

SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

TEXT: LUKE 12:22-34

INTRODUCTION:

1. In Luke 12:15, our Lord said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."
2. Then He spake a parable unto them, referred to as "The Parable of the Rich Fool" (12:16-21).
3. In this passage of Scripture we see:
 - * A warning about the spirit of covetousness (12:13-15)
 - * A warning about the course of covetousness (12:16-19)
 - * warning about the penalty of covetousness (12:20, 21)
4. Our Lord called this "certain rich man" a "fool" (12:20) because a fool thinks only of the pleasures of this world. A fool does not consider eternity.
5. This rich fool was thinking in terms of "many years," but God said to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (12:20).
6. First Timothy 6:7 says, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."
7. And our Lord said in Luke 12:21, "So is he (he's just like the rich fool) that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."
8. After this parable, our Lord gave further warnings and instructions regarding the dangers of materialism (12:22-34). Note the word "Therefore" (12:22).

I. TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR YOUR LIFE

1. In Luke 10:41, our Lord said to Martha, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things."
2. The word "careful" in Scripture means "full of care" or "anxious."
3. Philippians 4:6 says, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."
4. And here in Luke 12:22 and 23, our Lord said to His disciples, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment."
5. Greed and worry go together. "Greed can never get enough, worry is afraid it may not have enough" (Arndt).
6. In Luke 16:13, our Lord said, "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

7. I once read a prayer written by a materialistic man.

*Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray my Cuisineart to keep.
I pray my stocks are on the rise,
And that my analyst is wise.
That all the wine I sip is white,
And that my hot tub's watertight.
That racquetball won't get too tough,
That all my sushi's fresh enough.
I pray my cordless phone still works,
That my career won't lose its perks.
My microwave won't radiate,
And my condo won't depreciate.
I pray my health club doesn't close,
And that my money market grows.
If I go broke before I wake,
I pray my Volvo they won't take. (author unknown)*

8. Many of you have probably heard the story of Ethan Couch, the rich teenager from Texas, who is presently in a Mexican jail. A few years ago, he was on drugs and alcohol, speeding, and illegally driving on a restricted license. He lost control of his car, plowed into a group of people, and he wound up killing four people.

9. In addition to the four deaths, nine people were badly injured. Couch was charged with four counts of intoxication manslaughter and two counts of intoxication assault. Prosecutors were seeking a maximum sentence of 20 years imprisonment, but a psychologist hired as an "expert" by Couch's defense lawyers, testified in court that the teen was a product of something called "affluenza," and argued that rather being sent to prison, he needed rehabilitation.

10. Apparently he never got rehabilitated.

11. Ethan Couch became the subject of a big police manhunt last month, after his probation officer was unable to contact him. On December 28, 2015, police arrested him and his mother drinking and partying in the Mexican resort city of Puerto Vallarta.

12. His mother is now in a Los Angeles jail, being held on \$1 million bail.

13. Ethan Couch is presently in a detention facility in Mexico City, trying to avoid being deported back to the states.

II. CONSIDER THE RAVENS AND THE LILIES (12:24-30).

1. In his book, *Outline Studies in Luke*, W.H. Griffith Thomas makes a distinction between what he calls "vain solicitude" and "true solicitude." True solicitude is after seeking God (12:31).
2. The Bible teaches us that we should not to be vainly solicitous (anxious). It is paganistic ("the nations of the world" -- 12:30).
3. It is humanistic because it leaves God out. Those who are anxious are not trusting in the Lord.
4. In Job 38:41, the LORD said to Job, "Who provideth for the raven his food?"
5. In I Kings 17, the LORD told Elijah to go hide by the brook Cherith, and He told him, "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there" (I Kings 17:4).
6. And here in Luke 12:24 Jesus said, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?"
7. If God can feed the ravens, and God can tell ravens to feed his prophet, can't God take care of you and me?
8. "How much more are ye better than the fowls?" (12:24).
9. Being consumed with money and the things money can buy demonstrates a lack of faith (Luke 12:28b, 29).
10. "Neither be ye of doubtful (anxious) mind" (12:29b). A.T. Robertson said "doubtful mind" means to be like a ship tossed about on the sea.
11. It is sad that many people are like a ship being tossed about out on the tumultuous sea, when they could be anchored safely in the haven of rest!
I've anchored my soul in the "Haven of Rest,"
I'll sail the wide seas no more;
The tempest may sweep over wild, stormy, deep,
In Jesus I'm safe evermore. -- Henry L. Gilmour
12. The danger of vain solicitude is faithlessness and restlessness. On the other hand, true solicitude means brings perfect peace and rest (12:31).

III. SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD (12:31)

1. I prefer Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
2. "Seek ye first..." God must always come first.
3. First in order of time. Spurgeon told the story of a wealthy businessman who advised his son to, "Stick to trade and money, and then attend to religion."
4. The son wisely replied, "Father, you have always given me wise counsel but this time I cannot follow your advice, because our Lord said, 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness...'"

5. First in order of preference. If it comes down to a choice between God and a good job, choose God. Or God and a good wife (or husband), choose God. Or God *and anything*, choose God.
6. First in intensity. Many Christians are intensely involved with their career, or with their hobbies, or with travel, or with sports, or with many other things, but sadly, they are lukewarm when it comes to the things of God.
7. We need to have our priorities right (12:30, 31).
8. I heard about two elderly men walking through a beautiful park on a gorgeous spring morning. The first man was not a Christian. He waved his hand around the beautiful park and he said to his friend, "These are the things that make it so hard to die!"
9. The second man was a Christian, and he said, "No. This little paradise helps me to think of what the real paradise up yonder is going to be like, and it makes me yearn for heaven!"
10. A different perspective!
11. King Solomon said, "What profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?" (Eccl. 5:16).
12. George W. Truett was a well-known Baptist pastor in Dallas, Texas. One night he was invited to dinner in the home of a very wealthy man. After the meal, the host led him to a place where they could get a good view of the surrounding area. Pointing to the oil wells punctuating the landscape, he boasted, "Twenty-five years ago I had nothing. Now, as far as you can see, it's all mine." Looking in the opposite direction at his sprawling fields of grain, he said, "That's all mine." Turning east toward huge herds of cattle, he bragged, "They're all mine." Then pointing to the west and a beautiful forest, he exclaimed, "That too is all mine."
13. He paused, expecting Pastor Truett to compliment him on his great success. Truett, however, placing one hand on the man's shoulder and pointing heavenward with the other, simply said, "How much do you have in that direction?" The man hung his head and confessed, "I never thought of that" (cf. Luke 12:20, 21).
14. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness..."
15. David Livingstone said, "I place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of God."
16. Being consumed with money and the things money can buy is a mark of a heathen -- "For all these things do the nations (heathens) of the world seek after..." (12:30).
17. Worldly people are preoccupied with money and clothes and shopping, etc. As Christians we should trust God to provide for our needs (not our "wants").

18. Worldly people do not appreciate spiritual things. They do not trust God. They trust their bank account and their portfolio and their IRA's and their 401k's and just about everything else BUT God.
19. I read about a wealthy widow named Henrietta Garrett, who died in 1930 at the age of 81, leaving a \$17,000,000 estate. She had failed to leave a will.
20. Mrs. Garret was childless, and at the time of her death, had only one known relative, a second cousin. Later on, genealogists produced a three-volume report that verified Mrs. Garret had three cousins. These were people Mrs. Garret had never met, but to whom she was related through her mother.
21. But nearly 26,000 claims were filed in court by persons claiming to be next of kin. These attempts were made by more than 26,000 persons from 47 states and 29 foreign countries, represented by more than 3,000 lawyers.
22. In Germany, a man who shared Mrs. Garret's maiden name shot his aunt and uncle after they refused to fund his trip to America to claim the Garrett fortune. In remorse, the man then committed suicide.
23. Many others committed perjury, faked family records, changed their own names, altered data in Family Bibles and concocted absurd tales of illegitimacy.
24. Some fakers accused their dead parents of committing adultery, and their own mothers of having children out of wedlock. Many falsified official and family documents to present themselves as Garrett heirs.
25. Court hearings often took on the aspect of a circus. One man on the witness stand took off his shirt to show he had the name "Schaffer" tattooed on his chest. (That was Mrs. Garrett's maiden name.)
26. At one point, it was rumored that Mrs. Garrett had left a will, but that someone hid it in her casket before it was lowered into a grave at the cemetery.
27. So her body was exhumed in 1937, but no will was found inside the coffin.
28. As result of all this greediness, twelve were fined, ten received jail sentences, two committed suicide, and three were murdered.
29. "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Tim. 6:10).

CONCLUSION:

1. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
2. I heard about a man who was passing out Gospel literature on a riverboat. He saw a worldly man drinking, and he handed a tract to him.

3. The worldly man laughed at him, and to show his contempt he took out his knife and cut the tract in small pieces and threw the pieces of paper into the wind.
4. As he went back to his drinking he noticed that the wind had blown a small piece of paper that stuck to his coat. It said: "Eternity."
5. He looked on the other side of the paper and it said, "Repent."