

A Heart for Kingdom Treasure, Part 2

Luke 12:32-34

What does seeking the kingdom look like? What is the right response to receiving God's precious gift of a kingdom? What demonstrates that you no longer fear, no longer worry, are no longer anxious, but that your priorities are now set by eternal realities. Jesus says, here's what it looks like, "'Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'" Folks, where is your treasure? Where is your treasure located? Where do you bank? What is the security of what's most valuable to you? Listen, if it's located anywhere on the face of this planet, if it is oriented to all the fading and fleeting life of this world, then you have invested poorly.

James says in James 5:1-3, "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have

rotted, your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days.” Foolish to do that. Bad investment to put all your time, all your energy, all your efforts into amassing wealth here. You need to get your resources out while you still can. Withdraw from this world. See this time and energy and resources that you have as a stewardship and then reinvest the talents that your master gave to you to into kingdom ventures.

Notice first in that section back in Luke 12:33, 34. Notice first what Jesus tells us what to do. He tells us what actions to take, practically speaking. “Sell your possessions and give to the needy.” And we’re going to clarify the meaning of that in just a moment for us. So he tells us what to do, what actions to take.

Secondly, Jesus tells us the significance of our actions. We’re investing in the future. We’re investing in invisible unseen realities but make no mistake because they’re invisible and unseen that they don’t matter. They matter so much more consequentially than anything visible, anything physical,

anything temporal. We're tucking away an infinite unfailing treasure. We're storing the riches of heaven in imperishable wallets and indestructible purses, which can never be stolen, which can never wear out. No one can hack this bank.

Then third, Jesus tells us what our actions reveal about our hearts, namely that our hearts are in the right place. Rather than being estranged from God like those still enslaved to covetous desires, when we treasure the kingdom that God has already given us, listen, our hearts are aligned to worship God, to find all joy, satisfaction, and rest in him. So let's put all that together in a little list here, okay, these verses. Just assess ourselves and see whether or not we're seeking the kingdom, see how we're doing at this.

We're going to start with that first sentence in verse 33, "Sell your possessions, and give to the needy." We need to clarify that. What it meant for the disciples then and what it means for us now. We're going to that by highlighting some principles here for them, first of all, to apply to our lives.

Here we go. Number one, first, first principle: Be diligent, work hard and build wealth. First principle: Be diligent, work hard and build wealth. And you're looking down at the verse and you're saying, in light of what Jesus says here, build wealth? Yes. Absolutely. Be diligent, work hard and build wealth. Notice when Jesus says, sell possessions, what does that imply? You have possessions to sell. Make no mistake. Jesus' disciples had possessions. That's how they funded the ministry.

Even after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, Christians in the early church, they had possessions, too. They clearly didn't interpret what Jesus said here with a communist hermeneutic over the mendicant, which is a beggarly vow of poverty hermeneutic. It's not how they thought. Let me show you this in Acts chapter 2. Acts 2, remember that Jesus called these disciples to deny themselves and take up their crosses and follow him. And that is exactly what they did. They left everything, quite literally left everything to follow Jesus. And they went where he went. They slept where he slept. They put everything on the line to follow him.

In our interpreting Scripture at times, we need to boil down the command to its principle form and use wisdom to see how that principle applies for us in our own time and in our own situation. There are times an obedience to this command requires us to sell everything and give. At other times, the same command requires us to hold down a job and earn a living and save money and fund kingdom purposes.

So when Jesus says, "Sell your possessions, and give to the needy," he is not here advocating some kind of Francis of Assisi vow of poverty. It's not supportive of a communist denial of personal property where all goods and property belong to the collective and it's doled out by hire-ups in the state. That's what I appreciate so much in Luke's body of writing, where he gives us Volume One: The Gospel of Jesus and Volume Two: The Acts of the Apostles, because we get to see how the early church applied Jesus' words, Jesus' teaching.

Look at Acts 2 starting in verse 41, "So those who received his word," Peter's word, Peter's gospel. They, "were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the

fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common." That's where the communists stop reading.

But keep reading, verse 45, "They were selling their possessions and belongings, distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need." That's where the Franciscans and the monastic beggars stop reading. Keep reading. "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." Where were they breaking bread again? Hmm. "In their," well, that's a possessive pronoun, calls attention to the fact of, you guessed it, possession. "In their homes." They still had homes. They still had possessions.

Listen, these are diligent, hard-working people who built wealth, had stuff to share. And we could read about this all over the New Testament. Just as an example, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12. You can write that down, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.

Paul says, "We urge you, brothers, to [...] aspire to live quietly," or make it your ambition, in other words. "To live quietly, to mind your own affairs, to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one." There is no justification biblically, there is no justification whatsoever for Christians taking vows of poverty, for Christians living like the rest of their, living the rest of their lives on handouts, feeding like a leach from hard work of other people. That is not godly. That is not piety. That's not biblical. We all need to be diligent, find ways to work hard and to build wealth.

Jesus' disciples had already applied the command, "Sell your possessions." They applied it quite literally because that is what the moment demanded. If they didn't, they would not have been able to follow his circuitous route to Jerusalem. Other Christians in the New Testament, most of them in fact, they're called to hold down jobs, be diligent work hard, build wealth. And then share it. How else do we fund gospel ministry? How else do we train competent preachers of the Word of God? How else do we deploy well-trained pastors, well-trained missionaries to

build churches? If God's people divest themselves of everything, you do that one time, and they're you're begging.

So instead of taking Jesus' words in some strictly wooden, literal fashion, which is really to do violence the intent here, we need to see Jesus' words complimented and applied in what Paul said to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 7:29-31. Paul says there, that "The appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away."

The world is passing away, make no mistake, in Corinth and in Greeley. "It's passing away along with its desires," 1 John 2:17, "But whoever does the will of God abides forever." So much more to say about this. We've got six more points to cover. So be diligent, work hard, and with the wealth that you earn, just insert a practical matter here because it's assumed in the text here, just a practical matter, second: Be responsible and care



for your family. Be responsible and care for your family. Listen, before you give alms to the needy, before you're concerned about the poor, make sure you've taken care of your responsibilities at home.

Paul tells young Pastor Timothy to care for widows, 1 Timothy 5. They're the most vulnerable members of any society, especially in the First Century, harsh world. Paul tells Timothy there about caring for widows and it's not just pull out all the stops and just pour money on them. He says this, before they're added to the widow's list, before they're made a charge of the church, do this, "If a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God." Then verse 8, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, especially for members of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." So just squeeze in the point just slightly here, before you look outside of your home, be responsible in your home.

Third point: Be compassionate. Be compassionate and look to meet needs. Be compassionate and when I say, look to meet needs,

I mean be on the lookout. Make that a preoccupation of yours to say, Hmm, who can I give to? Where are the needs? Who can I care for? Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "This is the heart of your Father in heaven." Luke 6:36, "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." We're to, "Put on," Colossians 3:12, "as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved," we're to put on, "compassionate hearts, a heart of kindness," that looks out for those in need." That's the instinct of love itself. 1 John 3:16, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives," for others, "for the brothers," it says.

"But if anyone has this world's goods and sees his brother in need, and yet closes his heard against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk," a lot of talk going around. Let us love instead in, "in deed and in truth."

Paul says, Galatians 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." He tells us to prioritize our compassion, in verse 10, "So then as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the

household of faith.” Prioritize your compassion, prefer those who are in the household of faith in your generosity, your giving, your care for the poor.

Paul modeled that for all the churches in all of his ministry. In fact, he reminded the Ephesian elders, Acts 20:35, he says, “In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” That’s the way Jesus lived. That’s the way Paul lived.

So be diligent, be responsible, be compassionate. Point number four: Be generous and share your stuff. Be generous and share your stuff. I’d say even more, not just share, but give your money. Give it away with no strings attached. Give. John the Baptist, when he taught the crowds to bear fruit in keeping with repentance, they asked him for some practical application. He immediately had it. He said, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none. Whoever has food is to do likewise.” And there should be no need in the body of Christ. Be generous, share, give. The theme shows up in the Law and the

Prophets again and again, share with the needy, share with foreigner, share with orphans and widows.

David said, "The wicked borrows, but does not pay back." A lot of wickedness going on in our country, isn't there? A lot of people borrowing and never repaying. Psalm 37:21, "But the righteous, the righteous is generous and gives." Solomon, likewise, Proverbs 3:27-28. He says, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to you neighbor, 'Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it' when you have it with you." You see a need, don't tell your neighbor to come back tomorrow and let your covetous heart work you over and tighten up. You sell your possessions. Give to the needy. Be diligent. Be responsible. Be compassionate. And then be generous. Be generous.

Paul summarizes kind of all this, these four points, in one verse, Ephesians 4:28, when he's teaching repentance to the thief. How do you know when a thief is no longer a thief? How do you know when a thief is truly repentant, and he's, he's recovered? Ephesians 4:28, "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so

that he may have something to share with anyone in need.” When is a thief no longer a thief? When he has worked through repentance to its very conclusion? Is it when he stops stealing? No. Is it when he gets a job? No. Is it when he’s working hard and laboring and appreciating his job? No, no and no.

A thief is no longer a thief, he’s repented from his thievery, when he converts his heart of covetousness to a heart of generosity, when he’s working because he’s driven by a generous heart that wants to earn and provide, save up and then share with others. That’s when a thief is no longer a thief.

So be diligent, responsible, compassionate, generous. That’s just the first sentence in verse 33. Let’s look at the second sentence of verse 33, also verse 34. We’ll find several more principles for application here. Number five, fifth thing: Be wise and invest for the long term. Be wise and invest for the long term. Verse 33 says, “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.”

Trust him in this. Invest your money, your goods, wealth, right now. You can anticipate God outgiving your investment. A heavenly rate of return in ways far beyond what you can ask or imagine. I just want to insert a brief, but very important word here. The wrong way to apply this text would be to go home this afternoon and go sell that extra piece of furniture, couch, whatever it is, take that money in hand and go to the homeless guy standing on the corner and hand it to him. That would be unwise, not wise. That would be bad stewardship, a bad investment and not the proper execution of a good and wise stewardship. Listen, when we're diligent and hardworking and when God blesses our work and allows us to build wealth, what are we to do with it? Do we just squander it on an emotional impulse? Are we to give thoughtlessly with no investigation, no follow up? Go to some homeless person holding a sign?

I mean, beloved, we all feel, I feel that, don't you? We all feel that when we drive by, feel the tug at the heartstrings, don't we? Especially when they get the kids involved? Don't be fooled by appearances. Don't be deceived by their cleverness and they are very, very clever. Ask anyone in law enforcement. They'll set you straight on the con job that's

going on out there, what you're actually funding when you give money, put money in their hands. Do you think God is pleased when you give his money that he gave you and invested into funding a drug habit or drunkenness or some kind of abuse?

What does Paul tell the rich, those who have wealth? 1 Timothy 6:18, They're "to do good." They're "to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share." The exercise of a good and wise stewardship is to thoughtfully evaluate the opportunity that is in front of you, to investigate it, to fund what God calls, good. Jesus said in Luke 16:11, "If you've not been faithful with unrighteous wealth, who will entrust you with true riches?" Listen, faithful giving requires wisdom. Wisdom requires not impulsiveness, but thoughtfulness. Wisdom requires you to slow down, evaluate the opportunity. I can say without fear of contradiction here, in the context of seeking the kingdom, Jesus, he's preparing his disciples for future ministry. They can't see that right now, but it's a ministry that is going to go on long after his ascension into heaven. Here we are 2000 years later, right?

So when Jesus says, sell, give, invest, he doesn't intend for us to go fund the homeless population of our cities. All his good works, miracles, feeding, healing, his ministry, the ministry of his apostles, the ministry of the 72, the ministry of all the churches in the New Testament, all the way up to us, all his compassion, practical care, physical needs, was accompanied by the message of the Gospel. It's accompanied by preaching, accompanied by the proclamation of the kingdom of God.

We know of churches who are struggling with finances who could use a little seed money to encourage them and help them. We're, we're right there with financial counsel and wisdom to evaluate opportunities for them, but we can't pay for all of it. We need to train called men to be competent in handling the Word of God, because there are so many untrained and incompetent people peddling the Word of God. So we need to train men. We need to send these men into pastorates, send them to other places as well. There are local, regional, international opportunities and we want to be involved. And all that requires funding.



These opportunities are just waiting for Christians to wake up from slumber, stop supporting bad stuff, bad ministries, stop squandering resources and invest in building the kingdom. You may not be able to go, but you can help send, right? Let's do that together. Let's do that together.

So be diligent, responsible, compassionate, generous, wise. Here's a sixth point and we're wrapping up here. Six, number six: Be content and let your heart rest. Six: Be content and let your heart rest. When all of your treasure, everything you count valuable is wrapped up in the safest, most secure bank in the entire universe, where no thief approaches, can't get near, where no moth destroys, you can sleep at night, can't you? You're unincumbered by any of the anxieties that afflict those who are rich in this present world. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." And if your heart is in heaven, your heart is at rest. "Provide for yourselves with moneybags that don't grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Be diligent, responsible, compassionate, generous, wise, content.

Finally, seventh: Be grateful and let your heart rejoice. Be grateful, let your heart rejoice. You've been granted a kingdom here, all right? Rejoice a little, already. It's decreed for you by God from before the foundation of the world. Listen, this is as secure as it gets. You have unfailing treasure in the heavens, safeguarded by holy angels, attentive cherubim, fiery seraphim are at hand. They are always under the watchful eye of an all-seeing, all-knowing God. God is all-wise, which means what you invest in his kingdom doesn't just sit there, it accrues to your benefit. God accelerates your interest. He drives up your dividends.

Jesus said in Luke 6:38, "Give, it will be given to you." How will it be given, just in the same way I gave it? No. "Good measure pressed down, shaken together," so there's no space left in the pressed down grain that he gives you, "running over, that will be poured out into your lap. With the measure you use, it will be measured right back to you." God has given you an infinite share of eternal treasure and he gives you the privilege of starting right now. Right now, enjoying the stewardship of that treasure. Your dividends are going to pay off. They're going to last throughout all of eternity. They are

never going to grow old, never lose their shine, never lose the value or the interest, never get hacked by hackers.

So be grateful. Give your attention to the treasure laid up in heaven. Instead of looking, instead of rifling through catalogues online for stuff you want to buy, instead of browsing through travel brochures and places online you want to travel to, visit on this decaying planet, use your time, instead, not to stir up a heart of discontent. Use your time instead to search Scripture. Learn more about your reward. Fill your heart with anticipation and joy about this future, this glorious future that awaits you. You have a kingdom and all of its treasure besides. We have, as Peter says, "An inheritance that's imperishable, and undefiled and unfading, it's kept in heave for you." So beloved, let's act like it. Let's start investing with glad and grateful hearts. Amen.