

Jesus Teaches About Treasure

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Jesus warned His disciples about hoarding treasure instead of living generously with whatever God gives.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Luke 12:13-34

Ebenezer Scrooge is the main character in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. The miserly old man can't even be moved to generosity on Christmas Day, a time of year when even the greediest penny-pinchers have been known to share a bit more than usual. On Christmas Eve, Scrooge is visited by three ghosts: the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. These three ghosts uncover the past root of Scrooge's greed, the far-reaching present results of that greed, and the dire future consequences of his greed. Through this experience, Scrooge learns his lesson, has a change of heart, and becomes an example of joyful giving.



Why is money such an effective snare for people's hearts?

Group Time

Point 1: Be rich toward God (Luke 12:15-21).

¹⁵ He then told them, “Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions.”

¹⁶ Then he told them a parable: “A rich man’s land was very productive. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What should I do, since I don’t have anywhere to store my crops? ¹⁸ I will do this,’ he said. ‘I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones and store all my grain and my goods there. ¹⁹ Then I’ll say to myself, “You have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.”’

²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared—whose will they be?’ ²¹ That’s how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

“What’s he worth?” Most of us understand this question concerns a person’s monetary status, but how many of us stop to think about what the question implies? Before Jesus launched into a parable about a rich man, He told his listeners not to measure their worth by the abundance of their possessions because our worth is not determined by what we do or what we have. Our earnings, either spiritual or physical, will never amount to the priceless love that God *freely* gives us through faith in His Son.

Jesus told the story of a rich man who has a lot in common with many people today. Already having more than enough, he reasoned bigger is better. He stockpiled his goods and told himself that he’d never have to work again. His only job would be to eat, drink, and be merry. What a life! But then God told him he would die that very night. It’s a morbid story, but it hits on a truth we all instinctively know: **you can’t take it with you.**



What will it look like to be rich toward God?



Voices from Church History

“This should be the careful consideration of wise people, that since the days of this life are short and the time uncertain, death should never be unexpected for those who are to die. Those who know that they are mortal should not come to an unprepared end.”¹

—Leo the Great (c. 400-461)

Point 2: Trust in God's faithful provision (Luke 12:22-28).

²² Then he said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, don’t worry about your life, what you will eat; or about the body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: They don’t sow or reap; they don’t have a storeroom or a barn; yet God feeds them. Aren’t you worth much more than the birds? ²⁵ Can any of you add one moment to his life-span by worrying? ²⁶ If then you’re not able to do even a little thing, why worry about the rest?

²⁷ “Consider how the wildflowers grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. ²⁸ If that’s how God clothes the grass, which is in the field today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow, how much more will he do for you—you of little faith?

Jesus’ words in this passage echo His teachings on prayer: **We do not have to worry that God is going to forget us; He already cares for us.** Worry is an easy sin for us to fall into. It creeps in without being invited, stealing into our work and needling us about whether or not we will be able to afford our daily bread. When we worry about the things of this earth, we betray hearts and minds that are centered not on the eternal provision of our loving Father but on our own efforts, which are entirely secondary.



What are some things we are prone to worry about?

Jesus, as the Son of God, was intricately involved in the creation of our bodies, so He, better than anyone, knows that worry does not add a single day to our lives. In fact, all worry does is detract from our lives and our ability to worship our Creator. To make this point, Jesus pointed to the lilies of the field, which don’t have the capacity either for work or worry, and yet, they are completely taken care of. **God cares for fragile flowers without eternal souls, so how much more does He care for His children!**



What are some ways God has provided for you that can help you resist the temptation to worry about your present circumstances?

Point 3: Seek God's kingdom first (Luke 12:31-34).

³¹ “But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you. ³² Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make money-bags for yourselves that won't grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

God's provision for us extends far beyond our daily bread. The eternal provision that God has made for us through the person and work of His Son does not negate our temporal needs but is far more important than our temporal needs. We have a God who cares deeply for the well-being of our mortal bodies, but He does not promise us ease on this earth. In fact, as we learned when speaking about the cost of discipleship, Jesus promised His followers the exact opposite. He does promise to care for our physical needs, but even more so, He promises that our eternal well-being will always be secure.



How are we to seek God's kingdom?

Jesus said our greatest treasure isn't something we can hold in our hands; rather, our greatest treasure is found in heaven. The things we can hold can always be lost, stolen, or destroyed. We can drop them, nick them, scratch them, and have to sell them. Therefore, our dearest treasure should be something that nothing can destroy and that no one can take away. This litmus test should revolutionize the way that we understand our treasures because the Lord alone should be our greatest treasure.

Stewardship: We are to invest the _____, _____, and material possessions God has given us for His kingdom work, knowing that God is the true _____ of all we have, and that our true treasure is found not on earth but in heaven. Motivated by God's generosity to us made most clear in the _____, we are to give God the best of what we have, regularly, sacrificially, humbly, and cheerfully, praying that God may be _____ in our stewardship of His provisions.

My Mission

Because Jesus is our greatest treasure, we live with generosity, trusting in God's provision of our needs, as we seek to steward well the resources God has entrusted to us.

- **How will you honor God, the giver of all good gifts, especially salvation by faith in Jesus Christ?**
- **How might your group need to hold possessions loosely for the sake of the kingdom of God on display in your church?**
- **What are some ways you can live with Jesus as your greatest treasure to help you communicate the gospel to unbelievers?**

Voices from the Church

"God's continual provision is always before our eyes. It's His common grace that keeps the sun rising and the earth turning. It's God's good providence that keeps His creatures fed and clothed. Indeed, it is His grace that runs before us and behind us, keeping us secure in a way our own worrying, striving, and scheming could never achieve."²

—Rebecca Faires

Notes

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Luke 12:13-21

In this passage, a young man spoke up like a little boy asking his mother to settle a dispute between siblings; he wanted Jesus to tell his brother to share his inheritance. No doubt, if you had asked this young man what kind of person his brother was, he would have described him as incredibly greedy. Of course, the irony here is that Jesus could see right through this young man and knew that greed was what motivated his own request.

We are usually very good at seeing the greed in others but less accurate when judging the greed in our own hearts. Here Jesus gives us an important litmus test: Are we giving everything to build for today or do we have our eyes on eternity?

The author of Hebrews wrote of how Jesus kept eternity in view during His own mission that involved suffering and death: “For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Let us follow our Savior by denying ourselves potential earthly joy in order to gain eternal joy by taking up our cross so that we might gain our resurrection.



How can we be sure we are storing up heavenly treasures instead of earthly ones?

Day 2: Read Luke 12:22-30

Money can buy us a lot of things, but contrary to popular belief, it cannot buy us freedom from worry. No matter how much material wealth we have, we are still susceptible to hand-wringing concern about our futures. We worry about acquiring money and keeping money, about spending it wisely and treating ourselves, and about how much treasure we have or how little.

Jesus' words here remind us that our concerns over what we will eat and what we will wear are for naught. He was not encouraging us toward idleness but rather reminding us that He is the One who blesses the very labors we are prone to fret over. The birds Jesus spoke of don't know the meaning of worry. They work in the way that God has made them to work, toiling without concern for their future because they don't know anything but to trust the processes that God has set up for their good. The same goes for the lilies of the field. How freeing it would be to trust God as effortlessly as one of these!



What does our worry say about where our trust truly lies?

Day 3: Read Luke 12:31-34

In this passage, Jesus reminds us that God is our Father, not an austere miser in the sky waiting to withhold good things from us. We can trust Him to do right by us and by our earthly treasure because He has stored up myriad eternal treasures for us.

In fact, the greatest treasure is the Person speaking to us in this passage. Jesus, the Son of God, is the most precious gift that God has ever given His children. There was no amount of toil we could have given to earn Him, no amount of money we could have paid to profit from Him. He has been given to us completely free of charge. He is the One who paid for us by laying down His invaluable life on the cross.

It is because of this gift that we can view our own treasure as an added blessing and not as the source of our value. We can give of it freely because the gift of greatest worth has already been given to us in Jesus.



What is the treasure that can never be destroyed, and why does it deserve our highest affection and investment?

Day 4: Read Matthew 6:1-4

Jesus' words about earthly treasure don't just extend to the monetary. We can treasure so many other things on earth, particularly the praise of our fellow human beings. Even in giving sacrificially of our monetary treasure, we can fill the stores of our pride.

Thus, Jesus warned us in Matthew that when we give to the poor, we should not be giving to our own overblown sense of self-importance at the same time. If need be, we should give completely in secret, skirting the praise of others in an effort to give completely for the glory of God and not for the glory that we can garner from our fellow human beings.

God cares that we give, but more than that, He cares about the heart behind our giving.



How can we ensure that our hearts are right before God when we give?

Day 5: Read Mark 12:41-44

Jesus teaches us here that our giving isn't measured in mere sums. A rich man can give to God in amounts that would make most of us faint just to think about, but his gift might not come from a generous heart. A poor widow can give just a penny, and her gift might come from a place of full reliance upon God.

Through her offering, this widow showed that God was truly her treasure; she gave out of her lack in complete trust that He would supply her earthly needs. When we give, God is not concerned with an exact percentage of our wealth so much as He is concerned with the heart behind our giving. Are we giving out of abundance, keeping back a heart of submission to God, or are we giving out of our lack, realizing that we should entrust ourselves to God just as the widow did in this passage?



How can we be sure that our giving is rightly motivated?

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Jesus was born to die—a jarring statement indeed, but one that is quite true.

Christmas and Easter are fused together, linked hand-in-hand in such a way that each is dependent on the other for its meaning. The theology of such a statement is solid but incomplete, for Jesus was not born to die immediately but rather some thirty years later. Jesus' life, then, was not utilitarian—existing just so it could be taken away and picked up again—it had greater meaning and purpose. What Jesus did during those thirty years of walking the earth mattered; He lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father. He satisfied the demands of righteousness that we could not so He might take away our sin when we trust in Him and so His righteousness might be credited to us, making us fully pleasing to the Father (2 Cor. 5:21).

In this volume we delve deeper into the marvelous truth of the incarnation to see still further glimpses of Christ's glory on earth. His righteousness did not occur in a vacuum but rather among people, ordinary people like you and me. In each unit of this volume, we will look at Jesus' interactions with people as through a prism, making slight turns to see different yet equally brilliant perspectives of Jesus' works. In Unit 22, we will see Jesus' power to heal coupled with His deep compassion for people, even those who were marginalized in society. In Unit 23, we will see Jesus' riveting teachings empowered by His divine authority. And finally, in Unit 24, we will see Jesus' miraculous power over nature, revealing His identity as Creator God.

Each ray of light we will see points to the same truth: that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God given for our salvation. Jesus was indeed born to die, but He lived so that we too might live.

UNIT 22**SESSION 1**

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2. J. C. Ryle, "What It Costs to Be a True Christian," December 4, 2019, www.the-highway.com/cost_Ryle.html.

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2. John Onwuchekwa, *Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 43.

SESSION 4

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