

“WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE?”

I. Introduction

- A. When it comes to money and possessions, we are all familiar with the temptations of covetousness and anxiety.
- B. It is interesting that these temptations persist even as we live in a society that enjoys a higher level of affluence and material comfort than just about any generation before us.
- C. For many people, the things of this world really are the things that are of ultimate importance.
- D. In these verses from the Gospel of Luke, Jesus explains why such a mindset is both foolish and pointless, and he also shows us what we need to do if we want to have true security.

II. The Folly of Laying Up Treasure for Yourself

- A. Our text begins with a man from the crowd saying to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”
 - 1. We should note that Jesus has been talking about living a life of integrity before God, and the importance of fearing God rather than man, and the necessity of acknowledging Christ before men.
 - 2. In other words, Jesus has been talking about things that pertain to the kingdom of God.
 - 3. Yet this man in the crowd is focused on getting Jesus to resolve a dispute about an inheritance, a dispute that has to do with the things of this world.
 - 4. We get the impression that this man has not been listening to the things Jesus has been saying.

5. Instead, as he sees Jesus's popularity rising in the eyes of the people, he sees an opportunity.
 6. Of course, there is nothing wrong with wanting a financial dispute to be brought to a fair resolution.
 7. But that is not what this man is after.
 8. He is asking Jesus to take his side in the matter.
 9. He wants Jesus to tell his brother what to do, even though Jesus has not been made aware of the specifics of the situation.
- B. Jesus responds to this request by using it as an opportunity to offer a warning against covetousness.
1. Covetousness is rooted in the notion that life is fundamentally about the acquisition of goods.
 2. Covetousness causes people to spend their lives serving created things rather than the Creator.
 3. Jesus tells a parable that illustrates the foolishness of this approach to life.
 4. The man in the parable is exceedingly rich, and he decides to build bigger barns to store all of his grain.
 5. Now, the problem was not that this man was rich.
 6. The abundant harvest that he received was a gift of God's providence.
 7. And it was simply a matter of stewardship for him to devise a way of storing his crops.
 8. We begin to see the problem in his soliloquy in verses 17-19.

9. Do you see the word that he repeatedly uses in these verses?
 10. He speaks of *my* crops, *my* barns, *my* grain, *my* goods, *my* soul.
 11. His focus is entirely on himself.
 12. This is confirmed by the fact that the parable ends with him counseling himself to live out his days in sheer self-indulgence, saying, "relax, eat, drink, be merry."
 13. This man gives no thought to the needs of others and he shows no gratitude toward God.
- C. In the estimation of the world, the man in this parable is a success.
1. He has it made.
 2. He can retire early, buy whatever he wants, and enjoy the good things in life.
 3. He has the kind of life that people envy.
 4. But in God's estimation, his life is a colossal failure and a picture of the utmost folly.
 5. This is made clear when his life is cut short one night, and all of the wealth that he accumulated becomes utterly worthless to him.
 6. This is the problem with thinking that life consists in possessions.
 7. Your material goods are only useful to you for as long as you go on living in this world.
 8. When your soul is required of you (and it will be required of you at some point), when it is your appointed time to leave this world, you will not be able to take your possessions with you.

9. That being the case, it is foolish to live a self-centered and self-indulgent life.
10. Instead, we should use the material things that we are given in this life to help us live in the service of God and seek the interests of his kingdom, the only kingdom that will stand the test of time.

III. The Pointlessness of Being Anxious

- A. After addressing the problem of covetousness, Jesus next deals with the problem of being anxious about the things of this life.
 1. Now, in telling us not to be anxious about food, clothing, and the other necessities of life, Jesus is not advocating laziness.
 2. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are not in conflict with one another.
 3. It is certainly true that God is in providential control over everything in this world, but it is also true that he requires us to use the means that he has placed within our hands.
 4. When it comes to how our material needs are met, the Scriptures make it very clear that God expects able-bodied people to work to earn their living.
 5. As Paul says in one of his letters, "If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat." (2 Thess. 3:10 ESV)
 6. God calls us to work and to live within our means.
 7. The point that Jesus is making in telling us not to be anxious is that we should not let our lives be consumed with the worry that we will not have enough.
 8. Anxiety stands in opposition to faith.
 9. The cure for anxiety is to take care of the things that God has told us to take care of, and then to put our prayerful trust in God to take

care of us.

- B. In our text, Jesus sets forth several reasons why it is pointless to be anxious about your life.
1. The first reason is that life is more than material things like food and clothing.
 2. Food and clothing are important means that sustain our lives in this world, but true and lasting life is only found in knowing God.
 3. As Jesus prayed in his great high-priestly prayer, "this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (Jn. 17:3)
 4. God is the one who gives eternal life, and he is also the one who provides the means that sustain life in this world.
 5. God is able to do this with creatures like ravens, even though they do not sow or reap or store up supplies in barns.
 6. Of course, ravens do not just sit around waiting for worms to jump into their mouths, but as they do what is given to them to do, their needs are met by God.
 7. If God can provide for the ravens, he can surely provide for us.
 8. After all, we are far more important than mere birds.
 9. We are God's image-bearers.
 10. And if we are in Christ, we are God's children.
- C. Another reason why it is pointless to be anxious is that anxiety cannot add a single hour to our lives.
1. Worrying is of no benefit to us.

2. If the thing that you were worried about ends up not happening, then you wasted a lot of time and energy on your worrying.
 3. And even if the thing that you were worried about does happen, what good did your worrying do you?
 4. While we are certainly called to be responsible, we need to trust that the Lord will take care of us.
 5. If God clothes the lilies of the field with such splendor when they don't even do anything, then he can certainly see to it that our needs are met.
- D. One more reason why it is pointless to be anxious is because we have God as our heavenly Father.
1. The people of the world push and shove and bustle about in hopes of securing worldly goods because that is all that they are living for.
 2. But if we belong to God's kingdom, we aren't living for the things of this world.
 3. God certainly knows that we need material things to support our lives in this world.
 4. And because he is our Father, he provides us with all that we need.
 5. He may not always give us everything that we want, but he will always provide us with what we truly need.
 6. As the apostle Paul told the Christians in Philippi, "my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil 4:19 ESV)
 7. If God has given his own Son for the sake of our salvation, then how could we ever doubt that he will fail to provide all things necessary for the completion of his good purposes in our lives?

IV. The Security of Having Your Treasure in the Heavens

- A. Instead of being anxious about the things of this world, we should rest in the security that belongs to those whose treasure is in the heavens.
 - 1. This is the last point that Jesus makes in our passage.
 - 2. He tells us to seek God's kingdom, and he assures us that when we do so we can be confident that the Lord will take care of all of our worldly needs.
 - 3. Seeking God's kingdom means making the expansion and the interests of God's kingdom the top priority in our lives.
 - 4. Though we live in this world, we are to do so as those whose ultimate allegiance is to the heavenly kingdom that is our true home.

- B. Notice, however, that while we are called to seek God's kingdom, Jesus's words in verse 32 make it clear that we are not the ones who are building this kingdom.
 - 1. God is giving the kingdom to us, and it is his good pleasure to do so.
 - 2. We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.
 - 3. There is nothing in this world that can surpass the greatness and glory of the kingdom of God.
 - 4. Remembering this is the antidote to covetousness and anxiety.
 - 5. It helps us to see that God does not want us to extinguish our desires and longings.
 - 6. He wants us to look for the only thing that can truly satisfy those desires and longings.

7. As C.S. Lewis famously said, "It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." [*The Weight of Glory*]
 8. Only when we see the greatness of our heavenly inheritance will we begin to have the proper attitude toward our earthly possessions.
- C. This is the point that Jesus is making when he tells us to sell our possessions and give to the needy.
1. He does not mean that we have to sell everything we have and give all of the proceeds to the poor.
 2. That would be irresponsible.
 3. Instead, Jesus is instructing us to do whatever is necessary to loosen the grip that our possessions have over us.
 4. Don't be possessed by your possessions.
 5. Don't be consumed with yourself and your comfort and your security.
 6. Be generous.
 7. Use your resources to benefit others.
 8. When we live this way, we are storing up treasure in the heavens, and that is the only kind of treasure that will stand the test of time.
 9. Of course this does not mean that we can merit heavenly blessings by our acts of charity.

10. It simply means that a life that is lived for God's kingdom rather than for the accumulation of worldly goods is a life that is invested in something that will endure forever.
11. Use the things of this world in a manner that will prepare you for the next world.

V. Conclusion

- A. Covetousness and anxiety are perennial temptations.
 1. And these sins are not very easy to detect in our own lives.
 2. We may tell ourselves that we are seeking first God's kingdom when in reality our hearts are set on the things of this world.
- B. This is why we need to listen very carefully to the things that Jesus says in this passage.
 1. We need to guard ourselves against the temptations of covetousness and anxiety.
 2. When we see these sins rearing their heads in our lives, we need to repent of them and ask for God's help in resisting them.
 3. We need to set our hearts on the things that are above rather than on earthly things.
 4. As we often sing,

*Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, now and always:
Thou and thou only, first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.*