



Part 5 – The Gift of the Kingdom

Luke 12:22-34

In the passage immediately preceding this one, Jesus encountered two brothers who were engaged in a dispute over money. Specifically, they could not agree on how to divide up an inheritance. They appealed to Jesus for help in settling the matter. However, Jesus' interest was not in their domestic dispute. His interest was the condition of their hearts.

So he tells them a parable the purpose of which was to unveil what was lying just under the surface of the brothers' argument.

Jesus' parable of the rich fool is a masterful warning about the heart's propensity to find security in wealth. The rich man was not foolish because his crops yielded great harvests. He was not a fool for having plans for the future. He was a fool because his great goal was to "eat, drink, and be merry." His own comfort and ease was at the center of his planning. Because of this, his approach to the blessings granted him by the Lord was to hoard rather than give. He did not consider the possibility that his life consisted of something far greater than his possessions and personal comfort. He did not consider the fact that how he lived in this life had reverberations in eternity.

After the incident with the quarreling brothers and his parable of the rich fool, Jesus turned to his disciples and began to teach them about God's great generosity in giving them the kingdom. The two episodes are closely linked. It is within the given reality of God's kingdom that his people are to live and give. The gift of the kingdom is a reality that should generate trust and peace in our hearts knowing that the God who feeds ravens and clothes wildflowers so splendidly cares infinitely more about us. It is a kingdom where true wealth is found in giving rather than hoarding.

1. The Kingdom of God as Gift

Vs. 32 – "Fear not little flock for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

- The Bible makes many references to "the kingdom," "the kingdom of God," and "the kingdom of heaven." These various terms, though varying slightly in emphasis, nevertheless reference the same reality. The kingdom in all its varying references means God's sovereign rule over all things established through the dying and rising of Christ. God's kingdom is both eternal and becoming. God has always been the sovereign King over all things. But in terms of human experience, the kingdom is an unfolding reality which will not be fully known until the age to come.
- The Bible describes the Christian's relationship to the kingdom as one of receiving. Christians are not called to build the kingdom. Rather, we receive the kingdom. It is the gift of God. "Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken" (**Hebrews 12:28**).
- Just as in the case of the giving of the Son and Spirit, so the giving of the kingdom is an example of the self-giving love of God. This is so because the kingdom comes as a gift of and is ruled by our crucified Savior sent from the Father. And because Jesus the King has been given, so too has the kingdom he rules.
- Here is the most defining characteristic of the kingdom of God: That Jesus Christ has all power and authority and dominion and at that same time is the One who gave his life as a ransom for many. The message of the kingdom is that God so loved the world that he gave his Son to bear the curse of sin in our place. "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (**Matthew 25:34**).

2. The Kingdom of God as Salvation

- John the Baptist announced the coming of the Messiah by calling people to "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Lord Jesus came preaching the same message of repentance in preparation for

the coming of the kingdom of heaven. As thousands of Jews gathered in Jerusalem on Pentecost, Peter called them to repent. At the heart of the message of the kingdom is the call to salvation.

- The message of the kingdom is one of salvation, beginning with God's people but extending to the whole cosmos. God's plan of salvation is expansive in scope. Not only has God promised to save a vast multitude of people, he will also create a new dwelling place for all the redeemed; a new heaven and earth with God at the center and where sin and death are no more.

3. The Kingdom of God as Present Reality

- There is a now and not yet principle to the Kingdom of God. That is, the kingdom will not be fully realized until the age to come. And yet, there is a present-ness to God's kingdom which is to be experienced by Christians and put on display as public witness for Christ. We will have eternity to behold the beauty of the Lord in his kingdom in the age to come. However, we have but little time in this life to live in joyful witness to that kingdom which has been given to us.

a) Consider

Vv. 22-28

- Typically, proper action begins with proper thinking. Toward this end, Jesus holds forth two pictures to help us understand the Father's care: flowers and ravens. It is probably not insignificant that, according to Jewish law, ravens were unclean (Lev. 11:15). God makes provision even for the unclean. The Father's generosity is not the sole possession of his own people. Even to those outside the covenant promises of God are recipients of God's generosity.
- This is not a prescription for inactivity. Ravens do not sit in a nest and wait for food to drop into their mouths. They build nests. They go out get food. They protect their young. And yet the point is that all these things are ultimately provided by God.

b) Trust

Vv. 22-23, 29-30

- If greed can never *get* enough, worry is the fear of never *having* enough. Wealth can be a danger to those who have it and to those who merely crave it. Anxiety and worry never add or contribute to our lives. Rather they rob us of the peace of God. There is nothing in all creation that God so loves and treasures as his people. Certainly we can dare to trust that he will never fail us.

c) Seek

Vv. 31-32

- To seek the Kingdom of God is to seek to live joyfully under the Lordship of King Jesus. Throughout this passage Jesus is challenging his disciples with the fact there are only two ways to live. Either we will live in pursuit of earthly treasure or we will live in pursuit of the treasure valued in God's kingdom. Either we will seek what is considered great and good in the kingdom of this world or we will seek those things that are eternal in value.

d) Act

Vv. 33-34

- Nowhere in Jesus' teaching does he condemn financial success. Indeed, the Scriptures, Jesus' teaching included, offer various examples of the goodness of wise investing and the responsible stewardship of significant resources. The man building bigger barns in Jesus' parable was not a fool for having fruitful harvests. He was a fool for finding his security in his riches and the attending sin of hoarding it all for himself.
- Our hearts and our treasure will occupy the same object. So often our treasure follows our hearts. The things, persons, possession, experiences we desire get the lion's share of our treasure. But Jesus makes an extremely helpful point in his ordering of heart and treasure. Jesus teaches us that our heart will surely follow our treasure. That is, we can choose to invest in the right thing so that our heart will follow the right thing. If we desire to treasure Christ's church and her mission to advance the gospel near and far then we ought to invest our treasure there.