

## Luke 12C

- Last week Jesus transitioned into an extended discussion of the dangerous of wealth
  - It was the compliment to His earlier teaching on the distractions of fear
  - Now's He's begun addressing the pitfall of being rich in earthly terms while at the same time being poor toward God
    - Of worrying so much about our material needs that we become distracted in the doing the spiritual work of serving God and serving the work of the gospel
    - Of saving dollars instead of saving souls

One Sunday a pastor told the congregation that the church needed some extra money and asked the people to prayerfully consider giving a little extra in the offering plate. He said that whoever gave the most would be able to pick out three hymns. After the offering plates were passed, the pastor glanced down and noticed that someone had placed a \$1,000 bill in the offering. He was so excited that he immediately shared his joy with his congregation and said he'd like to personally thank the person who placed the money in the plate. A very quiet, elderly, saintly lady all the way in the back shyly raised her hand. The pastor asked her to come to the front. Slowly she made her way to the pastor. He told her how wonderful it was that she gave so much and in thanksgiving asked her to pick out three hymns. Her eyes brightened as she looked over the congregation, pointed to the three handsomest men in the building and said, "I'll take him and him and him!"

- If you want to sum up the verses we studied last week, Jesus said:
  - When His disciples – you and I – are distracted by how much wealth we can accumulate, we waste our time, eternally speaking
  - Because everything we're working for God will gladly provide in some measure, according to our needs
  - Meanwhile, our seeking of wealth accomplishes nothing meaningful
- And we risk losing so much more eternally
- There's an old phrase we've all used at some point in the past
  - We trot it out anytime we encounter into someone who would rather store up their wealth than put it to use

- We say “you can’t take it with you”
  - Meaning you can’t take your money with you when you die, so why collect it but never use it? What good will it be to you after you die?
  - In fact, the Bible teaches that not only is the love of money the root of all evil (1 Tim 6) but even the storing up of wealth is a sin

[Eccl. 5:10](#) ¶ He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance *with its* income. This too is vanity.

[Eccl. 5:11](#) When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on?

[Eccl. 5:12](#) The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much; but the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep.

[Eccl. 5:13](#) ¶ There is a grievous evil *which* I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their owner to his hurt.

- Last week, Jesus said to His disciples:

[Luke 12:31](#) “But seek His kingdom...

- Seek His kingdom? Isn’t that what I’m doing, they probably asked?
  - The disciples understood the meaning of kingdom – the promised kingdom of God on earth when the Christ would lead the nation of Israel over all the nations of the earth
    - The kingdom when the promises to Abraham would be fulfilled
    - The kingdom when all true sons of Israel would reign with Christ and receive their rewards for faithfulness
  - So Jesus says seek the kingdom and all the earthly necessities would come their way by God’s hand
    - Probably the part that concerned the disciples the most as Jesus spoke these words was the prospect that they might miss the kingdom
      - After all, Jesus said seek the kingdom – does this mean they might miss it? Is it possible they might miss the kingdom, they wondered?

- Jesus knew their concerns, and His next statements seem designed to address those concerns a bit

[Luke 12:32](#) “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

[Luke 12:33](#) ¶ “Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.

[Luke 12:34](#) “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[Luke 12:35](#) ¶ “Be dressed in readiness, and *keep* your lamps lit.

[Luke 12:36](#) “Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open *the door* to him when he comes and knocks.

[Luke 12:37](#) “Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself *to serve*, and have them recline *at the table*, and will come up and wait on them.

[Luke 12:38](#) “Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds *them* so, blessed are those *slaves*.

[Luke 12:39](#) ¶ “But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

[Luke 12:40](#) “You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”

- Jesus moves immediate from His statement about seeking the kingdom to reassuring the disciples
  - He says do not be afraid – do not be afraid about whether the kingdom will be yours –
    - Because God has chosen to give it to them and to all those He gives the gift of faith
    - The kingdom will come and they will be in it
  - In other words, the point here of Jesus’ teaching is not how to obtain salvation, but rather the point here is having been saved, how are you spending your time while you await the kingdom
- So if the kingdom is already assured, then Jesus challenges the disciples to sell their possessions and give the wealth to charity
  - From the context it’s obvious that Jesus isn’t demanding that we abstain from owning anything as a prerequisite for pleasing God
    - Rather, we must not be owned by what we have

- We must not be distracted by what we have, especially if we are compelled by our earthly wealth to spend time serving that wealth (obtaining, maintaining, storing, etc.)
    - By the way, you don't have to have a lot of money to be owned by it
  - It would be far better to put them all aside and focus on a different treasure
- We should turn our attention to a different kind of treasure, once that won't fade and isn't temporary
  - A treasure waiting in heaven
    - Look, we all understand the need to work for what we want
    - We are trained as children that we have to earn the things we want
    - Most of our adult lives are spent working to obtain the things of life
  - Jesus isn't trying to change that principle
    - In fact, He's reinforcing it
    - He's telling the disciples make yourselves a money belt
      - The word for make is po-i-eo means to accomplish, produce, to bring forth
      - He's talking about a process of earning – not just sitting around expecting good things to happen
- The solution isn't in pursuing a different, but rather a different object of our desire
  - Before faith came, it made some sense that we would spend our days working for earthly wealth – because that was the only kind of treasure we would ever have
    - Now that we know Christ and look forward to the kingdom of God, our focus should change, the object of our desire should change
    - Our desire should now be to earn treasure in that everlasting kingdom, not in this temporary fallen world

- For where our treasure is, there our hearts are also
    - Those who serve their earthly desires do not have a heart to serve and please God,
    - Because you cannot serve both God and wealth
- Jesus reinforces this truth with a remarkable parable, probably the clearest teaching on the relationship between our opportunities to serve here and our expectations for reward
  - Jesus uses a familiar relationship, that between a master and slaves
    - The master is always Christ and the slave is usually a believer,
      - Paul calls believers slaves to Christ in 1 Cor 7:22
    - Often parables about masters and slaves will also include a slave who is unbeliever, who is pretending to be a Christian
      - We would call these false disciples Condition 2 Christians from the parable of the sower and the seed
      - The one who looks like a Christian but is truly not'
- In this parable, a master has left his house to attend a wedding feast
  - The mention of the wedding feast is significant for at least two reasons
  - First, it serves as a useful device in the parable because it's responsible for the uncertainty surrounding the masters return
    - Wedding feasts could last a long time (many days), and the exact time of the man's return could not be known in advance
      - The only thing to know for sure is that the longer he's away, the closer is the time of his return
  - The second reason this detail is significant is that the Jewish wedding is a common picture in scripture of the Church's relationship to its groom, Christ
    - And that connection confirms that the relationship between the slaves and the master in this parable is a picture of our relationship with Christ

- Jesus introduces the parable by giving it's point up front in verse 35
  - Be ready for the masters return
    - Since we are already slaves, already believers, already assured our salvation, then what does “be ready mean”
    - Well, the rest of the parable explains what “being ready” means
  - Jesus starts in verse 36 saying be like this
    - Be like men waiting for the masters return, watchful and ready to open the door
  - Imagine yourself as the master returning after many days away
    - What do you hope to find?
      - You hope to find the slaves working on the tasks you assigned
      - You expect them to be vigilant, attentive to your return
    - We can understand this even as parents
      - Now that our children are older, we will leave them alone in the home for a while
      - When we do, we may leave them with assignments, things to do while we're gone
        - I wonder if they have done what we asked?
      - If we walk in and find nothing done and the children busy in their own pursuits, entertaining themselves, we are disappointed
        - There is much weeping and gnashing of teeth
      - If we return and find the work done and the children anticipating our return, there is much rejoicing
    - The expectations are the same for this master

- The slaves who have been faithful in this way, Jesus says in verse 37, are going to be well rewarded by the pleased Master
  - Take note the blessing is something out of reason with anything the disciples might have expected
    - The Master will gird himself to serve the servants, waiting on them as they sit around the table
    - Much like a Husband would attend to his precious bride on their wedding day
    - This was a reward beyond anything the disciples could have imagined under the circumstances
  - In verse 38 Jesus adds that this return could happen at any hour (1, 2 or 3 watch)
    - In Jewish society, watches were the night duty of a soldier
      - First watch was 9 pm to midnight
      - Second watch was midnight to 3:00 am
      - And third was 3:00 to sunrise
    - Even if the master were to return at the unlikely hours of 3:00 am, the slaves were to be ready, taking nothing for granted
  - Jesus ends the parable with a surprising statement
    - When the Son of Man finally does return, His return will take everyone by surprise
      - The implication here is that even some believers will have stopped expecting the return to some degree
  - So how do we prepare? The answer is obvious, isn't
    - By treating everyday as if this is the day of our Rapture or our death and spend every hour doing what He asked us to do
    - Don't get distracted by the cares of this perishing world and get caught off guard by your master's return

- Embarrassed that when he knocked on our door, we were busy entertaining ourselves and pursuing the wealth of this world rather than seeking His kingdom
- This is exactly the reason Jesus embarked on this entire discussion of wealth
  - He is warning his disciples – then and now – that we can’t let wealth distract us from our assigned task
  - And like our kids left at home, if we lose sight of the master’s imminent return, we get lazy, we get satisfied, we give up trying
- What is the work Christ is expecting us to be doing upon His return?
  - For each of us it will be slightly different, just as we have different walks of life and different spiritual gifts
  - But the unifying quality will always be that we are glorifying God and testifying to His Son is all that we do
    - Perhaps the best verses of scripture to sum up this responsibility are found in Rom 12

[Rom. 12:1](#) ¶ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

[Rom. 12:2](#) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- Your body, your very life, is to be a sacrifice to God
  - Deny yourself, don’t seek what you want, don’t be conformed to this world
    - Conforming doesn’t just mean in thought
      - The word in Greek means sharing the same form
      - It means pursuing what the world values, patterning your a life after the lifestyle the world values
      - The Bible says don’t do that



- But rather prove in yourself what is the will of God by doing what he wants you to do with your life
- And this act of worship will require a sacrifice – it will not be easy
  - Following God’s will over our own will inevitably mean making sacrifices in this world – sacrificing the world’s approval, sacrificing the pleasures and comforts and riches of this world
- These are the acts of readiness God is expecting us to pursue as we await His return
- Now the disciples are getting a bit confused
  - Remember, they don’t expect that Jesus will be leaving them
    - They assume that Jesus is here to establish kingdom and he intends to remain
    - So to hear him talk about the master leaving confuses them
  - So Peter speaks up and asks in verse 41

[Luke 12:41](#) ¶ Peter said, “Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone *else* as well?”

- Peter wants to know if Jesus is only speaking to the disciples here or to the entire crowd
  - He probably whispered this, perhaps a bit embarrassed to admit he wasn’t following it
  - Jesus’ next statement answers that question

[Luke 12:42](#) And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?

[Luke 12:43](#) “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

[Luke 12:44](#) “Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

[Luke 12:45](#) “But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,’ and begins to beat the slaves, *both* men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk;

[Luke 12:46](#) the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

[Luke 12:47](#) “And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes,

[Luke 12:48](#) but the one who did not know *it*, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

- Peter wanted to know if Jesus’ instructions were unique to the apostles or meant generally to all of Jesus’ follows
  - So in His response, Jesus offers the distinctions that Peter was looking for
    - But this situation falls into one of those situations where if you don’t want to know the answer, don’t ask the question
  - Jesus had been talking to all disciples, but in response to Peter’s questions, now Jesus zero’s in on leaders
  - Let’s study Jesus response, remembering that we’re looking at a description of how leaders in the Church will be judged
- Let’s begin by mentioning that in Jesus’ day, it was common for a master to place one slave over other slaves in authority
  - Typically, this was the most trustworthy and mature slave
    - You can see examples of this elsewhere in scripture
    - Remember Joseph in Potipher’s house
  - So Jesus compares the role of apostles – or more generally leaders in the church – to that of a head slave
    - And you notice that the chief responsibility of that leader? To feed the other slaves

- At the risk of carrying the details of the parable too far, we can say that the chief aim of those who lead God's people is to feed them, to teach them the Word of God
- As Jesus asked of Peter shortly before He ascended
  - Three times Jesus asked Peter if you love me, feed my sheep
- And in the parable, Jesus says that a faithful head of the household will feed the others until Jesus' return
  - And the reward for that faithful head of the household will be to have authority over a much greater responsibility in the coming kingdom
- Now, on the other hand, if that one placed in charge acts in an unworthy manner, essentially acting as though the master's return is never going to happen
  - He abuses the other slaves
    - He beats slaves – both men and women – a particularly damning accusation
    - He eats and gets drunk – a complete abuse of power and reckless disregard for his responsibility
  - When the master returns, the head slave will experience a fate equal to unbelievers, meaning this slave is actually an unbeliever
    - A man like the Pharisees of Jesus day
      - Or today, a false teacher leading God's people, as a wolf in sheep's clothing
    - This slave doesn't believe the master will ever return
      - After all, if you believe the master is returning, you would never act this way
  - So the first distinction Jesus makes in his answer to Peter is
    - Between the good leader who feeds God's people and looks forward to His return
    - And the false disciples who abuses God's people and will be justly condemned

- But then Jesus goes on to make a more compelling and interesting comparison
  - In verse 47, He launches into a slightly new direction
    - We're still talking here about leaders in light of Peter's question
  - Now, however, the distinction is between two leaders in light of what the Master revealed to each of them concerning His will
    - For the first slave, we're told he knew the Master's will
      - In the context of the parable, we're talking about knowing the Master's instructions
      - A leader who clearly understanding the Master's instructions to serve Him in a certain way
      - But for whatever reason, the slave chose to ignore those instructions and was not ready for the masters return
        - This slave will receive discipline
  - It's important to note the difference between this slave and the previous one
    - The previous one beat other slaves and disregarded all responsibility
      - This slave merely neglected his work
    - The first slave was an unbeliever and was judged accordingly
      - The second slave is disciplined, not cast out
  - But most interesting of all, Jesus says there will be leaders who are less informed about their Master's will
    - And they acted exactly like the first slave
      - That's what is meant by the statement "committed deeds worthy of flogging"
      - Just like the first slave who received a slogging for his deeds, this slave committed similar deeds
    - Yet he will receive few

- Keep in mind this slave is not completely excused for his inaction or unpreparedness
  - Merely, he received a lesser discipline
- Jesus sums up the difference between these two disappointing leaders by saying of everyone who is given much, much is expected
  - With this statement, Jesus transitions back to speaking to the crowd and ties the teaching together
    - For leaders, Jesus explains that the more insight one has been given
      - The more skill, the more knowledge, the more responsibility
      - Then the more will be expected of our service
    - And for everyone, this principle holds true as well
      - If we have been given more than others in the Body
        - More opportunity, a greater exposure to and knowledge of scripture
    - Or even those who have been blessed with greater wealth and influence
      - More is expected
- More service, more commitment, more impact for the kingdom
  - More vision, more urgency, more energy, more selflessness, more seriousness, more of whatever God demands to reach the lost and disciple the saved