

Don't Worry
Luke 12:22-34

Introduction

Turn in your Bibles to Luke 12:22-34. This passage is very similar to what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:19-34, but the differences in historical context and details of what is said demonstrates that Jesus taught the same or similar lessons to different groups at different times. That is something every teacher does sooner or later. Parents even do that with their children (sometimes a lot on the same day when they are young). The idea that sometimes appears in commentaries that try to coordinate the four gospel accounts as if Jesus only taught a particular lesson once is actually quite silly.

The setting of both events is similar, yet with significant differences. In both Jesus is teaching His disciples and a large crowd that had gathered with Luke 12:1 describing the crowd there as “stepping on one another.” The Sermon on the Mount takes place early in His ministry in a remote location on a mountain where people from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan have followed Him. The event recorded here takes place near the end of Jesus’ ministry as He was traveling from Jerusalem back to the region of Galilee. It is in some population center because the crowds have quickly gathered after He had cast out a demon healing a mute man and then had lunch with a Pharisee who had invited other Pharisees and some lawyers (scribes).

The Sermon on the Mount begins with Jesus presenting the characteristics of those that are part of His kingdom and then moves to correction of the teaching of the Scribes and then the practices of the Pharisees. Jesus’ teaching about anxiety there is a contrast to having wicked hearts like the Jewish religious leaders who were actually more concerned about the things of this world than the things of God. The teaching in this passage began with Jesus’ warning about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and then abruptly turns to warnings about greed after Jesus is rudely interrupted. Jesus’ teaching about worry is the follow-up as to why greed is foolish.

Luke 12:22-34

Follow along as I read through the passage and then we will go back to look at its particular points.

²² *And He said to His disciples, “For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on.”* ²³ *“For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.”* ²⁴ *“Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!”* ²⁵ *“And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life’s span?”* ²⁶ *“If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?”* ²⁷ *“Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.”* ²⁸ *“But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith!”* ²⁹ *“And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying.”* ³⁰ *“For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things.”* ³¹ *“But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.”* ³² *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.”* ³³ *“Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.”* ³⁴ *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Worry - Luke 12:22-23

The first phrase in Jesus' command in verse 22 is, *"For this reason."* This directly ties what He is about to say with what He had just said. Jesus had been specifically addressing the crowd when He warned 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 then He told them the parable of the foolish rich farmer. All his plans to store up his wealth so that he could have a comfortable retirement proved to be foolish because his soul would be required of him that night (Luke 12:15-20). Jesus concluded with the admonition to not be like that man who laid up treasure for himself and was not rich toward God. Jesus was not speaking against saving or planning, both of which the Scriptures encourage, but He was speaking against living apart from awareness of your dependence upon God. James 4:13-16 explains the proper perspective with verse 15 summarizing the principle, *you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."*

Jesus now expands on this point about not laying up treasure for yourself and instead being rich toward God, but now He specifically addresses His disciples as pointed out in Luke 12:22. The crowd is still present and is welcome to listen, but the lesson is specific to those who are His followers since the promise of the kingdom spoken about in verse 32 does not apply to those that were not His disciples.

The specific command is *"You are not to worry about your soul - what you eat, nor the body - what you wear."* The reason given in verse 23 is *for the soul is much more than food and the body than clothing.* Jesus further ties this to what he had just taught by using the same word for "life" here as He did in verse 19 for the rich farmer who said to his soul, *"Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years, take your ease, eat, drink, be merry."* Life / soul here is *yuchv / psuchē* which encompasses more than your biological functioning. It is your physical life plus the immaterial aspects that make up the totality of what we call human life. It includes your emotions, thoughts, desires and will. Jesus contrasts it specifically as something different than your physical body.

Worry is *merimnavw / meimnaō*. In this context it is to care in the sense of have anxious concern, apprehension about possible danger or misfortune. The command here does not prohibit thinking about what you will eat or what clothes you will wear. It is a command not to have your thoughts bound up by them or have a brooding, fearful concern. These are not the things that should preoccupy your mind and you should be without apprehension of having what you need. Our English word worry comes from a German word which has a meaning of "to strangle," and that is what worry does. It chokes you out from being able to move forward in life because you are too busy planning for all the things that could possibly go wrong in the future. The mind is preoccupied with contingencies, the emotions are troubled with fear, desires are shortened to avoidance all of which prevents the will from taking positive action forward. As Corrie Ten Boom, a survivor of Nazi concentration camps well said, *"Worry does not empty tomorrow of sorrow; it empties today of its strength."* Arthur Somers Roche gives a good description of this, *"Worry is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained."*

What Jesus says here applies to all of His followers regardless of their economic standing. Perhaps it is easier to understand the danger of someone poor falling into the trap of worry because they may not have any food reserves or even an additional change of clothes, but what Jesus commands here applies just as much to the wealthy who worry they will not be able to keep up with their current standard of living. I don't recall the fellow's name, but I read an article in the Wall Street Journal a month or so ago about a businessman who became worried about whether he would be able to keep up his success rate. His business was doing great and he was a multi-millionaire who would not need to work at all the rest of his life even if his business did not produce any more income for him, but despite psychological counseling, he could not handle the stress and committed suicide leaving behind his wife and fairly young children.

Jesus' command covers everyone from those who may worry about having anything else to eat and those who worry about being able to still afford steak, lobster and caviar. It covers everyone from those who worry about having adequate clothing to protect themselves from the elements to those who worry about whether they will be able to still afford the latest designer fashions. Why? Because life itself is about a lot more than what you eat and even the physical body is about a lot more than what clothing you will wear.

The Need for Food - Luke 12:24

Jesus' first illustration of this principle is in verse 24 and concerns food. ²⁴ *“Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!”*

Jesus used the generic *“birds of the air”* in the parallel illustration in Matthew 6:26, but the term raven is used here and makes an even greater emphasis to the point because Leviticus 11:13 lists ravens as detestable. God provides even for the unclean birds! Like most birds, ravens do not sow, reap or store any food for the future. They are completely dependent upon finding food as they need it, and therefore they are ultimately in God's hands. God points this out in Job 38:41 rhetorically asking, *“Who prepares for the raven its nourishment When its young cry to God And wander about without food?”* Psalm 147:9 also points this out as one of the reasons to sing to the Lord with thanksgiving, *“He gives to the beast its food, and the young ravens which cry.”* Adding to this illustration was the fact that 1 Kings 17 records that God used ravens to supply food to Elijah. God supplied their food and then through them He supplied food to Elijah.

The point is a simple argument from the lesser to the greater. If God has such watch care for an animal such as a raven to feed them, then certainly He has such watch care to provide for you as one of His followers when you are of such greater value. But be careful here because the command here is only not to worry. It does not mean you do not need to plan and work.

Certainly God provides, even miraculously when needed, such as the manna for the children of Israel for forty years in the wilderness (Exodus 16:35). However, Jesus is not removing the general curse that was placed upon man in Genesis 3:17-19 in which we are told that *“by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.”* Man still has to sow, reap and store because that is the normal way God has determined that man is to eat.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 the Apostle Paul had to rebuke some people concerning this commanding, *“if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.”* Paul had said in the previous verses that with *“labor and hardship”* they worked *“night and day”* so that they could pay their own way so that they could set an example and not be a burden.

Jesus is not giving you permission to quit working because God will provide. He is commanding you to quit fretting about food because God will provide. The ravens actively look for food, but they are not anxious about it because God provides. You are to work and plan ahead, but you are not to worry because God provides.

The Inability of Worry - Luke 12:25-26

Jesus next points out the folly of worry in verses 25-26. ²⁵ *“And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life's span?”* ²⁶ *“If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?”* I think the point here is easy enough to understand, though the terms used in verse 25 are unusual in being joined together and hence the variations in translation. A literal translation would be, *“but which of you out of your worry is able upon the life span of you is able to add a cubit.”* Translators tend to emphasize either the term “cubit” (the distance from your elbow to the end of your fingers) and

translate age / length of life as stature, a measure of height as in the NKJV, or they do the opposite as in the NASB. Personally, I think both terms fit together well as you cannot add a cubit, a short measure, to the length of your life. I am sure there are some people that would like to add about 18 inches to their height and might even be anxious about, but more common is the human quest to live longer.

However, either way, the answer to the rhetorical question is that worry cannot make you taller or help you live longer, and it probably shortens both since it has such a negative effect upon health. We have a tremendous amount of people on anxiety medications trying to head off not only the emotional turmoil, but also its negative effects on the body. A fellow named William G. Jordan listed some of these out saying, *“Worry is the most popular form of suicide. It impairs appetite, spoils digestion, disturbs sleep, irritates disposition, weakens mind, warps character, saps bodily strength, and stimulates disease. Worry is the real cause of death in thousands of instances where some other disease is named on the death certificate.”*

If worry cannot help you with such a little thing such as adding a cubit to the length of your life, then why worry about other matters? Jesus’ rhetorical statement in verse 26 expands the principle far beyond just food to all the other things people tend to worry about in life. There is no valid reason to worry about those things because it will not help anyway. As Claude McDonald quipped, *“Worriers spend a lot of time shoveling smoke.”*

The Desire for Fashion - Luke 12:27-28

Jesus next turns His attention to illustrate His point about clothing.²⁷ *“Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.”*²⁸ *“But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith!”*

What Jesus says here applies to everyone. Perhaps there are some people so poor that they worry about having some kind of clothes to wear, but most people only worry about having the clothes they like to wear, and the rich that their clothes are fashionable enough to make the right impression on others. Jesus is not saying you should expect to be clothed like Solomon without working or that you will be clothed as lovely as the flowers, but He is saying that if God clothes common flowers so beautifully, then He will take care of you. It is another argument from the lesser to the greater.

Do not think of the lilies mentioned here as the large Easter Lilies we had here a few weeks ago or Calla Lilies. The flowers Jesus refers to here could be any of several types of wild flowers common to the area. Those hearing Jesus were also aware that those same plants would be used for tender in starting fires for the ovens used to bake bread after they dried out. If God cares for something so insignificant that it is used to tender fire, then He will take care of you. Your degree of worry demonstrates the insufficiency of your faith. Do not let your faith be small. Increase it by reminding yourself of these truths and especially so when you are tempted to worry.

The Correct Focus of Life - Luke 12:29-31

²⁹ *“And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying.”*³⁰ *“For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things.”*³¹ *“But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.”*

Let me stress again that worry is an issue of the heart, not economics. The poor may worry about having food and clothes, but the rich worry even more about the kind and quality of the food and the fashion of the clothing. Such worry easily leads to greed when you do get something or being ungrateful because what God provided was not what you wanted. You wanted a steak but got a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Failure to be thankful for what God has provided is the sin of ungratefulness. That was the reason for the sinful murmuring and complaining by Israel in their wilderness wanderings (Numbers 11:4,31f; 1 Corinthians 10:10), and according to 2 Timothy 3:2, it is one of the many sins that will characterize the last days.

Let me quickly add here that you need to be careful to be grateful yourself and to demonstrate that before others. Children and the immature learn a lot by your example. Be diligent to teach your children to give thanks for whatever God provides for them. It is not enough to just refrain from whining and complaining. Teach them to praise God for the vegetables as well as the desert, and what is true about food is also to be true about clothing. While there is nothing wrong with dressing nicely, do not let either yourself or them get caught up in trying to be “fashionable” to impress others. Neither silk suits, name brand blue jeans, or designer dresses impress God. He is looking at your heart.

Jesus points out that it is “the nations of the world,” a reference to unbelieving heathens, that eagerly seek these mundane things. Because they do not know and trust God they focus their lives on material things resulting in anxiety about them. We certainly see this often in the materialistic society in which we live. Jesus commands His followers to not be like them. Do not seek, strive after, set your desire for, what to eat or drink, and do not worry. Why? Jesus points out two reasons.

First, the Father already knows your need of them. Have faith. He who provides for ravens and common lilies will also provide for you. God’s provision was part of the lesson Jesus gave them on prayer only a very short time earlier (Luke 11). In prayer you can ask, seek and knock with confidence that the good Lord hears and will answer.

Second, Jesus gives the cure for anxiety in His command and promise - *“Seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.”* Set your desire on God’s kingdom and strive for it and God’s promise is that He will provide these necessities of life. God wants your mind focused on Him and living for His glory as part of His kingdom and not on the mundane things of this world. However, I must stress that this is not a promise to give you what you want, it is a promise to give you what you need. Part of seeking God’s kingdom is learning contentment, and as 1 Timothy 6:8 states, *“If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.”* Part of the reasons that Christians can be worry free is that they are not competing with the unbelievers in the rat race of futility to gain what is going to be left behind when you die and will ultimately burn up anyway (2 Peter 3).

Not only does God provide what you need to live in this life, but Jesus next points out that He has already given something greater.

The Provision of God - Luke 12:32

³² *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.”*

What a tender and powerful statement! Fear drives worry, so do not be afraid. He then tenderly calls His disciples His “*little flock.*” They are His sheep which makes Him the shepherd, and that would have quickly brought to their minds many Psalms in which that analogy is made of God and His people. (Psalm 23, 28, 74, 78, 79, 80, 95, 100, 119). Believers are Jesus’ sheep.

Because we belong to Him, Jesus then states that it is the Father’s good pleasure to grant to us the kingdom. Contemplate that for a moment. Each of you knows the waywardness and failings of your own hearts, yet God the Father, who is holy and infinite in every dimension and respect, delights to give to humans His kingdom. This is not a universal action for the “you” is restricted to those who are part of Jesus’ “*little flock*” which is composed of redeemed sinners. God’s incomprehensible love was demonstrated in sending Jesus to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) and calling sick sinners to Himself (Matthew 9:12-13) for whom He died (Romans 5:8).

Your Treasure and Your Heart - Luke 12:33-34

³³ *“Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.”* ³⁴ *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

These commands are designed to put a person’s trust of the Lord to the test, for only someone who trusts God will take on the apparent risk. This is the opposite of greed which arises from a heart of

selfishness and fear. This is a heart of compassion that extends itself to help other because there is trust that God will provide for future needs as promised. This is a heart that lives according to an eternal instead of temporal perspective. The desire is to further the kingdom of God instead of kingdom of self.

Do not take this as a requirement to impoverish yourself as if that is somehow a superior spiritual position as is done among monks and nuns of various faiths. Paul's various admonitions in Ephesians 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-13; 1 Timothy 5:7; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:6-11, etc., explain the application of this command. We are to diligently labor so that we provide for ourselves, those dependent upon us, and to give generously to those in need. Colossians 3:1-2 commands believers to "*Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth,*" and these things demonstrate such a mind. These are the actions of a heart that is seeking treasure in heaven instead of treasure on earth.

Jesus also points out the very practical side of this as well. Money belts wear out with age and they become obsolete when either there is nothing left in them or you die and can no longer use what was in them. The contrast to this is treasure in heaven that never wears out, never goes out of existence, never is exhausted. Jesus' reference to the thief coming near and the moth destroying is pointing out the simple reality that any form of wealth on the earth can be either stolen or destroyed. Even intangible items such as good relationships, happiness and good memories can be destroyed quickly by sin and its effects including diseases that cause various forms of senility. Treasures in heaven cannot be stolen and they cannot be destroyed. Even from a purely logical standpoint, heaven is the much better location to place your treasure.

Jesus concludes with a statement about the underlying issue in all of this. "*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" The location of what you treasure reveals the location of your heart.

If your heart is set on the things of this earth, then you will be busy about the business of laying up treasures here. If you value fortune, your finances will go into things like large financial portfolios, large houses, fancy cars, fine clothing & jewelry and such instead of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you value pleasure, you will spend your time and energy on whatever makes you feel good such as culinary delights, exotic vacations, spas and elaborate home theater. Sacrificing a creature comfort for the sake of being able to help someone else would not be done. If you value fame, you will spend your time and energy doing whatever it is that you think will bring you acclaim from people. Gaining honor from God would be an afterthought at best. If you value power, you will strive to climb your way up to the top so that you will have control of those below you. This is doubly tragic when someone pursues a church leadership position for this reason. The idea of actually being a servant to others in the kingdom of God is repulsive to such people.

The location of your treasure reveals your heart and two quick indicators of what you treasure is what you spend your money on and where you spend your time. What do they indicate about your heart? A third indicator is what you worry about. The greater your focus on the kingdom of God and trust of Him, the less worries you will have. Where is your treasure? Where is your heart? What do you worry about?

Sermon Notes - 5/7/2017
Don't Worry - Luke 12:22-34

Introduction

This is similar to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:19-34) but _____ in context and details

The Sermon on the Mount takes place _____ in a remote location, this takes place late in a populated area

Luke 12:22-34

Worry - Luke 12:22-23

This passage ties in directly to Jesus' previous warning to guard against every form of _____

The crowd is present, but Jesus turns His attention to His _____

He ties His command to the Parable by using the same word for _____ / soul - yuchv / psuchē

Worry (merimnavw / meimnaō) : _____ concern, apprehension about possible danger or misfortune

Worry _____ the mind, troubles the emotions, cuts short desires and cripples the will

Jesus' command applies to all His followers regardless of _____ status

The Need for Food - Luke 12:24

This is specifically “_____” which are an unclean bird and not just “birds of the air”

God provides for _____ (Job 38:41, Psalm 147:9), you can trust Him to provide for you

God provides miraculously when needed, but man still must sow, reap and store by the _____ of his face

Those who refuse to _____ should not be given anything to eat (2 Thess. 3:10-12)

The command is to quit _____ about food because God will provide - it is not a license to quit working

The Inability of Worry - Luke 12:25-26

Worry cannot add height to your stature or length to your life - it is more likely to _____ both

There are no _____ reasons for the Christian to worry

The Desire for Fashion - Luke 12:27-28

This _____ also applies to rich and poor alike

Don't _____ to be clothed like Solomon or as lovely as a flower, but God will take care of you

If God cares for common, _____ wild flowers, He will provide for you

Your degree of worry demonstrates the insufficiency of your _____ - Learn & hold to the truth

The Correct Focus of Life - Luke 12:29-31

This is an issue of the _____, not economics

You need to be _____ and teach thankfulness to your children and the less mature

The “nations of the world” seek _____ things because they do not know or trust the Lord

Don't worry because the Father _____ your need even before you ask

Don't worry because God _____ to provide for those that seek His kingdom

As you seek God's kingdom you learn _____ even there is little (1 Tim. 6:8)

The Provision of God - Luke 12:32

_____ drives worry, so do not be afraid

"Little flock" - His disciples are His _____ and He is the shepherd (Psalm 23, 28, 74, 78, 79, 80, 95, 100)

It is the Father's good pleasure, He _____ in granting the kingdom to His flock

Your Treasure and Your Heart - Luke 12:33-34

These commands are the opposite of _____ and designed to put a person's trust of the Lord to the test

_____ not required: Eph. 4:28; 1 Thess. 4:11-12; 2 Thess. 3:7-13; 1 Tim. 5:7; 2 Cor. 8:1-5; 9:6-11,

Diligently _____ to provide for yourself & dependents and give sacrificially to help those in need

Treasures in a temporal world are _____, but treasures in heaven are eternal and safe

What you treasure reveals your _____ - either worldly or godly

Your use of time and money _____ what you treasure and therefore your heart

_____ reveals what is important to you and your level of trust in God

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help. **Young Children**

- draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch.

Older Children - Do one or more of the following: 1) Count how many times a reference is made to worry. 2)

Discuss with your parents what you worry about and how trusting God can give you confidence.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. Set the context for Luke 12:22-34. How does this distinguish this passage from the parallel in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:19-34)? How is this passage linked to Jesus' warnings about greed just prior to this? What does it mean to worry? How does worry affect the mind? Emotions? Desires? Will? Physical body? What does Jesus mean that life is more than food and the body more than clothing? What is the significance of Jesus using the raven to illustrate God's provision of food? Find as many Old Testament reference to ravens as you can. What is the nature of a raven? If God provides, why does a Christian still have to work - sow, reap and store? Why can't worry make you either taller or live longer? What negative effects does worry have on the physical body? Are there any benefits to worry? How does the quest for fashion lead people away from godliness? What kind of flowers does Jesus reference? Why are they insignificant? How can a faith that is small be increased? How strong or weak is the word for "seek" in Luke 12:29? Why do the "nations of the world" seek after those things? What is the link between worry and ungratefulness? How can you teach your children to be thankful to God? What is necessary to be content? What is the significance of Jesus using the term "little flock"? Why should they not be afraid? Why does the Father delight in granting them His kingdom? What does it mean that they are given His kingdom? Does Luke 12:33 indicate that Jesus wants you to take a vow of poverty? What does the Apostle Paul teach about working and giving in his epistles? Is there any form of earthly wealth that cannot be either stolen or destroyed? What is treasure in heaven? Why does the location of your treasure reveal your heart? What is revealed about your heart by your use of money and time? What does worry reveal about your heart? What do the things you worry about reveal about your heart and trust of God?