

Kingdom Security

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[0 : 00] Hi, good morning. Good morning. Hope everybody's doing well. As Alex said, my name is Elliot.! It's so good to be with you here at City Grace this morning. And well, so we're winding down to the end of our parable series.

We've got two more weeks in this. It's been a lot of fun going through it. And then we'll kind of turn our eyes to our fall series in the book of 1 Thessalonians here. But we've got two more to get through.

And man, you know, looking back over the series, Jesus tells us a lot about the kingdom, right? We've learned a lot about his kingdom and how it works through this series.

But there's one topic we haven't talked a lot about, which Jesus does, which is money. And so this morning we get to talk about money because who doesn't like to talk about money in church? Am I right?

But in truth, whether we're comfortable with it or not, what we do with our money, our things, is a topic that Jesus talks about a lot.

[1 : 03] It's one of the things he actually talks about the most. And because Jesus talks about it a lot, we have to as well. Though I think you'll find, once you start looking at why Jesus talks about money, it might not be for the reason you suspect.

Because in point of fact, God doesn't need your money. He is not under-resourced. And he is not worried about what you're going to do to accomplish his purposes.

But what we do with it, what we do with our things, is one of the ways that we make the reality of his kingdom visible to the world around us.

So we're going to look at a text today, a parable today, where Jesus is going to talk to a guy about this. But before we look at the text, kind of an interesting context note here. So, when you see Jesus teaching throughout the New Testament, there's kind of this interesting dynamic, if you look for it, where as Jesus is kind of going from place to place, and he's teaching, and he's doing miracles, and he's starting to draw crowds.

When he teaches, like when you see the text given to us in the New Testament, there are some times that Jesus stops and addresses the crowd directly.

[2 : 20] So, like the crowd is gathering around, and he says, I'm saying unto you. But then there are other times where Jesus is not actually talking to the crowd.

He's talking to his disciples. Like he's allowed a crowd to gather, but it says he's teaching his disciples, and he's kind of wanting people to overhear that.

And that's what this passage that we're going to read in Luke 12 today, it's that second scenario where Jesus is speaking directly to his disciples, not to the crowd.

But there is a crowd gathered around. So, he's teaching them, and he wants them to overhear it. And then in the middle of doing that, something happens. So, Jesus is teaching his disciples.

The crowd is gathered around. And then in Luke chapter 12, starting in verse 13, this is what happens. Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

- [3 : 19] But he said, Man, who made me a judge or arbiter over you? And he said to 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 he told them this 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 I will build bigger 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, and be merry.
- But God said to him, Fool, this night your soul is required of you. And the things which you have prepared, whose will they be?
- [4 : 18] So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God. This is God's word to us. An interesting scene, right?
- Jesus is teaching his disciples. And right in the middle of that, a man in the crowd pipes up and says, Jesus, tell my brother to divide our inheritance with me.
- And it's really more awkward than you might think, because the implication is, his brother is there with him. Right? So this is kind of like him saying, Jesus, tell him what's up about the inheritance.
- And our gut reaction to that, our first kind of impulse is probably to think, how audacious of this man to interrupt Jesus teaching his disciples to make that request.
- And in some sense, that's true. But it's also probably not completely surprising that the man would think this is something he could do, because as we established at the outset, Jesus wants people to overhear him.
- [5 : 23] And one of the things that Jesus talks about a lot is money, and what to do with your wealthy, and how it's a trap. He talks about it a lot, so it probably isn't that unreasonable for the man to think that this is a matter Jesus might want to weigh in on.
- And they consider him a teacher, a rabbi. That's what rabbis in that day would do. You would bring disputes like this to them. And it's probably, if we're honest, not also a foreign concept, the idea of us wanting Jesus to speak into someone else's life, right?
- Okay, I'm not calling anybody out, right? But if that's like, you ever been listening to a sermon, and you're like, mm-hmm, mm-hmm, my sister needs to hear that. Wish my boss was here.
- Go get him, Jesus, you know. And so he speaks up. He wants resolution. And Jesus' response, again, is really interesting. First, he basically says to him, look, I'm not here to arbitrate that.
- I'm not here to judge that, which is, again, a little surprising, because in plenty of other places, we learn not only is Jesus a judge, he is the judge. But he says, I'm not here to arbitrate, almost literally in the Greek, I'm not here to divide that.
- [6 : 47] I am not that kind of divider. Which, again, seems strange, because if you just keep reading in that chapter at Luke, near the end of it, it seems like he is the divider of some very significant things.
- He says, don't you know I haven't come to bring peace, but division between families, between important things. But that's what he tells him.
- It's an interesting response on his own. But this morning, because we really want to focus in on the parable, I kind of want to move past that one and put our primary focus not on that statement, but on what he says next, which is, take care and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.

Again, literally in the Greek, for not in the abundance of your things that you have is your life. Which kind of gives us the first thing Jesus wants this man and us to know, which is, your life does not exist in the things you have.

Jesus wants you to know that no matter who you are and what you think, your life is not your things. Your life is not defined by your wealth.

[8 : 08] And I actually think you know that even if you don't think you know it. Let's do a little thought experiment here, right? Really simple, okay? Let's say I came to you and I said, you could have \$50 million.

No strings, just \$50 million. Do whatever you want to with it. Only catch, you get it for one day. You're going to die tomorrow.

You taking that deal? Of course not. And so, if you wouldn't take that deal, you've already testified that there's at least one thing in this world worth more than \$50 million to you and it's waking up tomorrow.

It's an asset you're not willing to give up. But it really doesn't have to be that dramatic. I bet there are other things that you would probably say that about as well.

If I said, I'll give you \$50 million but you can never see your best friend again. Maybe you're thinking about your friend right now and kind of weighing it out. You can have \$50 million but you can never tell your wife or you can never tell your children that you love them again.

[9 : 34] You can be with them but you can never say to them, I love you. I kind of think, no thanks. You don't have to be a follower of Jesus to see that some things in this world are more valuable than all the money you could be given.

And so, Jesus, perceiving this in this man, tells him this parable to warn him about the path his heart is taking. So, let's kind of recap the story.

It says, there's a rich man and he has land that produces plentifully and he thinks, what am I going to do with it? I wasn't prepared for all this increase. I don't know what I'm going to do. I don't know what I'm going to do. So, here's what I'll do.

Very simple plan. I don't have enough place to store this. Notice all his mind is on saving it. Storing it up. So, I'll build bigger barns and I'll store it up.

And then God says to him, fool, this night, your soul is required of you. Meaning, you're coming to stand before me.

[10 : 38] You're coming to the eternal place. And just like we hear in the book of Ecclesiastes, who will have the things you've laid up for yourself?

Solomon says, I build all this wealth and one day I'm going to have to hand it over to somebody I don't know. Jesus says, not only does your life not exist in your things, but kingdom security can't be found in material wealth.

You know, the primary problem with money is not specifically money itself. Because followers of Jesus can, and quite frequently do, use material wealth in all kinds of ways that are a blessing both to you and to those around you.

That's not the problem with money. The problem with money is that it calls out to our deepest desires. It calls out to us that it can give us what we need.

What does that look like? It calls out to your sense and your need for security. I don't feel safe in this world. I feel like my family could be ruined at any moment.

[11 : 53] But if I was rich, if I was wealthy, I would never have to worry about that again. I would never have to worry about losing my job. I would never have to worry about a medical bill I couldn't pay.

If I was rich, I'd be secure. Money calls out to your sense of significance. I'm not important. Nobody knows who I am.

I'm just kind of a plain person, but if I had wealth, people in this town would know my name. They'd see it. They'd remember me.

It calls out to your sense of purpose and agency. I don't feel like I have any control over my life. I can't affect and change the world in the ways I wish I could.

I am beholden to the decisions of others who have more power over my life than me. But if I was rich, I could tell them to shove it. I could call the own shots in my life and I could exert influence over the world in a way to help steer the course of this ship in a way I want it to go.

[13 : 02] At the height of his wealth, in the early 1900s, John D. Rockefeller, through his company Standard Oil, controlled, this is an insane stat, 90% of the U.S. oil supply.

He was unfathomably wealthy. If you've ever been, if you've ever seen some of these things, like these kind of titans of the industrial age, like if you've ever been to Biltmore House, right?

Like you realize they would spend your entire life's earnings, more than you could earn in a year, your entire life really, on like a table, a room.

And they still weren't scratching it. Unfathomably wealthy. And yet, there's this kind of often written about famous reply he made to a reporter who asked him one time, kind of again, at the height of his wealth, Mr. Rockefeller, how much money is enough?

And his reply was, just a little bit more. Now whether he said that out of just pure greed, or maybe as some people have kind of, who study him in the years to come, maybe even a little introspection into like what was happening in his own heart, that answer does testify to the fact that money promises the things we need most and it can never deliver.

[14 : 32] And it is such a problem that the scriptures tell us money's just not another thing. It sets itself up as a rival to God.

Matthew 6, verse 24, Jesus speaking to people says, no one can serve two masters, for he will either hate the one and love the other or he'll be devoted to the one and he'll despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. He could have put anything to be worshipped in there. You cannot serve God and yourself.

You cannot serve God and Baal. You cannot serve God and the Roman state that lords over you. But he said, you can't serve God and money.

Mammon, things. And that's in contrast to throughout scripture. You know, God has given these names that represent that he is your kingdom security.

[15 : 39] Some of you, if you've done Bible studies, you've probably run into these before like Jehovah Jireh, Jehovah Rapha, right? Like they're just names that means God is your healer.

God is your provision. God is your banner. He is the identity you have. God is your shepherd.

God is your righteousness. as we sung about this morning. I will stand faultless before a throne because God made me righteous. God is your savior.

The one who saves. Kingdom security is found in God alone. And God says, only a fool would choose money over God.

The term fool in scripture is actually an incredibly serious one and it doesn't really resonate with us the same way today because when we say fool, we think of things like a lack of savvy or a lack of intelligence or maybe just it's like a silly, unserious person.

[16 : 45] But in scripture, a fool is someone who hates God's view of reality and hates God's wisdom and refuses to accept it on those grounds.

And that's exactly what has happened to the rich man in this parable. He thinks he's operating in a super savvy and competent and wise way but money has blinded him to a primary spiritual reality.

See, the only thing he can see, it says he saved it all. The only thing he can see is his saving. This world is given no thought to eternal things but if God and his kingdom are what matter most, if those are the things that are going to last, if all the things of this world eventually get eaten up and stolen and if just like this man eventually your own mortality is going to come calling for you and all the stuff you have goes to someone else, how can you not think about it?

And that's the message that Jesus is putting before this man. That's the reason he gives this parable to this man who wants him to divide an inheritance with his brother.

He detects he's on that path and he wants him to know that the one who lays up treasures for himself and is not rich towards God is not investing in the right things.

[18 : 22] You know God does tell us throughout scripture how to invest in the kingdom though. He doesn't leave you in the dark about that and it's not always giving money to church though that is certainly a part of it.

in Luke 16 there's this other parable that we didn't have time to get to in this series but actually kind of gives a clue to what God's looking for in kingdom investing.

In Luke 16 chapter 1 Jesus gives his disciples this parable he says he also said to his disciples there was a rich man who had a manager and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions and he called him and he said to him what is this I hear about you?

Turn in your account of management for you can no longer be my manager and the manager thought to himself what am I going to do because the manager is taking it away from me I'm not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg I've decided what to do so that when I am removed from management people will receive me into their houses so summing his master's debtors one by one he said to the first how much do you owe?

and he says a hundred measures of oil and he says here take this bill and make it fifty and then to another he said how much do you owe? and he said a hundred measures of wheat and he said to him take your bill and write eighty and then the master commends the dishonest manager for his shrewdness for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light I tell you make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth so that when it fails they may receive you into eternal dwellings and another interesting story but think about just the root of what that parable says basically Jesus is saying this you want to know where to invest your money?

[20 : 26] invest in people because people last forever invest where it's going to matter for eternity seems pretty straightforward right?

don't put your money into investments that don't last use your material wealth to build eternal things give it and invest it in things that last forever like the souls of the people God loves but it's not that easy because we live in a world that is upside down and opposite to the kingdom and the things that we know are foolish in this world are always going to seem wise and the things of the kingdom are going to seem foolish and Jesus says that gives you a hard choice because Jesus says you're going to have to pick what kind of fool you're going to be 1 Corinthians 1 verse 18 the scriptures tell us for the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing but to those of us who are being saved it is the power of God for it is written

I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart who is the one who is wise where is the scribe where is the debater of this age has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world the world is never going to understand a life sold out to Jesus it's a fairy tale it's a crutch for those who are weak and don't know how to make their way in this world if you aren't doing certain things you're not going to make it and giving away your money to Jesus is not going to make it and that's part of why money is so important it's why Jesus talks about it it's not because he wants your money it's because what you do with your money fundamentally reveals a lot more about you than you want it to is a testament to what kingdom you think is really real so Jesus says you're not going to be able to live on both sides the message of the gospel

Jesus died crucified resurrected is foolishness to the wise of this world and so he says you're going to have to choose so on the one side you've got that man or that woman that keeps showing up on your Facebook reels or your Instagram preaching to you about cash flow and arbitrage and why aren't you buying rental houses why are you foolishly just working and getting taxed on it this is how you build wealth this is what you do with it to succeed and on the other side you have the son of God whose invitation is nothing less than come to me and die die to the things you think will save you so that you might actually know what eternal life looks like a different kind of life that the world knows nothing about

Jesus says that's the kind of divider I am that's the choice I want you to make that's what I've come to judge may our prayer just simply be God give us the grace to choose wisely give us the grace to see the things that are really real as the band comes up today if you're not a follower of Jesus I think you know or hopefully you can start to see your life does not exist in your things and there is nothing in this world that it can't steal from you the stock market is not forever the US economy is not forever Jesus calls us to invest internal things in things where he says moths and rust can't take it away if you're interested in that he's got that invitation he's made it possible for you to know that kind of life but it's it's a call to come to him and die to the things of this world it's going to be a prayer on the screen that might be a way you can express that or if you want to talk to us about that kind of life if you're just frankly tired like John Rockefeller was of the false nature of pursuing things in this life and then finding out they're false they don't they don't ever fulfill you

[25 : 50] Jesus says come if you are a follower of Jesus beloved there is nothing money can promise you that it can deliver on and look I know for a lot of people in this room making ends meet is a struggle and I want you to know Jesus isn't insensitive to that he cares he is not unaware of how hard it can be but he also wants you to know if if you try to find security or significance in money if you think that's the thing that would make you feel safe he wants you to know it'll fail you just as soon as you have it you'll think I need a little bit more and when you have more you'll think I need a little bit more and so maybe like the rich man maybe you're on the other end of this right like maybe God has given you material possessions and like the rich man the only thing you can think about is how do I make it more and more you're just storing it up for someone else what might kingdom investment look like if you were gonna make a home for yourself in eternity not for a home here what would that look like

I'm gonna spend a few minutes praying into that and then when you're ready we're gonna come to the communion table for those who are followers of Jesus and you can take the elements back to your seat and partake of them and remember in your Jesus isn't asking you to do anything he didn't do he didn't store up things even into his own life here he gave it all away that we might have life just take that time you don't have to rush do business with God father we ask that you come into this moment God I just pray for both the humbling and convicting power of your spirit but also the joy God I pray you can not only convict us of our foolishness but convict us of the joy that you have put before us show us show us a different kind of life a life where we really do feel safe all the time we really do have significance and purpose all the time that nothing in this world could steal away

God help us to catch that vision Holy Spirit have your way in Jesus name miracle!
miracle