

Luke Series #6
“What Comes First” — Luke 12:13-34

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Difficult Things*

1. Today, a difficult passage
2. Not to understand
 - a. easy to understand
 - b. difficulty comes in how it challenges us
3. Jesus is brutally blunt here
4. Not a person in this room who calls themselves a Christian who won't be somehow stirred by the challenge Jesus issues in these verses
5. Difficult for the original crowd
6. Even more difficult for us today, living in modern America, because of our culture's great material prosperity

B. *Interruptions*

1. Confession - like Star Wars
2. Realized kids hadn't seen
3. Bought full set of videos
4. Watching Empire Strikes Back
 - a. fight between Luke and Darth Vader in Cloud City of Bespin
 - b. a holy moment; struggle of good against evil
 - c. climax of the movie
 - d. right at the critical point of the movie - Tyrell says, "Can we make some popcorn?"
 - e. I just about passed out! How could he?
5. See something of that here
6. Jesus teaching; sharing holy truths — pearls of wisdom
7. Some clown from the crowd interrupts Him with a petty request

II. TEXT

A. *Vs. 13-15*

1. Start reading at v. 8-12

8 “Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God.

9 “But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

10 “And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be

forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.

11 “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say.

12 “For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

- a. what great words of promise and hope
- b. would think entire audience would be silent, waiting for the next morsel of living bread
- c. but one guy in the crowd isn't at all interested in all this talk about heaven, and depending on the HS
- d. he's a practical kind of guy
- e. so he says -

13 Then one from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

2. This was totally out of context with what Jesus was sharing with the crowd
3. But it reveals the heart of the man who spoke it
4. Not uncommon for rabbis to settle legal cases
 - a. a dispute, people often went to the local rabbi
 - b. Jesus has obtained a rep as a powerful rabbi
 - c. so this guy brings his case to Jesus
5. This man had an elder brother.
 - a. when their father died, it was the older brother's duty to be the executor of the estate
 - b. since there was just the two of them, the elder brother would receive 2/3's of the inheritance and the younger man, 1/3
 - c. but the elder brother hadn't given his brother anything
 - d. this deprived man asked for what was rightfully his
6. Now, interesting, Jesus didn't intervene: His reaction was much different than what the man expected

14 But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?”

15 And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

7. Jesus was not going to get sidetracked from His mission and message by an endless settling of legal issues among the crowd

8. Instead, He gets to the heart of the problem of both brothers =
9. They are covetous; they are greedy
10. V. 14, "who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?"
 - a. the "you" is plural
 - b. both brothers were there
 - c. so he says to "them" -
 - d. "Take heed and beware of covetousness"
11. To covet means to want more
 - a. doesn't matter how much one has, covetousness always wants more
 - b. in Calvin Miller's book, *A Requiem for Love* he writes,

A beggar asked a millionaire,
 "How many more dollars would it take to make you
 happy?"

The millionaire reached his gnarled hands in to the
 beggar's cup, withdrew a dollar and replied,
 "Just one more!"
12. Jesus never tells us to take heed and beware of something unless it presents a very real threat to us
 - a. these are strong words: "Beware - Take Heed"
 - b. strong warning!
13. Why?
 - a. because the enemy would like nothing better than for us to define our lives in terms of this realm
 - b. his greatest weapon is distraction
 - c. and getting us to concentrate on the here and now, to the exclusion of eternity is a coup d'etat
14. So Jesus says it plain and simple: "One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."
 - a. this is a truth Madison Avenue, Sport Mart and Price Club do not want us to realize
 - b. their whole message is; "If you'll just buy our product, or a couple of our products, you'll find happiness and contentment."
 - c. if that were true, why do they have to come out with a new model of the same thing every 6 to 12 months?
 - d. life is much more than the accumulation of things
 - e. the one who dies with the most toys, does NOT win
 - f. we don't need bigger houses, bigger cars, bigger refrigerators, bigger stereos, bigger computers
 - g. what we need is a bigger spiritual perspective; a bigger view of God; His love, His holiness
15. Though this man has interrupted Jesus, Jesus will turn the interruption

into a much needed lesson on the true meaning and direction of life . . .

B. Vs. 16-21

16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.

17 “And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’

18 “So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.

19 ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’

20 “But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’

1. Jesus tells a story about a man who was prosperous
 - a. a rich man
 - b. his fields yielded a bumper crop
2. From a purely natural viewpoint, what he did seems both practical and wise
 - a. seeing he had an overflow
 - b. he rejoiced and stored it away
 - c. saved it for the future
3. It might seem like a shrewd business decision, but God calls the man a fool
 - a. in the bible, the word fool different than what we mean
 - b. for us, usually, someone who lacks knowledge, ignorant
 - c. in bible, foolishness carries a strong sense of moral negligence
 - d. in other words, the fool is the one who rejects God and refuses to live His life by the light of God’s word
4. The rich man’s problem was this:
 - a. he never stopped to consider anything but his own selfish desires
 - b. 14 times we find the words, “I my”
 - c. rather than asking God what he should do with the surplus, he asks himself
 - d. rather than give to those in need, he saves it for himself
 - e. he was so caught up in his own comfort, he never stopped to think about where his life was headed
 - f. and for this, God calls him a fool
5. He thought his future was secure because he had enough food to eat for a few years
6. But he never took thought for the eternity he had to face long before he

- expected to
7. Story of lady fleeing Pompeii
 - a. encased in the ashes of Vesuvius
 - b. feet aimed out of the city,
 - c. but upper body turned around facing back toward center of city
 - d. hand outstretched; there just inches away, a bag of pearls
 - she dropped them?
 - someone else, and she turned to gather up
 - don't know; not important
 - e. she stands to this day a mute testimony to the futility of trying to find security in possessions

 8. Have you considered eternity?
 - a. in what do you find your security?
 - b. job, family, marriage, house?
 - c. all things can be taken from you in a moment
 - d. and you know what - one day they will be taken away
 - e. that is why Jesus warns us . . .

21 “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

8. There is nothing wrong with being wealthy
 - a. bible says that those who are wealthy face certain temptations others do not [Prov. 30:7-9 Matt 13:22 1 Tim. 6:6-10, 17-19]
 - b. but wealth does not automatically mean a person is in sin
 - c. on the contrary - those God blesses so they can be a source of blessing to others
 - d. that was the tragedy of the rich man
 - God blessed him
 - the intent of God was that he would put that wealth to work in blessing others
 - his guilt was that he used it selfishly
9. Whether we have much or little, it doesn't matter
10. The real issue is, do we invest whatever we have for the glory of God and the good of others
11. This is how we become rich toward God
12. Jesus has much more to say on this issue of wealth and our lives so He goes on . . .

C. Vs. 22-34

22 Then He said to His disciples, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on.

23 “Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.

1. In v. 15 he said, “One’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”
 - a. then went on to tell a story about a rich man
 - b. spoke that to the crowds
2. Now he turns to speak just to His disciples
 - a. none of them were what can be called “wealthy”
 - b. rather, they had left all to follow Him
 - c. they were living by faith, and from day to day
 - d. the lesson of covetousness must not be lost on them
 - e. the poor and needy can be just as greedy as the rich
 - f. but it often appears as something else = worry
 - g. so Jesus speaks to them about trusting in God for their food and clothing
3. Jesus says that there is more to life than food and clothes
 - a. realize that may come as a surprise to some of the teenagers — but true!
4. We are not to worry about these things because God, who gave us life, is not going to neglect the maintenance of that life

24 “Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?”

25 “And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?”

26 “If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest?”

27 “Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

28 “If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?”

5. Contrary to the thinking of the animal rights and tree hugger movements, we are of greater value than birds and trees and blades of grass because God values us above these things
6. Yet He takes care of them — so, He will take care of us
7. And since that is true, there is no need for worry about such things as food, and clothing, health
8. “Worry” = to split the mind;
 - a. James terminology “double minded”
 - b. we are double minded when we worry
 - c. for we deny the love and provision of God
 - d. we accuse Him of not caring about us

- e. and for that reason, worry is a grievous sin that needs to be repented of
9. Jesus points out the futility of worry in v. 25
 - a. “Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?”
 - b. worry accomplished nothing except ulcers
 - c. worrying is like a child on a rocking horse; there’s a lot of movement, but he goes no where
 - d. Corrie Ten Boom once said, “Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but it does empty today of its strength.”
 10. Jesus shows us the way to victory over worry in these verses
 - 1) Realize that God knows your needs
 - 2) Remember that God loves you and that you are precious to Him
 - 3) See how He takes care of the rest of creation
 11. We must have that child-like faith that looks to God as our loving heavenly Father
 - a. a child does not worry about dinner or clothes
 - b. a child trusts in his parents - and that’s even with parents who sometimes fail to provide
 - c. we are to trust in our Father who is perfect in love and power

29 “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind.

30 “For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things.

31 “But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.

12. Jesus knows the human penchant toward worry, so He adds more words of comfort on the provision and faithfulness of God
13. But here we see a blunt command
 - a. “Do not seek the things that the world seeks”
 - b. “Don’t fall into the trap of materialism”
 - c. “Don’t get all worked up about these things.”
14. Word “Anxious mind” in v. 29 means to be “above the ground”
 - a. when we say that something is “up in the air” it means the same thing
 - b. it is uncertain and unsettled
 - c. it doesn’t have a firm foundation, insecure
15. You and I are not to be insecure in our relationship with God
16. We are to have our feet firmly planted in the knowledge that come what

- may, He is seated on the throne and all power, dominion, and might are His and nothing can hinder Him taking care of us!
17. Rather than fixing our attention, or our preoccupation with the things of this world, we are to fix our attention on God and His kingdom
 18. He is the star we are to steer by
 19. And we have this promise - as we make God our aim, everything we need will be given to us
 20. I like what A. MacLaren wrote, "My needs are the prophets of God's blessing and provision."

32 "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

21. Seeking the kingdom of God is not a game of hide and seek with God
 - a. not an arduous journey
 - b. not an epic undertaking that requires us to embark on some kind of mythical voyage
 - c. No!!!
22. It is God's pleasure to give His kingdom to us - now!
 - a. we can enjoy all the benefits of being under God's care this moment
 - b. we must but seek Him
 - c. we must but surrender to His rule as King

33 "Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.

34 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

23. In v. 21, we can be rich toward God
24. Repeats that idea here, and tells us how
25. By realizing we do not live FOR OURSELVES
 - a. we live first for the glory of God
 - b. second, for the good of others
 - c. whatever we are blessed to receive from the Lord, must be used to His glory
26. If we have possessions that are doing nothing more than sitting uselessly, sell them and give to those in need
 - a. if we simply have too much stuff so that we aren't free to live for God because the stuff requires maintenance - ditch it and give instead to others who have real needs
 - b. by doing so, you invest in eternal treasure
27. A woman died and went to heaven
 - a. shown to her new home; a small log cabin
 - b. across the street, a beautiful mansion

- c. saw a man come out the front door - her gardener
 - d. asked the angel, "Why is he there? I thought there'd be no more gardening in heaven."
 - e. angel replied, "He's not the gardener. That's his house."
 - f. lady was disturbed. "Why does HE get a mansion while I get this humble little cottage?"
 - g. "You used all your wealth on your mansion on earth. Your gardener sent what little he had on ahead of him. It built him this fine mansion you see across the street."
28. You can't take it with you - but you can send it on ahead.

III. CONCLUSION

A. *John Wesley*

- 1. Rule of life, set early: Give away all he could
- 2. When young, annual income of 30 lbs.
 - a. lived on 28
 - b. gave away 2
- 3. Raised to 60
 - a. lived on 28
 - b. gave away 32
- 4. Raised to 90
 - a. lived on 29
 - b. gave away 61
- 5. Raised to 120
 - a. lived on 30
 - b. gave away 90
- 6. It is the American way to try and get ahead
 - a. but getting ahead means to increase our income so we can increase our standard of living
- 7. In the Kingdom of God, getting ahead means increasing our standard of giving

B. *Take Heed and Beware*

- 1. Not a one of us that doesn't need to heed these words of Jesus
- 2. Both covetousness and worry are sins we must beware of
- 3. May God give us the grace to trust in Him without distraction