

Be On Guard Against Covetousness

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[0:00] All right, let's be turning to Luke chapter 12.

Luke chapter 12. Luke chapter 12.

And being able to pay all their bills for the rest of their lives. They never want another worry in the world. People dream of making it big as YouTube stars.

Being able to build one of those fancy houses. Live with all the things you ever wanted. People dream about having the dream job. You know, the kind of job where you go to work.

You sit behind a desk. You write a few little things. You make a few little decisions. I mean, it's more like not much work rather than work.

[1:35] Everybody wants that kind of work. Little work. Lots of pay. Lots of time off. Living the good life. We're going to look at a situation today presented to Jesus.

And it seemed innocent enough. But just as that happened, Jesus saw the heart behind the man. And warned of something that is a temptation to everyone. Covetousness. Covetousness. Let's look at Luke chapter 12.

We'll be reading verses 13 to 21. 13 to 21. 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 arbiter over you. And he said to them, Take care. Be on your guard against all covetousness.

[2:40] 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. Be merry. For God said to him, 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. It is not rich towards God. Let's pray together.

[3:38] Father, I thank you. Thank you for being able to see into our hearts. And Lord, This situation Could be innocent.

But Lord, you saw into this man's heart. And you Opened up The problem to him. We don't know how he responded.

We don't know anything beyond this conversation. But Lord, as you taught these people here, I pray that you would teach us. Help us to see what you wanted this man to see.

Help us to see what you want us to see today. I pray that you would be with us. That you would open your word to us. And that you would be glorified. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, we see this situation.

It's been an onrolling story. There may have been a little time between this And the situation that was just before that.

[4:43] Jesus had been eating with the Pharisees. And he comes out and warns his disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees. Which is hypocrisy. And talks about acknowledging him before men.

And we went through these things. And so what's coming next could be a following on. It was certainly probably in the same day. Whether it was immediately after what was said.

We don't know. But Jesus is teaching along. In the middle of him teaching. There's this almost rude thing that happens. There'd been a dispute between two brothers.

And a man just simply cries out. Teacher. Or we could say, Rabbi. Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

Just out of the blue. Now, it was not unusual for there to be interaction. Between Jesus and the people he was speaking with. That was something that happened. It was common of the day. It was common not only of Jesus.

[5:48] But it did happen with the ministry that Jesus had. And so, in one sense, it wasn't odd. And in another sense, even, it wasn't odd. In the sense that what was about to happen was something that did sometimes happen.

In these kind of situations. But it was, here is Jesus teaching all these important things. He's laying down important spiritual principles about standing for the Lord.

And not being ashamed of him. And then, all of a sudden, this man, out of the blue, without any consideration. There's no tie in what he is saying to what Jesus has been saying.

This man came with an agenda. He came with something on his heart. And whether he was listening to Jesus or not, we really can't tell.

It almost seems as if he isn't. And he just breaks in and says, Teacher, make my brother share the inheritance with me. Now, the situation here was probably, we only have clues by pronouns and tradition.

[7:01] So, there could be some mistakes in what I'm about to lay out. But most commentators believe that this is exactly what probably happened. There was a young man there, or middle-aged man.

He was probably a younger brother. Second born. Probably second born. And their father had died. His father had died. But he wasn't just father to him. He was father to the other brothers. And there would have to, by means of the way the story is told, seem to be an older brother in this circumstance.

Because when a man died, the inheritance was then distributed amongst the sons. Deuteronomy 21.17 says, of the people of Israel, when a man dies, the oldest son gets a double inheritance, and the rest of the sons get a single inheritance.

And so, of course, nothing new. It happened then. It happens now. There are sometimes disputes over inheritances.

[8:14] And you could imagine it was common in that day that if a man had a nice, let's say he had a nice farm, which was probably most of what would be argued about here, land.

If the man had a nice farm when he died, the oldest son would, of course, get double the inheritance. But if there were like one, two, three, or four, that would mean that this nice farm would then have to be split up into smaller pieces.

And the oldest son sometimes would argue and say, you know, if we kept this whole, we could all make more money.

And that was his reasoning, and sometimes that would happen, but it was kind of unfair to all the rest of the sons. Because if they kept it whole, the oldest son got to make the decisions on everything.

And no other son could venture out, take his money, and invest, and become something on his own. He was limited.

[9:31] And so there were problems. And oftentimes the younger sons would be mad at the older sons, saying, give us our money. I mean, I don't want to live here.

I see land over the other side of the Jordan, or I see land here, there, or someplace. I think I could really make something of, and I've got to have that money to be able to start.

And so he would be arguing for that inheritance to be divided. Dividing the inheritance would have made the younger brother more economically sound.

And he also would have his freedom. And so in this dispute, what probably was the younger man came to Jesus and said, Master, teacher, make my brother divide the inheritance.

Why did he come to Jesus and do that? Well, it's because that was what was often done, not necessarily to Jesus. In fact, we don't know if any other person came to Jesus and asked such a thing as this man.

[10:39] But it was common for inheritance disputes that the grieved party would go to a rabbi.

Because rabbis knew the law. And rabbis could take and say, now remember, brother, Deuteronomy 21, 17 says, this is what must happen.

And they could make it happen. A rabbi would have that knowledge. He would have that reasoning ability. And he may well have the resources to make those kinds of things happen.

And so why come to Jesus? Well, he was a rabbi. The word teacher means rabbi. When he comes to Jesus, he says, rabbi, we see it in English as teacher because it helps us to understand what the position was.

But he says, rabbi, make him divide the inheritance. And the answer that Jesus gives seems rude. And Jesus is not rude because of sin.

[11:48] Jesus is blunt often because people need to hear the truth. And this is what goes on here. This man needed to hear the truth because Jesus saw his heart.

Jesus says, man who made me an arbiter between you two. And the man might rightly, according to the common practice, say, well, you're a rabbi, aren't you?

But Jesus was not throwing off his responsibility as a rabbi. He came for a different purpose. But more importantly, God was being very gracious to this man because this man needed to know what Jesus was about to reveal.

It had eternal consequences. This man, this younger man, wanted his inheritance so he could go out and start a farm of his own or whatever kind of business of his own. He wanted to launch on his own.

He didn't want to be under his brother's authority. But what he needed to hear was the problem of his heart. So Jesus saw this man clear down to his heart and addressed the real problem.

[13:02] It was greed. It was covetousness. We'll use those terms interchangeably today. It was greed or covetousness. And so Jesus' answer to this young man, now notice, if you look at verse 15, it says, and he said to them.

That's one of the evidences that maybe he's talking to both brothers at this point. But Jesus is not just talking to both brothers. He's talking to anyone who hear them.

Because all of us need to hear what's here today. And so, he says in verse 15, and he said to them, take care and be on guard against all covetousness.

He sees right down into their heart. Why did the older brother want to keep the land? Because it was better for him.

Why did the younger brother want the land divided? Because it was better for him. Now, these are not illegitimate claims.

[14:18] they, they, it was, by this, Jesus is not saying we should never have inheritance dealt out rightly. He's not against that.

But he sees their heart. And he sees a condition that is in all human heart. And that is this greed and covetousness. This desire to have for them, for themselves.

So he says, beyond guard against all covetousness. For one's life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions.

Jesus saw greed and covetousness in this man's heart. Greed is not a one-time thing. it's something that often is in our hearts all of our lives.

And I'm going to speak generally now about us. It's something that's in us. Greed is something that's here. You don't believe me? Hold up the cookie to, to, to two-year-olds.

[15:19] Cookie jar to two-year-olds. What do you find? Yeah, no cookies. No cookies. I want the biggest cookie.

And the other two-year-old goes, that's mine. Why? Because they want the biggest cookie. It's something that, that's in us.

We want the bigger cookie. We want a better car. We want a bigger, better house. We want more vacation.

We want more pay. Greed is about what we can, can get and about having more. And Jesus saw this in this man. He saw it in the brothers. It's in us too. What's the axiom that was real popular probably a decade and a half ago?

[16:26] He who dies with the most toys wins? That's greed. And you say, I've never been afflicted with that.

You've never fought over the cookie. You've never, as Pastor Tripp mentioned, weighed the ice cream jar of bowls on the way up the stairs to see which one you're going to give your wife. we're all greedy. And it's a dangerous thing. And so he warned these people to be careful, to take care, and be on guard against all covetousness.

And he goes on to say, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. Life is not about what we can get.

He who dies with the most toys dies. And that's it. Most toys doesn't mean anything.

[17:30] Life is not about what we can get. Life is about knowing God. John 13, 3, Jesus said, and this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Life is about knowing God. Life is about serving God. Romans 14, 7 and 8, for none of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord.

And if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. And that is what should be.

But what often is is the other. Trying to die with the most toys. And so Jesus tells them a parable to illustrate this.

I'm out on a limb here. Okay? But I'll mention this. Do you think Jesus fashioned the story around the life of these men's dads?

[18:48] Would they have recognized the story as he was telling? That's way out on a limb. We don't know. But Jesus says, the land of a rich man produced plentiful.

And he thought to himself, what shall I do? For I have nowhere to store my crops. We'll stop there. The man was blessed.

Blessed by God. God allowed it. God allowed his land to produce plenty. And I want to say that there's no sin in this.

There's no, there's no, there's nothing wrong here at this point. There's nothing wrong with riches. There's nothing wrong with being blessed. There's nothing wrong if God gives you a bazillion things or a bazillion dollars.

There's nothing wrong with that. Man was blessed. And then he considered what to do with his profits.

[19:49] Hmm. Bumper crop this year. What will I do? We're still not at a point of sin. All of us can come into money.

All of us can work and God bless our job. And all of us can come sometimes to a point where things are doing well and we go, what do I do?

There's nothing wrong with coming to that point and having to figure out what to do. What happens though is how often our heart influenced us.

And this man, his heart influenced him to choose to serve himself and make his own life comfortable and secure.

he says, I will do this. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones.

[20:47] 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. Never have another bill you can't pay. Never have a car that will die and you can't figure out how to fix it.

It's just going to be great. But this is where the man sinned. This is where things went wrong.

He stored everything for himself. He chose a life of ease for himself. Several pointed out there are four my's and eight I's in this passage.

My, my, my, I, I, I. I'm going to make my life comfortable. Now, in the world around us, everyone at this point in the world who does not know Christ, does not know any biblical principles, would say, sounds smart.

[22:07] I'm just going to make my life comfortable. Kent Hughes in his commentary made this comment and I think it's a good application so I'm going to talk about that here.

This is about the closest thing in the Bible we have to any concept of retirement. I'm not against retirement.

I'm not sure it's in the Bible but I'm not against retirement. How many my's and I's are involved in your retirement?

What do you hear sometimes from people when they say they're about to retire? Well I'm always going to take that cruise I have always wanted to take.

Nothing wrong with cruises. Okay? What happens too often in thinking about retirement in living in retirement is everything then becomes about me.

[23:17] How can I make my life easy? How can I make my life good? good? Now we're not saying that this is teaching that we all ought to live as paupers.

It is going somewhere. Jesus is going somewhere with this. Luke 12 15 says retirement and he said to them take care and be on guard against all covetousness for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

retirement fine. Why? What are you going to do? What are you going to do with what God gives you?

Again I'm not speaking against retirement. I know some of you are and some of you will be soon.

That's not the issue. What are you going to do with what God has given you?

That's the issue. This man in this parable had no concern for anyone but himself. He did not say God what would you have me do with the money that you gave me?

[24:32] What would you like I mean I have so much more than I had. I have so much more than I need. What do you want me to do with it? There was no concern there for what God would have him to do with it.

And there was no concern for those in need around him. That's a big thing in the Old Testament. It's a big thing in the New Testament. Those God had blessed had responsibilities to help those that weren't so well off to meet needs.

You say well if they had been working as hard as I I agree if a man doesn't work neither should he eat. But there are many many many who work hard and still can't make ends meet.

We ought to be people who take what God gives us and thinks about what God would have us to do with our money. Thinks about what God would have us to do for others with what we had.

And because he built barns and packed it all away, because he didn't think about anyone else, because he was concerned only for his own pleasure and comfort and satisfaction, God called him a fool.

[25:58] He was a fool because all his work would be left for others. He was a fool because when he had given a count for his life, nothing he did counted for anything past the day he died.

He had all this stuff, he could enjoy all this stuff, but the day he died, there was not one thing that would stand before God as meaning anything to God.

He was a fool because he thought that being great was to have a lot of things. He was a fool for not being rich toward God. I want you to notice something here.

Most times when we think about tragic financial stories, we think about the man or the woman who's amassed this grace, fortune, and we think more like Job where the fortune goes away.

But that's not the case that's here. And that won't be the case for most people in life. Most of us even won't be like Job where all of a sudden everything is taken away.

[27:12] We may well. Most people will be like this rich fool. It is not the wealth that is taken away. It is the life that's taken away. And everything you've done just like what Solomon talks about in Ecclesiastes will be left for someone else.

And we don't know if they're going to be wise or going to be a fool themselves. And we'll have worked all our lives to amass that which makes us comfortable and the life will be taken away.

And everything we've done will count for nothing. When a man is covetous, nothing he has done in covetousness survives his death.

life will be if you've worked to make your life comfortable. Now, again, I'm not saying that we ought to wear garments of hair and live in sackcloth or anything like that.

It is right and fine to provide for your family. It is even right and fine to have a good car that runs, a house that meets your needs. Those kind of things are fine. But a covetous life, nothing done in a covetous life will survive death.

[28:37] As I said before, being covetous means in the end we worked for nothing. Nothing. In the world's eyes, the man was envied.

In God's eyes, he was a fool. And as I mentioned, covetousness is not something that's just for the rich, nor is it just for the lost.

It's something, because we're sinners, we struggle with it. All people struggle to a greater or lesser extent with greed and covetousness. They're condemned in Scripture, Ephesians 5, 3, but sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not be named among you as proper among saints.

But it is something that saints deal with. Colossians 3, 5, put to death, put to death therefore. He's not talking about, well, you guys don't have to worry about this, you're Christians. Christians deal with it.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness, which is idolatry.

[29:50] Making that link to serving a false God. 1 Timothy 6, 10, for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves through with many pains. Covetousness is something we need to be very careful of.

Now, I'm going to give you some conclusions to what's going on here. I wanted to preach clear down to verse 34.

Because the real ending to what Jesus is about to say is in verses 33 and 34. But there's enough here that we're going to touch on those principles. And then as we talk about anxiety next week, we'll be able to apply them both together because in the end, it comes down to the same issue.

Jesus says, Fool, this night your soul is required of you and the things that you've prepared, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.

[31:05] What should we gather from this? What's evident from the parable itself? Don't live for things, live for God. Don't live for things, live for God.

God gives you things, you are to use things, live for God. Your number one goal in life is not how good a job can I get, how much money can I make, how much can I save, it is what does God want me to do?

How can I serve him? Don't live for things, live for God. God. Secondly, let me ask, what should this man have done?

That's evident by the insinuation, but it's plain by the teaching of scripture. What should this man have done? James 2, 14 to 17.

What is good, my brothers? I'm sorry, what good is it, my brothers? If someone says he has faith but does not have works, can that faith him save him if a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled because I got everything packed in my barns and I'm not getting it out.

[32:29] Go in peace and be warmed and filled without giving them the things needful for the body. What good is it? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Jesus would expect us to take what he provides for us and as we're able meet the needs of those who are around us.

1 John 3 17-18 But if anyone has this world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

Little children, let us not love in word or in talk, but in deed and in truth. Now, the parable was a parable, it was a made-up story, but the situation is true enough.

If it was a literal man and he was tearing his barns down and building bigger and everyone in the community knew that he had had a bumper crop, do you not think there would have been people who would have come to him and said, sir, my children are starving, can you help us?

[33:47] Certainly there would have been people. Maybe they wouldn't have come, but certainly he could see. There are always poor among us, there are always those in need among us.

people who have come to us. And if he had had a heart that God had changed and a heart that wanted to serve God and was a person willing to obey God in this, he would have said, ah, I have a bumper crop this year.

Nobody in my area is going to go hungry this winter. you say, that's a tall order. But he had a lot of money.

1 Timothy 6, 17, and 18, as for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

They are to do good, and to be rich, and good works, to be generous, and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

[35:12] There it is. He's saying that rich people should be willing to share that they may take hold of that which is truly life. What is truly life?

It's being rich towards God, serving him. It's caring as he would care. Now, I'm going to pull from the part that I would have made an application in Luke 12, 33.

He later says, sell your possessions. Now, this sounds odd, because to this point, we've been talking about a rich man who may have had to sell his possessions.

possessions. This sounds like us selling our possessions. One of the things we're going to make much of next week as we talk about anxiety is that it's not just the rich are to watch for people around.

We as Christians give as God provides. We help people as God provides. So, Luke 12, 33 says, sell your possessions and give to the needy.

[36:18] 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.

This rich man was separated from his wealth. His life was taken from his wealth. We can serve Christ. We can be generous.

we can give to others, meet others' needs, and send ahead treasures that will never be taken away. Treasures of truly loving Christ and showing that by loving the folks around us and meeting their needs.

Sending that ahead where money bags will not fail, grow old. Nothing will take it away. So, at what point are you financially well enough to begin thinking about the needs of others?

We're not to wait until we're rich enough to serve one another. Luke 3, 11, and he answered them, whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none.

[37:36] Whoever has food is to do likewise. So, I think in some category or another, most all of us would be in the category of having something that someone might need that we don't need.

And we should not have them, and this is going to next week's message, and I wish I could get into it, but it would take another 45 minutes, which I won't burden you with right now, next week.

That takes us having an attitude of trusting God in the midst of life, of saying, God, what you've given me, I will serve you with. And if I have two coats, I'm willing to give up one.

I don't need the surety or comfort of having an extra setting by. I'm the kind of person. I like to always have extra toilet paper.

Maybe the pandemic did that to me. I like to have extra things here and there. We need to be people who say, if I have extra and someone's in need, then I ought to give and not wait until I'm rich enough that it doesn't impact me at all.

[38:58] Greed and covetousness take place anytime we have something that we have that we can use to meet the need of someone else, and we keep that to supply ourselves, to comfort ourselves, to cushion ourselves.

What do you do if you've lived a life without God in greed and sought together as much as you can and to take ease and to eat, drink, and be merry? What do you do if that's been your lifestyle?

greed is only a part of the debt of sin you owe to God. I'm speaking first of all to those who don't know Christ.

Greed is just a little part, not a little part, a big part, but a big part of a big, big, big part. You can't pay that debt, but Christ came to take your sin and to suffer in your place.

So if this morning you begin to see that you are a person who struggles with greed, run to Christ. Trust in the work of Christ to pay for your sins.

[40:09] But here as Christians, and I think I am safe to say that there's not one of us who doesn't in some way or another struggle with greed.

What do you do if you're, as a Christian, seeing greed in your life? You've thought about that extra thing that somebody really was wishing they had.

What if you see covetousness, what if you see greed in your life? What do you do? Confess it. Jesus calls that sin.

You're trusting in a God of your own making. saying, I will keep this so I am secure. Confess it.

Repent of it. Be willing to give. And don't say, yes, maybe next time I will give. But if there's opportunity, do it.

[41:16] Endeavor to meet the needs of those around you in need. Use what God has provided to serve you. if you like me have been guilty of greed, remember that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And remember that he would have us to turn from that sin and to walk in a way that's pleasing to him. And suddenly not only turn from the sin, but do what's right.

trust Christ. Let's pray together. Father, I thank you for your word. Lord, none of us likes to have our sin pointed out, and yet there's a very real sense in which all of us today probably say that at some point or another, or even right now, I'm being covetous.

I don't want to give up this or that to meet someone else's need. I don't want to give up this or that to serve God. I pray that you would bring repentance.

Father, if those who don't know you would see that not only their greed, covetousness, but all of their sin needs to be paid for. May they see Christ as the one who has come to take our sin upon himself and to die and take our place.

[42:44] May they run to Christ and trust in him. Lord, us as Christians, I pray that you would be with us. Help us to see our sin. Help us to confess our sin. Help us to repent of it.

May we be like Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.