

Message #62

Luke 12:22-34

It seems to me from observing life and observing the Scriptures that most people have a natural tendency to worry about money. Money is a fact of life and existence and financial anxiety and worry is certainly something that is very real in our society.

- 1) People are always talking about the economy, which is controlled by God.
- 2) People are always talking about a deficit that we will never be able to pay.
- 3) People are always talking about the job and employment situation.
- 4) People are always talking about the tax situation.
- 5) People have bills to pay and financial obligations to meet.
- 6) People have families to support and raise and it takes money to do that.

Because of this there has always been a tendency to worry about money.

For a believer, it is possible to get so focused and consumed with the financial dialogues of an unstable, God-mocking, Christ-rejecting world to the point that we lose sight of the fact that we, who know the Lord, are intimately connected to and related to the sovereign, stable, Omnipotent God who has always promised to take care of His people. **God does not want His people consumed with financial things; He wants His people consumed with Him.**

There is a key word that shows up in this section three times. The word is “anxiety” or “worry” (μεριμνάω) (12:22, 25, 26). According to Gerhard Kittel, this word was used in Greek to refer to a care or concern or anxiety that caused a person to be so intent on something that it became his primary focus and ambition (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 589).

This is what anxiety is. It is an intense worry, apprehension or uncertainty that becomes such a focus that it affects what you do and how you think. Anxiety can cause one to lose sleep and health. One of the main causes of this kind of anxiety in this world is money.

Somehow people get duped into falsely thinking that money is what will really bring happiness. It was Andrew Carnegie who said, “Millionaires who laugh are rare. My experience is that wealth is apt to take smiles away.”

There is an interesting verse in Luke 18:23. It is no coincidence that in this one verse you have the words “very sad” and “extremely rich.” Often extremely rich people are very sad.

When Jesus Christ was actually here on earth, His disciples had pretty much given up everything to follow Him. They had given up careers, incomes, homes, family and friends. The disciples travelling with Christ at times wondered where they would sleep and where they would eat.

The Pharisees and Scribes who were the dominant religious group were very wealthy. Many of them had a lot of money. They were enemies of Christ and enemies of the disciples and yet they appeared to be so successful. When you are following Christ through corn fields trying to get a little something to eat, that can begin to weigh heavily on you.

Jesus wanted His disciples to realize that God would always take care of them. He knew their needs and He would meet their needs. They could continue to focus on eternal things and know their temporal needs would be met. Notice **verse 22** makes it clear that this discussion is given to “His disciples.” Jesus is talking specifically to His disciples.

What Jesus said to His disciples was this:

THOSE WHO ARE COMMITTED TO ME NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT THAT WHICH IS TEMPORAL BECAUSE YOU MAY KNOW THAT GOD WILL ALWAYS PROVIDE FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM, AND THEY MAY LIVE LIFE WITH THEIR FOCUS ON THAT WHICH IS ETERNAL.

There is nothing wrong with thinking right about money. Money is a Biblical theme that does show up in the Bible. Money is a reality of life. God expects us to give to Him and His work. God expects us to care for our family. He expects us to pay our bills. He expects us to give what we can to those in need. There is nothing wrong with enjoying good things in life that He has provided. Money is not the problem; the problem is how people think about money and what they do with the money that is the problem.

In the previous context (12:13-21), Christ taught against the sin of godless ambition. In this context, Christ teaches against the sin of godless anxiety. For a believer to spend his entire life worrying and fretting about money, is a complete waste of time and life.

In this passage Jesus gives four reasons why a believer should not spend life worrying about money and making money and temporal things the primary focus of life:

REASON #1 – Because worrying about temporal financial things is not the primary purpose of life. **12:23-24**

In the first two reasons there is an order to how Jesus makes His point:

- 1) He gives His main statement (**12:22, 25**).
- 2) He gives an explanatory explanation to develop His main statement (**12:23, 26**).
- 3) He gives an illustration to enhance His main statement (**12:24a, 27**).
- 4) He makes an application of His main statement (**12:24b, 28**).

Now the first reason why Jesus did not want His disciples worrying about financial things is because this is not the primary purpose of life for a child of God.

That word “life” (*ψυχη*) is one that refers not only to life but to a person’s heart and soul (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 488-489). **What Jesus is saying here is that the most important thing to your heart and soul and life is not that which is material and temporal. It is that which is immaterial and eternal.**

Now Christ gives an illustration of the fact that God will always take care of His people and He uses the illustration from the bird world concerning a raven. To the Scribes and Pharisees, the raven was one of the most despicable and degrading birds on earth. It was ceremonially unclean (Lev. 11:15) and it was always connected and associated with unclean things.

This was the way the Pharisees saw these disciples. They saw them as unclean because they did not conform to their man made system of religion.

In **verse 24**, Christ tells His disciples to consider those ravens. Christ wanted His disciples to think about those unclean dirty birds. He brings out three facts about them:

Fact #1 - Ravens do not spend their time even trying to produce food. **12:24a**

Fact #2 - Ravens do not spend their time trying to stockpile food. **12:24b**

Fact #3 - Ravens always have plenty because God cares for them. **12:24c**

Ravens are unclean birds who don't worry or do anything to provide for their own existence. They don't try to produce food, store food and they don't worry about food because God provides it for them.

The point is profound. If God cares for the unclean birds like ravens, He is certainly going to take care of those who love and follow His own son. Any believer who purposes to follow the Lord and obey the word will discover that God will abundantly care for His people. God's people do not have to spend their lives worrying about money. They should focus on obeying God and let God take care of the money matters.

In David's elderly years of life, he wrote these words: "I have been young and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his descendants begging bread" (Ps. 37:25).

Don't spend your life worrying about temporal and financial things. Serve God for He will take care of you. You will probably end up with an abundance of blessings from the hand of God.

REASON #2 – Because worrying about temporal financial things will not add one thing to your life. **12:25-28**

The primary point of verse 25 is that all the worrying in the world will not change anything. You can worry about money and financial things and temporal things all of your life but that worry won't change a thing.

Now the point Jesus is making is you cannot add one inch or one day to your physical life span by worrying about temporal or financial things. You cannot add to your physical life by worrying, but you can take away from your physical life by worrying.

Verse 26 gives a follow up statement, namely, if you cannot do something “very little” in God’s world such as cause an expansion of physical life, why would you spend your life worrying about physical things. Worry won’t change anything about your life. Prayer can change things, but worry cannot (Philippians 4:6).

In **verse 27**, Jesus gives another illustration to make His point. He challenges His disciples to look at the flowers, specifically the “lilies.” Lilies were common in the land of Israel. In fact, many grow wild in fields to this day. Christ says look at those beautiful flowers. They do not toil or spin. Most beautiful things were made by taking material and spinning it and weaving it until it forms something beautiful. Christ’s point here is that these lilies don’t do any work, they just rely on God and they are more beautiful than all of the beautiful clothes that Solomon wore. Solomon wore high-end clothing and tailors did a lot of hard work to make his clothing.

Now Christ makes His point in **verse 28**: if God sovereignly sees that His plants grow to become beautiful and if He cares for something so temporal like a flower, He certainly will take care of His people who love Him and faithfully serve Him.

Flowers are pretty for a while but then the sun gets them and they are gone. Flowers and grass are only here for a short time and yet in that short time God Personally cares for them. How much more will He take care of His people who love Him and live for Him and serve Him?

At the end of **verse 28**, Jesus gets at the heart of the matter when He says, “O men of little faith.” This really is the central issue. **This whole matter really boils down to whether or not we truly believe God will care for us if we totally follow and obey Him.** Do we truly believe that God will take as good a care of us as He does ravens and lilies? God has promised to take care of us and the real issue is whether or not this is believed.

REASON #3 – Because worrying about temporal financial things is a wrong focus of life.
12:29-30

The verb “do not seek” is present imperative, meaning we have been commanded by God not to continually search after or strive after temporal things and we have been commanded not to worry. The Greek text would indicate that Jesus is saying stop this action. Knock it off.

Now the specific object of the seeking for the disciple’s concerned, is what they will eat and drink. So Jesus says you don’t even need to worry or fret about the basic necessities of life, including your food and drink. Stop worrying about temporal financial stuff.

Now Christ gives two motivations for not devoting ourselves to worrying about temporal things:

Motivation #1 - Because that focus is the objective of the world. **12:30a**

This is all the world thinks about temporal wealth and stuff. To devote ourselves to the same goal is to do that which is worldly. When we make our primary goals and worries about temporal financial things, we are behaving like most everyone else in the world.

If you were to ask most Christians what is worldliness, probably most would answer this way. Worldliness is drinking, stealing, lusting, cheating. I doubt too many would say worrying about money.

Motivation #2 - Because God knows everything we need to survive in life. **12:30b**

God knows what we need and He will always care for us and give us not only what we need, but more than we need. He knows what the ravens need and He supplies it. He knows what the lilies need and He supplies it. He also knows what His people need and He will supply it.

A minister met with a couple, who was not part of his church that was having all kinds of financial problems. He asked them if they systematically, sacrificially and generously gave to God. They said they could not afford to. He said you cannot afford not to. He told them no wonder you have financial problems, you don't obey God with your finances.

When I meet with couples who are about to be married, I discuss financial things from a Biblical perspective and I tell them always keep God first. Give him the first fruits and your barns will be filled with plenty. The Biblical philosophy of money out of Proverbs is simple: 1) Give some; 2) Spend some; 3) Save some. One time someone challenged me about this and I said well then don't follow it. Do it your way and see where that gets you.

God says don't spend your life worrying about money; you stay focused on Me because I know everything you need.

REASON #4 – Because not worrying about temporal financial things and seeking after eternal things is the right focus of life. **12:31-34**

Verse 31 is a very personal and practical promise. Look at what Jesus says here. **If we will make our primary objective in life to do God's will, He will see to it that we will have everything we need and He will actually add to it more than we need.**

He will take care of His people. He has promised to supply what His people need.

Now to drive this point home, Christ gives four commands to His people that guarantee His provisions:

Command #1 - Do not fear anything. **12:32**

Notice Christ calls His disciples “little flock.” Keep in mind the crowd total here was in the thousands (12:1). The Pharisees and Scribes were big time and powerful. Christ did not want His people to be afraid of the big, powerful, rich and famous people.

Obviously by calling His people “little flock” He is implying that their strength is not in their numbers, it is in their relationship with God.

Christ says you don’t need to go through life afraid of anything, including loss of money because you have been chosen by God and God will gladly give you things from His Kingdom. His kingdom controls the whole world.

Command #2 - Sell your possessions. **12:33a**

Jesus was physically here on earth and these disciples were physically with Him and I believe most of them did sell what they had to finance their ministry.

In the book of Acts there were times when some voluntarily did this. Apparently this was not mandated in the church, but there were a couple of instances where someone sold something and gave it to the church. Acts 2:45 and Acts 4:34 were moments when people literally did this. That is what got Ananias and Sapphira executed. They said they were going to sell some property and give it to the church and then they kept some of it and lied and God killed them (Acts 5:1-11).

In the Church Epistles, there is no place where we find this command given to people by Paul. In fact, when Jesus Christ addresses the seven churches of Revelation (Rev. 2-3), He does not tell them to sell their homes and live some communal life, but He does warn them to stay away from idolatry and immorality. But the principle is the same—God’s people should not spend their lives in love with their possessions or money.

Command #3 - Give things away. **12:33b**

One question God’s people need to ask is “what should I do with my surplus?” Obviously, God does not want His people hoarding and hoarding. God is a generous God and He wants His people to be generous and not stingy. He wants His people to be giving people. Those who are right with God are giving people. They have hearts that want to give and help.

Command #4 - Provide for yourself eternal treasure. **12:34**

Christ closes this section with a very simple statement—whatever you consider to be your wealth that is where you will find your heart. A person’s heart will beat after what one considers to be the true treasure. Your heart will beat after what you really value.

Use what you have for God and you will never regret it.