

A Heart for Kingdom Treasure, Part 1

Luke 12:32-34

We're going to start reading back in Luke 12:13, "Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But he said to him, 'Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator 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 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 bigger ones, 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.'" 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 and is not rich toward God.'" "

Those who do not fear God should say that they are, in this text, in contrast in the life that we see. They are in contrast to Jesus' disciples, Jesus' disciples who do fear God. But for those who do not fear God, they are in the position of the man who, at the beginning of this intends to use Jesus for his own advantage, to leverage Jesus in this personal matter. They are like the fool in the parable, weighed down by a heart blinded by selfish greed. Covetousness is really the epitome of self-centeredness, which contrary to expectation, produces loneliness. A covetous heart is a heart that is utterly blinded by pride and that is the condition of most of the people in this crowd. They're people who do not fear God, those who do not love him, worship him. They are those who do not follow Christ.

But to Jesus' disciples, he turns and speaks some encouraging words. He says, Do not be anxious at all about anything. Look at verse 22 and following. "Jesus said to his disciples, 'Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much

more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?

“Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!” Listen, that’s so much reason for us not to be anxious about anything. For those who fear God, for those who love and worship God, for those who follow Christ in discipleship, God takes such good care of his own, doesn’t he? They have nothing whatsoever to worry about, nothing to be anxious about. God sustains his people through the lifegiving Word. He preserves his people with eternal life. He adorns his people in the beauty of righteousness, perfect righteousness, the spotless righteousness of his beloved Son.

So based on the unshakeable, unchanging blessing and favor of God for us, Jesus calls his disciples to trust him, to trust

him, to believe that he is speaking a word to them from another world, a world that they have not seen. He is saying, Trust me, I know. He's calling his disciples to forsake a dying and decaying, decaying world, to set aside all its fleeting, dying pleasures and instead to seek the only thing that is permanent, the only eternal reality, which is the kingdom of God.

Look at verse 29. "And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'" What a word. What an astounding word. Jesus calls his disciples to seek the father's kingdom and, by the way, this is exactly what he has been doing. This is exactly how he's been living his life. He is calling us to do and to continue in the work that he has been involved in.

That's what he's deployed his apostles and evangelists to do, to proclaim what he's been proclaiming in the towns and the villages of Galilee and now here in Judea. He's going through all the towns that have been prepared by those evangelists.

Jesus has been active. He has been so active. It's exhausting sometimes to read his itinerary. He's just been, been maintaining this full schedule, preaching the kingdom, demonstrating the power of the kingdom. He's been doing works of compassion, miracles, healing the sick, casting out demons. The power of the kingdom that's been operative in Jesus, it's been opening the eyes of blind people. It's been making the lame walk, cleansing lepers, making the deaf hear, raising the dead from their graves. And all of this, preaching the Gospel. All of it saturated with Gospel hope, Gospel truth.

In fact, that's what he said from the very beginning of his ministry, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," for exactly this purpose he said, Luke 4:18, "To proclaim good news to the poor [...] liberty to the captives [...] sight to the blind [...] freedom to the oppressed. [He has come] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Listen, because this is not only important, important to notice, I want you to hear this. Just as a pattern of Jesus' life and ministry, hear this because this is the point of our passage today. This is what Jesus is calling us to do here and now, as well, in seeking the kingdom.

With heaven's bounty at his disposal, he is the son of the living God. And so he has everything at his disposal and so what does Jesus do with it? He seeks the kingdom of God by sharing the kingdom with other people. That's the Messiah's stewardship. He has a stewardship given to him by God and he is trying to fulfill it. He's taking what God has given him and he is spreading it to other people. He is sharing it generously, magnanimously. And it is in the exercise of his stewardship by sharing God's infinite bounty with other people, that is its own reward for him.

"For it is more blessed to give than to receive." Where did Jesus come up with this idea? Well, humanly speaking, he simply read his Bible. He sees God's heart of compassion for people. And how is that not attractive to us? How is that not compelling to us, to see how God cares for people? And for us to want to be involved in that work? So on a human level, Jesus is just simply mimicking what he's been seeing in God throughout the pages of Scripture. In his divine nature, again, Jesus does what he sees his father doing. John 5:19, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing on his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does

likewise.” So whether in his human nature or in his divine nature, he’s just doing what the father’s doing.

Beloved, that’s what we’re going to learn about today. How to follow Jesus Christ as he follows the heart of his father. This is how we, like him, will have a heart for the kingdom of God. How we’ll have a heart for kingdom treasure, how we seek, find, and share that treasure with others and how we are ourselves with our lives invest for eternity. That is really the secret of kingdom economics, right there, that the more you give away, the more you keep.

It’s what Jim Elliott discovered early in his life. It’s what he practiced to his dying day. It’s what he sealed with his blood. He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose. That’s what I want for us. I’m praying that we’ll see this message from Jesus, and we’ll understand it, we’ll embrace it, that it will go deep and saturate every fiber of our being, that we’ll learn to practice in the life of our own church, to join in Jesus’ work, to seek the kingdom of God, to share that kingdom goodness with other people. What else is there to live for? To demonstrate Jesus’ compassion, Christ’s

compassion, God's compassion with others, and then combine that compassion and care by preaching the hope of salvation in Christ.

That what we want to ask: What is this kingdom? What, what is this kingdom, I mean what, what are we supposed to get so worked up over? What are we, we supposed to be so thrilled with? What is this kingdom, anyway? The disciples thought they knew exactly what Jesus meant when he spoke of the kingdom. We read a little later that Jesus had to correct them about a few particulars, and some of those particulars had major, major implications.

Still, the disciples did have the basic gist about the nature of the kingdom. We don't. Not many of us, anyway. We don't. We've grown up in this county. It's not a kingdom. We've grown up with a government that's what? Of the people and for the people and by the people. It's a representative democracy, a constitutional democracy. But there are six absolute monarchies left on the earth. A monarch has an absolute sovereign authority and power, ruled by a king or a Sultan. Since very few of us have lived in such places or even traveled to them, it's safe to

assume that the concept of a kingdom is still pretty foreign to us as Americans. The disciples, though, they understood some of this.

Not only the concept of a kingdom was familiar to them, but the idea of the specific kingdom that Jesus was preaching, that Jesus commanded to them to go and preach. They knew it. Jesus, after all commissioned the Twelve to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal, Luke 9:2. He sent in the next chapter, Luke 10, he sent the 72 to heal the sick and to say, "The kingdom of God has come near you." So what do they preach if they're preaching the kingdom of God? Well, the phrase, the kingdom of God, it refers to a monarchy where God is the absolute sovereign authority. He is the one who has power over life and death. He's the one who sits on the throne.

So in terms that we can understand of a constitutional democracy, God is all three branches of government: legislative, judicial, executive. God is the government, lawgiver, judge, and executor of righteousness. Israel, it's the only nation on earth that God chose to rule, that God chose for the nation where his name would reside, God chose as the nation where his glory would

be manifest in and through that nation. So Israel as God's chosen nation was there to administrate his sovereign rule on the earth, to convey through it its blessing and glory and spread it around the earth. So properly speaking, we need to see that Israel's monarchy is actually a theocracy since God is the absolute sovereign. He is the lawgiver, he's the judge, he's the executioner.

Israel did not administrate God's kingdom on earth well. We can just leave it there. Not one of them was a perfect representative. Not one of them was a perfect king, perfect administrator. Israel's monarchy was never a perfect theocracy of God. It was never an exact manifestation of the kingdom of God. In fact, it fell far short. So God eventually judged Israel for its sins, its idolatry, its acts of gross immorality. But also for its rebellion against the superior light of revelation that they had received as a nation.

Even though after this, God sent the nation into exile, God was gracious all the way through. He sent prophets along the way to encourage and strengthen the faithful remnant. They heard words of hope and they so needed those words of hope. Things

looked so, so dark all around them. And yet, because of God's promise, they had hope. Hope that is proclaimed as good news to them. And that good news was coming in the form of a Messiah, the promised son of David. This one who would make the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Israel one. It is the same message for us, by the way, it's no different. In our darkest hour, whenever that darkest hour comes, whenever the bottom is the bottom for us, there's still hope in the Messiah.

Isaiah 53, the suffering servant: Messiah's kingdom mission begins with the king dying for his citizens. I mean who's heard of that? A monarch dying for his people. This is not typically how the story goes. But the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, he comes to secure the allegiance of his people with the unbreakable bond of love. He's come to secure permanent forgiveness for them by taking upon himself the due suffering for their sins. Though Israel failed to administer God's righteousness, they themselves were unrighteous from the heart. They're guilty before God. But the Messiah's sacrifice removed their guilt. His obedience secured their perfect righteousness before God, their standing before God. It's the greatest gift a king could ever give his citizens.

Just look at Isaiah 53 at the end of it, verse 11. It says, "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall," be, "the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities." In other words, the king, he takes upon himself the penalty that they deserved. He absorbs the wrath of God, the sovereign, the absolute sovereign authority and power, lawgiver, judge, and executioner, he absorbs that wrath and then he secures their righteousness, so that that very same sovereign can declare this people righteous in his sight, justified. Not simply forgiven, declared righteous. It's a positive element there.

I know it's hard to imagine but try to imagine that now as a reality through the entire earth. Every single nation of the world. That's what the kingdom of God looks like. It starts with an earthly kingdom, a kingdom that's governed by the Messiah on earth and then it culminates in the fulfilled promise of a new heavens and a new earth, 2 Peter 3:13, "in which righteousness dwells." All over the earth.

Isaiah 60, "Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise." What an earthly kingdom. Imagine that around the whole earth. Neighbor to neighbor, county to county, state to state, throughout the nation, nation to nation, this.

This is the earthly kingdom of the Messiah when Christ returns to reign and rule from David's throne in the city of Jerusalem. We call this kingdom the Millennial Kingdom because it lasts for a literal millennium, a thousand years, according to Revelation 20. Satan will be bound up in chains, cast into the abyss, a bottomless pit. The destroyer will be destroyed, the dominator dominated. Christ reigning, it will be a time of unparalleled peace and prosperity.

Look at Isaiah 65, verse 19 and following. "I will rejoice in Jerusalem be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be

accursed. They shall bring houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another ear; for like the days of a tree shall the day of my people be, my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,' says the Lord."

All those verses are about the earthly millennial kingdom. That's what Jesus' disciples have in mind. You've got to imagine their thrilled. Here he is! Here's the kingdom! Here's the Messiah, the king himself! Just briefly, there's more to this. Back up and notice. This is what they're seeing, too. Verses 17 and 18, same chapter, Isaiah 65, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I

create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.”

This language back up to chapter 60 verse 19, there's language of an eternal kingdom in Isaiah 60:19 as well. It says there that, “The sun shall no more be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the Lord [Yahweh] shall be your everlasting light, your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, your days of mourning shall be ended.” Those passages are fulfilled in particular in Revelation 21 and 22. As the kingdom of God comes into its final form, an eternal kingdom, a new heavens, a new earth, all lit by the eternal glory of God. Jesus' disciples, they knew these passages from Isaiah.

In fact, in dark times of Roman oppression, in times when their nation seems to be tearing itself apart, where even terrorists rising up from different parts of their land to try to assassinate leaders and bring about the kingdom, this is what they fed themselves with. This is what the disciples hoped in. This is what the disciples held onto. They looked forward with

hopeful, joyful anticipation. Ever since John the Baptist came into the land, very different from what they'd been hearing for the past couple hundred years. John the Baptist comes, and he says, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and then he spoke like no one else had been speaking for a long, long time. He started to sound a lot like their prophets written in Scripture.

And then comes Jesus. He comes through their town, through Capernaum, calling them to discipleship. Their hearts are pounding now with excitement and joy to be a part of this. They didn't recognize, like we do, there'd be a gap in the program between the Millennial kingdom and the eternal kingdom. A gap, you know, a separation between those. They didn't understand there'd be a gap between then, their time, and the kingdom coming, the second advent of Christ. They didn't realize that God intended Christ to come twice. A first advent for the forgiveness of sins to deal with the deep heart-work of the people, to fulfill all righteousness, to secure justification for its kingdom citizen. And then to have a second advent of Christ to consummate all the promises of restoration and all the promises of kingdom fulfillment.

We understand that because we have the whole written word before us. We are in a privileged position. They only started to realize the breadth of God's redemptive program when they came together after the resurrection. Remember, "It's not for you to know the times or seasons that the father's fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."

"And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Hmm. Righteousness covering the earth is going to start with a proclamation of righteousness to the earth. In answer to the disciples' question, "Is this time, now the time you're going to restore everything?" Jesus says, Not yet. Not yet. Let's leave the timing to the father and let's, you and me, let's us work on seeking the kingdom of God. And since it's been your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, there is a kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world, let's seek that together. Let's keep on living for the kingdom. Let's keep working for its fulfillment.

Listen, the apostles, these early disciples of Christ, for them, it must have seemed to them like a postponement of the fulfillment of kingdom promises. But listen, it was not that. This is all happening according to plan. After Jesus helped them reorient their minds to God's program, to his sovereign purposes for the church and the church age, that they would be privileged to see the advent and the growth of a body of Christ, Jew, Gentile together, slave and free together, male, female together, equal citizens of the kingdom. Man, they are all in. That's the record of the Book of Acts.

They're like, we get to, we get to do this. This is our role. And once the Holy Spirit came, filled them, indwelt them, empowered them to serve Jesus Christ, they got it. They got it. It didn't diminish their joy one bit to wait for the Millennial Kingdom. Nah, their joy deepened. Their vision of God's program expanded, broadened because they're seeing in Christ and in his work, they're seeing the very wisdom of God manifest before them in the glory of Christ on display in the church. They're overjoyed to be counted worthy to be a part of this.

PILLAR OF —TRUTH—



Beloved, what about you? Can we confess that we, maybe we're too preoccupied, far too preoccupied by this world, by this agenda, by what counts as important? Beloved, you've got to understand. This is our opportunity right here. We got work to do. In joyful obedience to Christ, we have a kingdom to seek.