

The Gospel According to Luke

Luke 12:22-34

Reading: Luke 12:22-34

Sermon #55
October 27, 2019

The Solution To Fear

Fear's Effect

In this passage Jesus teaches us about fear, anxiety and worry. When we are living life afraid or struggling with fear, anxiety and worry, then we are not living surrendered to Jesus and living by faith. Since your Bible is open to Luke chapter 12 look back to verse 4 where Jesus says, **“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.”** Believers in Jesus as the Christ have no need to fear or be afraid of people; people may be able to take your physical life but after that, they can do nothing more for one is in heaven with God. Jesus continued in verse 5, **“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!”** The children of God are to fear God. Here the word means something different; it means to greatly respect, to have an awe and wonder of God which leads to faith, love and peace. Believers have no reason to fear God as they should fear the attacks of the prince of this world and mankind; for verse 7 Jesus tells us, **“Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.”** People are the most valued of all God's creation and only those who come to him, through Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, does he guarantee their place in heaven. In fact, Jesus promises God will dwell within every believer and therefore we should live free of trepidation, fear and worry.

Jesus says in verses 11 and 12, **“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, ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very**

hour what you ought to say.” Armed with the knowledge that believers are given God the Holy Spirit to dwell within them; believers should never fear anything here on earth. God will provide the courage, words and faith one needs when one is tested. In fact, we are commanded not to fear; we are given the provisions that should drive fear away and yet Jesus compassionately knows we still, at times, are afraid and suffer from fear.

This morning Jesus continues his discourse on fear and anxiety. I pray that as we work through this passage, we will learn things about God and about fear and how not to fear.

Last week we saw a man who was anxious about his possessions and barns. We learned that possessions, like sirens, whisper lies to our souls. They tell us that life depends on an abundance of possessions. They whisper and lie that possessions bring security. Finally, they lie trying to make people believe that somehow, we can permanently own things and take our stuff with us when we die. Last week, we saw a man who had many possessions laid up and stored away but he was not rich toward God. He was so worried about how he could keep all his possessions that his stuff became a burden that brought fear and anxiety to the point he began thinking irrationally and he thought he could solve his dilemma by tearing down his barns and building bigger ones. For this man, his possessions were not his true treasure but they were the means for what he treasured; taking life easy – eating, drinking and making merry. His faith was in himself and this earthly life.

As Christians we learn money and possessions are tools that God gives us stewardship over and are to be used to meet our needs and advance the kingdom of God. Money is simply currency to purchase what you treasure. I have often heard

that you can look through someone's checkbook and credit card statement, and very quickly discover where their heart is because you observe what money is spent on. For the man building barns he had knowledge of God, but no wisdom, so his life was lived without even acknowledging God which caused him to live a selfish life, a self-indulgent life at the expense of others and he had no preparation for the life to come. How about you? What does where you spend your money tell about your true treasure? If you evaluated how you spend your money through the lens of God's teachings in the Bible, what would it reveal is your greatest treasure?

Let's pray as we prepare to hear Jesus' teaching to his disciples and to us about fear and anxiety and worry.

PRAY

Fear's Solution

The rich fool from last week was afraid of losing his abundant possessions - his material wealth. His life, he thought would now be a life of ease, but it was in fact, a life of anxiety as he worried over how he could keep all he had amassed.

For Christians, we can sometimes be tempted to worry whether or not God will be faithful towards us. Do we trust God, not so much to give us an abundance and allow us to become rich, but will he meet our needs? We struggle because many churches and Christians have joined the world saying; we have to make things happen because we represent God or even, there is no God. A lie! Some say you cannot out give God. If you are truly a child of God, he will bless you will wealth. Another lie! One only has to sit back and observe these preachers teaching "Prosperity Christianity" and see that they make themselves wealthy at the expense of others. They turn the scriptures on their head – instead of being like Christ who

came to serve; their claim is that they are specially anointed and they are serving, but the truth is they expect people to serve them. They have perverted God's Word; they are the Pharisees of our day.

To the man in the crowd last week, Jesus said life is more than an abundance of possessions. Here, he tells his followers that life is also more than the bare essentials. We exist for more than just to eat. We exist for more than just wearing clothes. We exist to glorify God our Creator.

The real thrust of Jesus teaching on fear in chapter 12 is that he desires to change our thinking concerning God; not as the world believes but as the Word of God teaches. If a believer lives in fear, that fear is founded on a wrong understanding of God. If a believer is focused on material wealth as life's primary objective, he has the wrong focus and a poor understanding of God. Martin Luther, the great reformer, before he was saved lived in fear and viewed God as a harsh Judge whose desire was to punish people for their sins. However, once Luther was converted and experienced God's grace his view of God drastically changed. He saw God now as benevolent and giving with unconditional love.

Jesus tells us we should fear God and not man. He also tells us that if we fear; meaning love, respect and having awe for God, we do not have to fear anything of the world because God loves and cares for us. We are of more value to God than many sparrows. He cares for the sparrows and He loves us more than them - so we can conclude that He will care for us. Jesus desires us to have a right understanding of God and if we do, we grow ever closer to living life without fear and anxiety.

When we belong to God, we understand this life and this world, for us, is just the beginning of the journey and glorifying God and reaching heaven is the

true goal. The Apostle Peter wrote this overview for the people of the early church with the same struggles and questions that we have. ¹³“Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.” (1 Peter 3:13-17) God will use us to expose his kingdom to the broken world and at the same time he loves us and guarantees us life with him, therefore we should without fear.

As we travel through this life God will meet our needs, in verse 24 we see a very similar teaching as the sparrows. God meets the needs of the ravens. These birds neither plant crops or gather into barns, *unlike the rich fool*, and yet in spite of their lack of planting and harvesting God feeds them. God feeds these unclean scavengers and knows them, how much more God loves us for he sent his Son to reconcile us back to him and he promises that he will also feed us who have become clean because of Jesus’ atonement.

The cause of fear that Jesus addresses in this section is a view of God that says, “He does not have the time or desire to provide for us so we must provide for ourselves.” Jesus is showing us the cause of fear and anxiety is our desire of being in control instead of submitting to God. The rich fool tried to play God. What do I mean by this statement? He had no relationship at all with God. He thought that everything he had was based on his ability to get it and his ability to keep it. He thought he was his own provider; my crops, my fields, my goods and my grain. He

thought he was the master of his own soul. Anxiety leads to fear and fear is accompanied with irrational thought and hell was his ultimate end. He was playing God; he made himself big and God small. This is exactly what the world and its prince promote, a small god and we, my beloved, must be on guard against such thoughts.

We must show the world a different path. The world thinks people are ultimately responsible for the things they have whether they are in abundance like in the case of the rich fool or in moderation like food and clothing. People try to play God because they lack trust in God or deny God. When people think everything is theirs and everything they have comes from their hard work and ingenuity people have fallen to the temptation of playing God. The great lie of Satan is; You will be like the Most High, you are god. This is the lie Joseph Smith believed; God is but exalted man. President Snow of the LDS church made this doctrine clear, saying, “As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be.” Therefore, they believe there are many gods and every good Mormon man who does all the right works can become a god and get his own planet just like Jesus did. Does this lie not appeal to one’s ego – it certainly appealed to mine, until God rescued me out of the Mormon church. However, the truth is; there is one God and he is the only creator and man is the created. God alone is the Provider. God owns everything and we are but stewards. People will be perfected in heaven but we will never be perfect in the sense the one God is the only perfect being.

Fear’s Solution: Trust God

Jesus continues with why one can trust God to meet our true needs. Notice I did not say our “desires” or “wants” but our “needs”. Verse 24 reads, “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!” God will supply our needs because he loves us and is forever faithful to his promises. Fear not, my beloved, for God knows you better than you know yourself and his still loves you with unconditional love. Fear not, God will supply all our needs. Fear not, we are most valuable to God, we are his most precious creations; for he created us in his image. Fear not, though the evil one has sway with the world for a while - the earth is the Lord’s and he is returning.

We live in time and history, but God is outside or beyond time and he has ordained the beginning from the end. Give your life into God’s hands, reading verses 25 to 28, “which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ 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!” Fear and worry can set in if we are overly concerned with the length of our lives. If we desire this life more than eternal life with God the worries of this world will weight us down. We should eat right and exercise regularly but ultimately – it is God who determines the length of our lives.

In this passage, Jesus argues from the lesser to the greater. God cares for ravens but because he loves you how much more he will also care for you. God cares about the smallest things in the world; grass, sparrows and ravens. But the Scriptures teaches God more than these, he cares about you, he loves you as his created and his children with unconditional love. He clothes the lilies with extravagant beauty, so, it stands to reason because of the superior love God has for His children, He will also clothe you and hold your life very tenderly in His hands.

Jesus reasons, if God arrays the flowers in splendor, whose days are short will He not clothe and care for you? My beloved, you do not need to worry about your life or live in fear when you give your life to God. Many people have various fears. Some folks are afraid of crowds, bridges, clowns, tight places, spiders, heights and so the list goes on. In each case, the reason they are afraid is that they think they are in control over their life. We are to seek God's will for our life, not our own, nor the world's and when we give our life to God we will live without fear.

As Jesus continues to teach, he becomes more specific. In verse 28 Jesus says, "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!" The ending hits deep; "O you of little faith!" One of my continual prayers is for God to strengthen my faith, to give me more faith because my heart falters. Faith in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is simple as the faith of a child – but if I am not careful the things of the world creep in. Again, this idea is important because Jesus repeats it - "O you of little faith!" Jesus uses this phrase 4 times recorded by Matthew: chapter 6, verse 30 and again in 8:26, 14:31 and 16:8.

The old saying; it is easier to talk-the-talk than walk-the-walk is true for the world. May it not be true of us. By reading the Bible, meditating upon its words, the very words of God and spending daily time in prayer we reprogram our minds and hearts from the world's view of god, who is small or does not exist and that we are big and important. We move away from this world view to the understanding God is big, so big he is beyond full description and understanding for he spoke the entire universe into existence by his mere word. Let us walk-the-walk of true Christian faith in a God so big, so beyond our imagination that it is OK that we are small and yet he delights in our relationship with him.

God delights in each of his children so much he knows exactly what you need. This is why Jesus continues, reading beginning at verse 29, **do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried.** ³⁰ **For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them.”** The next logical reason Jesus gives us as to why we should not fear is because God is omniscient; meaning, he has infinite awareness, understanding, and insight, and he knows exactly what you need. God is orchestrating every detail for the good of his people and for his glory. He knows what our physical and spiritual needs are. I cannot say what I mean as well as Paul, who wrote to the church in Rome asking the questions on the minds of the people and giving them the answers to life and faith. If you would like to read along with me, turn to Romans, chapter 8, beginning in verse 28, **“we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.** ²⁹ **For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.** ³⁰ **And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”** If we believe this is true, Paul uses it as the foundation and continues with his 1st question in verse 31, **“What then shall we say to these things?”** Paul gives the answer, **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”** He answers in a statement followed by another question: ³² **“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”** Next question, ³³ **“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? Answer: It is God who justifies.”** Question: ³⁴ **“Who is to condemn? Answer: Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”** Question: ³⁵ **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? Answer:**

³⁶“As it is written, in *Psalm 44:22* ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Because Paul believed in his heart the answers to the questions; he makes his concluding statement, ³⁸“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:28-39) This was Paul’s conviction of belief – what is yours?

Fear’s Solution: Seek God

Here is the climax of Jesus teaching, reading at verse 31, “**Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.**” ³²“**Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**” Rather than being preoccupied with providing for your physical body; eating, drinking, clothing, shelter, etc. you need to concentrate your efforts on seeking God’s Kingdom and His righteousness. Jesus is making clear that our task as children of God is to seek or pursue the Kingdom of God. The way we do this is by seeking to treasure God more than money and seek holiness rather than material goods. When we seek the kingdom, lo and behold, God gives us all the things we need to live. His promise is to keep us alive by giving us what we need to live so we can seek His Kingdom. So, we understand the purpose of food and clothing is to maintain life in order to seek after God and His Kingdom. We understand to work hard and do a good job is part of our witness to the world, but our primary purpose is to live a life glorifying God.

Scripture also makes clear that the Father gives to those who accept Jesus as their Savior, his kingdom. As Jesus explained, “**Truly, I say to you, unless you turn**

and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3-4) God does not give his kingdom to his children out of obligation or duty – he gives because of his love and his joy to do so. God is the opposite of the evil one; he is giving – he gives love, and peace and grace and his kingdom without holding anything back. As we pursue God through our relationship with Jesus, we are given not only the gift of salvation but the gift of the Holy Spirit, God himself to dwell within. God gives it freely but we must accept it. To be free of fear and anxiety pursue Jesus as your Lord and Savior and God will give you the gift of faith; a faith that brings peace and love and casts our fear.

Fear’s Solution: Treasure God

Jesus shifts his focus one last time. Listen as I read verses 33 and 34, “**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.**” ³⁴ **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.** Please notice the shift. Before the disciples were worried about their needs being met and fear and anxiety was the result. Now Jesus basically says, rather than hoarding like the ‘rich fool’ and being anxious and having fear like one who tries to provide everything for themselves, “**Sell your possessions, and give to the needy.**” Releasing your grip on earthly treasures and using them to help others is how someone actually stockpiles treasure in heaven.

We must notice, Jesus does not say sell **all** your possessions. He says, get rid of the abundance and be happy as your needs are being met because earthly stuff is only useful to your soul as it keeps you alive to pursue the Father and his

kingdom. When money becomes our pursuit, we have believed the lie of the devil that our security is in the abundance of our possessions.

There are basically two types of people:

First, those who live for possessions because they think they are the security of life. To stockpile possessions will lead to fear in this life and ultimate destruction in the life to come.

Second, those who live for Christ and see possessions not as the goal but as a means to sustain life while stockpiling treasure in heaven. Theirs will be a life of peace and never-ending joy with God in heaven.

Jesus tells us, you have one heart and it can only be fixed on one treasure. Decide what your treasure will be.

Live a life of faith and trust in God through Christ. This is the life that leads to peace and to heaven. Amen.