

How many of us have searched for a secure banking institution where our money can be safe and we can gain interest on our financial resources? I know every time a bank has increased the amount of my minimum deposit or lowered the level of interest earned, I have had to think long and hard about whether this is place for my limited resources!

In our scripture today Jesus has been teaching his disciples and the people who are following him about how to put our earthly possessions into perspective. What is the place of our money and things in our relationship to God? And how do we use our money to serve God? This all started when a man in the crowd asked Jesus to tell his brother to divide the family inheritance with him. Jesus then told a story about a wealthy farmer who had an abundant crop, but gave no thought to the people around him or his situation after this life. Jesus called the man a rich fool, because it happened that the man died and everything that he was saving went to others anyway. The point was the man was rich in earthly things but was poor in relationship to God. The Romans had a proverb which said that money was like sea-water; the more a man drank the thirstier he became. Jesus goes on to tell his disciples that they are not to worry about the things of this earth, but be faithful in serving God.

The rich farmer worried because he had too much, but the disciples might be tempted to worry because they did not have enough! They had given up all they had in order to follow Jesus. They were living by faith, and faith is always tested.

When we worry we are “anxious” meaning “to be torn apart.” It is the picture of a ship being tossed in a storm. Our English word worry comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word that means “to strangle.” “Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow,” said Corrie Ten Boom; “it empties today of its strength.”

Worry convinces us that life is made up of what we eat and what we wear. We get so concerned about earthly possessions that we totally forget that our purpose is to glorify God. Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom of God.” God’s kingdom is a state on

earth in which God's will is as perfectly done as it is in heaven. So Jesus is saying, "Bend all your life to obeying God's will and rest content with that." So many people give all their effort to heap up things which in their very nature cannot last. We are to work for the things which last forever; things that you don't not leave behind when you leave this earth, but which you can take with you."

In Palestine wealth was often in the form of costly clothing; the moths could get at the fine clothes and leave them ruined. But if a person clothes his or her soul with the garments of honor, purity, goodness, and service, nothing on earth can injure them. If a man or woman seeks the treasures of heaven, their heart will be fixed on heaven; but if he or she seeks the treasures of earth, their heart will be attached to earth—and some day they must say good-bye to them, as the grim Spanish proverb has it, "There are no pockets in a shroud."

Jesus said if God feeds the birds, He will surely feed His children. If God beautifies the plants that grow up one day and are cut down the next, surely God will clothe His own people. The problem is not God's little power, because God can do anything; the problem is our little faith.

How can we witness to a lost world and encourage them to put faith in Jesus Christ if we ourselves are doubting God and worrying? It is inconsistent to preach faith and not practice it! The late chaplain of the United States Senate, Peter Marshall, once prayed "that ulcers would not become the badge of our faith." Too often they are!

But God's pleasures and our treasures must go together. Treasure is that to which we give priority in our lives. We must look at earth from heaven's point of view and make sure that we put God's kingdom first in everything. The main question is, "Where is your heart?" If our hearts are fixed on the dying things of earth, then we will always worry. But if we are fixed on the eternal, then God's peace will guard our minds and hearts. We must let go when it comes to this world's goods, and be willing

even to sell what we have in order to help others. It is not wrong to own things so long as things do not own us. By putting God's kingdom first we store up treasures that will outlast eternity.

How do we win over worry? The first step is to realize that God knows our needs, so we can trust God to meet them. We are sheep in God's little flock, children in God's family, and servants in God's kingdom; and God will see to it that our needs are fully met. It is God's pleasure to give us His kingdom, and He also gives us everything that we need.

Jesus tells his disciples not to fear and compared them to a little flock, a seemingly defenseless group which could be preyed on. To make them even more defenseless Jesus instructed, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor." This is exactly what the early church did in the book of Acts, they sold their land and shared everything in common with the fellowship of the saints and the work of Christ. Jesus' point was that if His followers had a treasure on earth they would think about it. But if they instead had a treasure in heaven, which is safe from theft and decay by moths, and were "rich toward God," they would be concerned with matters pertaining to the kingdom and therefore would not be in a state of anxiety.

It is said that John Wesley's rule of life was to save all he could and give all he could. When he was at Oxford he had an income of £30 a year. He lived on £28 and gave £2 away. When his income increased to £60, £90 and £120 a year, he still lived on £28 and gave the balance away. The Accountant-General for Household Plate demanded a return from him. (I think this was like the Internal Revenue Service of our country and time.) Wesley's reply was, "I have two silver tea spoons at London and two at Bristol. This is all the plate which I have at present; and I shall not buy any more, while so many around me want bread."

Lest we misunderstand, Jesus never ordered any person to live in a shiftless, thrifless, reckless way. What he did tell a person was to do his or her best and then leave the rest to God.

Then Jesus told two parables (35-40 and 42-48) which were joined by a question by Peter (41). The second parable actually expands and explains the first. The first parable was read in our hearing this morning. The second will be our homework to allow God to reinforce what the Word teaches us today.

Jesus shifted the emphasis from being worried about the present to being watchful about the future. One of the best ways to conquer hypocrisy (where we say one thing and do another), covetousness (wanting what belongs to another), and worry (being anxious); is to look for the Lord's return. When you are "living in the future tense," it is difficult for the things of the world to ensnare you. Jesus explained how we can be ready for His return.

Jesus taught that the disciples should be ready because the Son of Man will come at a time when they will not be expecting Him. The parable describes a scene in which several servants were waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet. Jewish weddings were held at night, and a bridegroom's servants would have to wait for their master to come home with his bride. The new husband would certainly not want to be kept waiting at the door with his bride! But the servants had to be sure they were ready to go to work, with their robes tucked under their girdles or belt so they were free to move. The point was that they had to remain constantly vigilant so that the master would be able to come into the house whenever he might arrive at home. They had no idea of when the master would actually come; it may be any time between 9:00 in the evening to 6:00 the next morning. Recently we heard of the Jewish/Christian wedding celebration of Chelsea Clinton going into the early morning hours.

If the servants are watching and ready, their master will serve them. This is remarkable - master serves the servants! In Jewish weddings, the bride was treated like a queen and the groom like a king; so we would not expect the “king” to minister to his staff. Our King, Jesus Christ, will minister to His faithful servants when He greets us at His return, and He will reward us for our faithfulness.

To “watch” means to be alert, to be ready, not to be caught by surprise. That is the attitude we must have toward the second coming of Jesus Christ. His coming will be like that of a thief: unannounced and unexpected. We must be ready! The disciples must “be ready” for “the Son of Man will come” unexpectedly.<sup>1</sup> The saintly Presbyterian pastor Robert Murray McCheyne sometimes asked people, “Do you believe that Jesus is coming today?” If they replied in the negative, he would say, “Then you had better be ready, for He is coming at an hour when you think not!”<sup>2</sup> Jesus is calling us to put our priorities in order and be ready for His return!

Our passage has two meanings. One meaning refers to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ; but in its wider sense it refers to the time when God’s summons enters a person’s life, a call to prepare to meet our God. No person can tell the day or the hour when eternity will invade time and the summons will come. But, we must choose now how God to find us. We would like him to find us working, completing the work that we have been assigned to do. Jesus himself said, “I have accomplished the work which You gave me to do.”

We would like God to find us at peace with our fellow Christians. It would be a shame to leave this world with people angry and hating us. No person should let the sun go down on their anger, who knows; this may be your last night on earth. We should also want to be a peace with God. It will make all the difference at the last

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<sup>1</sup>Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:238

<sup>2</sup>Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Lk 12:22

whether we feel that we are going out to a stranger or an enemy, or going to fall asleep in the arms of God.<sup>3</sup> On Sunday, August 29, following worship we are going to discuss the work that God is calling this church to do. I pray you're your will join us with your prayers and ideas.

To be ready, believers must serve God actively, and with your help we will be found working and serving—and witnessing to the unsaved. Because unbelievers must make peace with God before it's too late.<sup>4</sup> My prayer is that we will each be ready and encourage others to do the same!

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<sup>3</sup> Barclay, William, lecturer in the University of Glasgow (Hrsg.): *The Gospel of Luke*. Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975 (The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. Ed), S. 162

<sup>4</sup>Richards, Lawrence O.: *The Bible Readers Companion*. electronic ed. Wheaton : Victor Books, 1991; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996, S. 663