapter 12, Jesus warns against the leaven of the Pharisees. This is the hypocrisy that they have within themselves.

They pass on from generation to generation, just as the mixture of the leaven is put into a new loaf, and then that is placed to a new loaf still. So the leaven of the Pharisees is the hypocrisy that generation after generation they pass down, with the result that all affected by it are corrupted.

But the time is coming when things in secret will be revealed openly. Open proclamation will take the place of private teaching. And the disciples of Christ must not be fearful.

They must declare openly what Christ has declared in private, declaring from the rooftops what his word is. Such open proclamation would be the first thing to fall by the wayside in the case of fear.

And the point here is not merely that of not being afraid. It's a calling to be bold, to go forward, and to face all the challenges. You should not fear being persecuted, because persecution associates us with our master, and our master is greater than any persecutor.

[4 : 53] They cannot kill the soul, only the body. If he notices even the sparrows fall, how much more will God notice his children who lay down their lives in his service? Every hair on our heads is numbered.

If we confess Christ before men, he will confess us before his Father in heaven. Success in this mission will look different from what success in missions usually looks like.

Disciples will find themselves brought before rulers and authorities and synagogues and having to defend themselves in such contexts. But the Holy Spirit will give them the words on the day that they need them.

Whoever speaks against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Son of Man will not be forgiven. There are two ages and two visitations. In the story of Joseph, there's that first visitation to his brothers as he tells them his dreams and they reject him.

And then he comes again when he delivers them in Egypt and gives them food. Moses visits the first time and he tries to act as the judge for his brothers, the Israelites, and they reject him.

[5 : 55] And then he comes again and delivers them from Egypt. Jesus, in the same way, he comes the first time in his earthly ministry and he's rejected. Then he comes the second time in the message of the church as he gives his spirit to the church and if that message is rejected, final destruction awaits.

Jesus, at this point, is surrounded by thousands of people who are almost trampling each other and a man calls from this crowd, calling Jesus to act as an arbiter between him and his brother in a quarrel concerning inheritance.

But Jesus refuses to adjudicate. Rather, he talks about the danger of covetousness and preoccupation with possessions. And he tells the story of a rich fool.

This rich fool seems to be a skilled farmer, someone who's so skillful and effective that he needs to build bigger barns. And he has everything mapped out, but he has not considered the way that he stands relative to God.

He seeks to plan his life without any reference to God and with little awareness of the precariousness of human life and wealth. And when his life is required of him, his bigger barns are of no use.

[7 : 02] All his wealth that he has built up while on earth is of no service. He had laid up treasure for himself and he was not rich toward God. Like Solomon, Jesus draws attention to the creatures and God's concern and provision for them.

Once again, the issue is our attitude to material possessions and provisions. We are to adopt a posture of dependency upon God for our daily needs. Worry and anxiety is far more likely to diminish our life than to extend it.

And there is some assurance to be found in this reminder of the limits of our power. This isn't a denial of the value of prudence and provision for ourselves, but rather a spiritual posture to be adopted, with anxiety being the alternative.

This connects with Jesus' teaching concerning daily bread that we look to God for provision for these things. There is a contrast between worry and faith. To whom are we looking?

In the parable of the sower, it is the worries of this world and the deceit of wealth that act like thorns that choke the seed. And we must be aware that this does not befall us.

[8 : 08] What is our priority? It should be seeking the kingdom. Everything else is second. That is where we will ultimately find security as we lay up riches towards God rather than towards ourselves.

Ultimately, Jesus' disciples should not need to fear on this front. Although they are only a little flock, the Father desires to give them the kingdom and he will give them the kingdom. He is a good Father and they can look to him to provide.

Jesus recognises that motives don't float free but they can be nudged and pulled by material situations and conditions. The problem is the loss of material wealth and the alternative is to invest your resources in spiritual things.

The heart will tend to follow your resources. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Put your money where you want your heart to be and where it is not vulnerable to loss and where it won't place your heart in the same jeopardy.

Selling possessions and giving to the needy is a means by which to dislodge your heart from its false attachments. It also builds up riches where they cannot be lost or destroyed, building up riches towards God.

[9 : 18] The one who gives to the poor lends to the Lord. A question to consider, what in Jesus' teaching can we truly possess and how can we come to possess it?