

Natalie Ford  
 1<sup>st</sup> Pres Owasso  
 11 7 10

*Where Your Treasure Is...*  
*Luke 12: 32-34*

I always laugh about the time that Dad and I were eating at Claude's hamburgers, across from *Ninde funeral home* in Tulsa, and right behind the hearse was a moving van loading furniture, the truck said 'relocation services'.

Some people do care so much about their money and stuff they want to take it with them. I was amazed at the recent Philbrook exhibit, how much effort was put into keeping track of the treasures of the ancient Egyptians when they died, into carefully burying it all with them.

It's kind of like the man who asked his wife to bury his money with him in his casket. So she did. She wrote him a *check*.

Now maybe none of us care that much about anything we have, but I bet we *worry* quite a bit about what we don't have, or what we *wish* we had, or how much we *need* to have and how it all *adds* up in the old checkbook.

Which is exactly why when Jesus talks about his two favorite subjects, the kingdom of God, and money—he also says things like, *do not worry, and do not be afraid*.

Just like our verses in Matthew 6 last week, in Luke 12 this week Jesus reassures us with words of comfort about how well God cares for the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, so much more will God take care of our every need. We don't have to worry.

But then he goes on to say some really life changing things. He says, do not be afraid little flock, it's your Father's good pleasure to *give you the kingdom*.

**Sell** your possessions and **give** alms.

Make **purses** for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys for where your *treasure is, there your heart* will be also.

Take these words piece by piece....what does it mean to you?

***Do not be afraid.***

We all need to hear those words when it comes to money.

I admit, I have moments when I am afraid—  
of my bills, and how it's all going to work out this year,  
I'm afraid of how I'm going to do Christmas and birthdays,  
and still help with things like the angel tree.

But then I read on.

It's your ***Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.***

Remember last week, we talked about the kingdom of God—  
seeking first the kingdom, what is the kingdom?

It's simple—it's who God is and what God's doing.

So God wants to give us that---God wants to give us ***Himself,***

God wants to give us ***opportunity*** to join the good that's happening.

So right there, I have an opportunity to step outside my problems and worries  
and start thinking about helping others instead.

I can start focusing on how ***my giving*** to this church  
makes a difference, and changes lives.

***Then he says, sell your possessions and give alms.***

Eli is always wanting to have a garage sale at my house.

He's one of the only kids I know who's willing to sell his stuff,  
because he knows that it will help us have more money.

I'm more apt to sell the handbags I make and appliances and things that I don't  
use, but I too am aware of just how useful it is to sell what you can when you can.

Eli is definitely on to something.

***Give alms.***

Jesus didn't force people to tithe.

Instead he told people to give ***sacrificially***---to give whatever was costly.

Not just a twenty in the plate, or leftovers at the end of the month.

He told them stories about a widow giving her last coins to the temple.

I'm moved by the example of our biblical ancestors from long ago  
who began to give God a ***tenth*** of everything off the top,  
of their first fruits of the harvest and all their livestock,

then it became a tenth of their earnings, because this is costly—it is a sacrifice—and if you're looking for a guide to help you know how to give, it's a great place to start.

Some people give more, some churches instead of giving 10% to missions, give 50%, dollar for dollar to help the needy.  
But tithing is a great place to start when it comes to giving.

When Jesus said give, he also said *make purses that don't wear out*.  
In other words, invest in something *eternal*, not temporary.  
We all know what happens when you invest in the temporary—we've seen that this recession.  
How are you and I investing in the eternal?

When I think of investing in the eternal, I think of *investing in people*,  
Like the precious **children** who come Sunday after Sunday, to learn God's word and God's love—now that is an investment for eternity.

Tutoring children at **Mills**, that's an eternal investment,  
nothing temporary about that at all.

Delivering Meals on **Wheels**—is a gift of life and an investment in something forever.

Even our **Fall Festival** and the 300 people who streamed through our lawn, that hospitality is an investment in our community that won't be soon forgotten.

Not to mention the **dozens** who receive help from us on a weekly basis, with their rent, utilities, and gasoline, we pray with them, talk to them, offer them compassion and hope, and perhaps it will reap an eternal reward.

When I think of purses that don't wear out,  
And unfailing treasures in heaven,  
I remember that all the money in the world can't bring happiness.  
Joy is something that comes from God, not money.

you don't get *heavenly treasure* by getting, or acquiring more....

In the Our Daily Bread devotional, Philip Parham tells the story of a rich businessman who was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat.

"Why aren't you out there fishing?" he asked.

"Because I've caught enough fish for today," said the fisherman.

"Why don't you catch more fish than you need?" the rich man asked.

"What would I do with them?"

"You could earn more money," came the impatient reply, "and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you'd have a fleet of boats and be rich like me."

The fisherman asked, "Then what would I do?"

"You could sit down and enjoy life," said the industrialist.

"What do you think I'm doing now?" the fisherman replied.

That ability to relax and enjoy life, is certainly a heavenly treasure....

***Contrary to our common beliefs, having*** lots of money  
Can cause untold pain and misfortune, and  
be gone in a flash. (kind of like going to the casino!)

The magazine *Investment News* warns that although winning the lottery carries odds of 7-million-to-1, making it much more likely for you to be struck by lightning, a few do win, and many suffer. Lotteries handed out more than \$21 billion in winnings each year. Yet every time a state lottery agency has a big payday, it's tantamount to clearing an untrained pilot for takeoff. As financial advisers know all too well, people who come into sudden wealth often face wrenching psychological changes. Far from good fortune, the results can be ruinous. Nearly one-third of all lottery winners eventually seek some sort of bankruptcy relief.

I don't think it's always the money that we want.

I think much of the time what we crave is the ***security, and comfort***

That we think having more money will bring.

Which is exactly why Jesus talks so much about money,

And about ***choosing God*** over money—

because they are dueling forces in our lives, both wanting our allegiance.

We either choose to rely upon our money (and ourselves) for security,

Or we choose to rely upon God—who is in charge of the money and security.

Our ***checkbooks***.

As pastor John Maxwell puts it, are actually 'theological documents'

It tells us what we are putting first in our lives.

If we are always worried about the checkbook  
 it may reflect upon some poor choices,  
 but it also may reveal our belief that ‘God can’t take care of me’  
 I’m on my own to bring in the money I need to be ok.

If on the other hand, our checkbook reveals **giving** to God,  
 it shows a reliance upon the God who does take care of our every need.

We have a **choice** to make—rely on the **checkbook**,  
 Or on the **God** who takes care of the checkbook.

But how do we ultimately **avoid** the worry and fear about money?  
 Jesus said, *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

**GIVING** puts our hearts in the right place.

Yes, that’s right. Giving is what puts our heart in the right place.  
 Our hearts do not necessarily lead our giving.

We don’t get our lives all together as great Christians,  
 Then become great givers.  
 No, *as we give, we grow* into great Christians.  
 Because giving is what breaks the chains that money places around our heart  
 Giving is what opens our eyes to *see what God* is doing all around us,  
 And how we can join it.  
 Giving is what brings us untold *blessings* and eternal rewards  
 we’d never know otherwise.

Some say, dedicate the heart and the money will follow;  
 but Jesus put it the other way around.  
 "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."  
 If your treasure is dedicated, then your heart will be dedicated.

Here’s what Pastor Mark Sargent wrote:

*I've heard lots of folks in my churches through the years say to me,  
 "Preacher, if we just get people's hearts right, then the money will come." No,  
 that's not it at all. ... Jesus says that you get people's wallets right and then the  
 hearts will follow. Where do you want your heart to be? To whom do you want  
 your heart to belong? Put your money there.*

*And if we wish to be followers of Jesus Christ, who is God's new economy in the flesh, then we live more simply with less stuff and we put more and more of our stuff into the hands of those who don't have the stuff they need.*

*It's not a hard concept to understand. It is a hard concept for us overstuffed people to practice. But it is the Gospel. It is good news.... (Leadership Today, Nov 2008)*

Friends, hear the ***Good News of the Gospel*** today:

Do not be afraid little flock. God wants to give you the kingdom, so make purses that don't wear out—sell what you don't need, give whatever you can, invest in eternity, because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Amen.