

Don't be a fool: live for eternity

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn now to our Bible reading for this morning. We're having a little break from Romans. I'm to be away on holiday for the next three Sundays, although I will be preaching each Sunday when I'm away.

We're going to be with a family in Zambia, visiting relatives and family. And I shall be preaching in various churches there over the next few weeks, so we would value your prayers for that.

But today we're going to look at Jesus' words in Luke chapter 12. And looking particularly at verse 13 and following, but I'm going to read from the beginning of Luke chapter 12.

You'll find that on page 871 if you have one of our church Bibles. And Jesus here really is speaking on a very similar theme to that which we've been looking at in Paul's writing in the Epistle to the Romans.

It's all about living in the light of eternity, living for the things that matter as individual Christians, also as churches, as believing communities.

[1 : 09] And Jesus here is addressing some of the particular dangers, some of the things that can stop us living for the kingdom and living for eternity. You see, chapter 12 begins in response to the scribes and the Pharisees, the religious establishment of Jesus' day, who were seeking to provoke him so that they might catch him out in something he might say, the kind of listening that's not looking for answers, but looking for accusations.

So in the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, Jesus began to say to his disciples first, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you've said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you've whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.

I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do, but I warn you whom to fear. Fear him who, after he is killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are numbered.

[2 : 38] Fear not, you are of more value than many sparrows. And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man, will also acknowledge before the angels of God.

But the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

And when they bring you before synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say. The Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.

Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide our inheritance with me. But he said to him, Man, who made me a judge and arbiter over you? And he said to them, Take care. And be on your guard against all covetousness. For one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. And he told them a parable, saying, The land of a rich man produced plentifully.

[3 : 46] And he thought to himself, What shall I do? For I have nowhere to store all my crops. And he said, I'll do this. I'll tear down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods.

And I'll say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Relax. Eat and drink and be merry. But God said to him, Fool, this night your soul is required of you.

The things you've prepared, whose will they be? So says Jesus is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich before God.

And he said to his disciples, Therefore I tell you, Do not be anxious about your life, what you'll eat, nor your body, what you'll put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

Consider the ravens. They neither sow nor reap. They have neither storehouse nor barn. And yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?

[4 : 51] And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life? Then you're not able to do a small thing as that. Why are you anxious about the rest?

Consider the lilies, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith? Do not seek what you're to eat, what you're to drink, or be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them.

Instead, seek his kingdom. And these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with money bags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

[6 : 01] For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Amen. And may God bless to us this, his word.

Well, do turn with me, if you would, to Luke chapter 12, page 871 in the Church Bibles. And the simple message, really, of the passage that we're looking at, really, from verse 13 through to verse 34, is that Jesus is saying to us, don't be a fool, live for eternity.

Don't be a fool, live for eternity. I guess hypocrisy is perhaps one of the few sins that still is generally despised today.

People who pretend to be one thing, but in actual fact are shown up to be something quite different. People don't like that. We despise that. And rightly so. We don't like being deceived.

That's what the tabloid papers love to expose so often, isn't it? The moral crusader who then is shown up visiting a prostitute or something like that. Or the politician who rails publicly against private medicine and private education and then, in fact, sends their own children to a private school and goes to private hospitals to have their own treatment.

[7 : 34] That's what the tabloids love to expose. Of course, the tabloids and their moral crusading is being exposed in its own hypocrisy at the moment, isn't it? In a very staggering way. But it just goes to show that we don't like hypocrisy.

And Jesus Christ has absolutely no time for hypocrisy. It's something he's constantly exposing in his teaching and especially religious hypocrisy.

It can be a very deep and a dangerous kind of hypocrisy. Not so much because it deceives others, although it can do, but because it can deceive ourselves so easily.

And in fact, that can be fatal. Nothing is more dangerous in life than to think that somehow you are in the right with God, that you're pleasing God, that you're serving God, but in reality to discover that you're nothing but a fraud, that you're a self-deceiver, that you're a fool.

And Jesus is always challenging those who follow him and who show interest in him to beware of hypocrisy, to be aware of that kind of self-deception, to see the difference between real faith and real discipleship and that which is simply false.

[8 : 51] It's just skin deep. And in Luke's Gospel, ever since, in chapter 9, verse 20, the disciples realize who Jesus is, that he is the Messiah, the Christ of God, ever since then, he has been teaching them constantly the difference between true discipleship and false discipleship, between hypocrisy, sham, and reality.

And it's a very, very important thing for Jesus to have to do. Especially when Jesus, and following Jesus, have become very popular. Look at verse 1 of chapter 12.

Thousands, we're told, were gathering to hear him. He was a sensation. And Jesus turns around and says to them in verse 2, beware of hypocrisy. Beware of the fraud of mere moralism.

Don't be a fraud. That's his message because, he says in verse 3, it's all going to be exposed one day. What is hidden will not remain hidden forever. Well, a lot of fraudulent moralism, as I've said, is being exposed and has been exposed, hasn't it, among the press, among the police, among the

politicians, all over our news just in this last couple of weeks.

All that moral outrage on every side being shown to be a sham. Well, says Jesus, so it is going to be for every single human being, ultimately. The light is going to shine and everything will be exposed.

[10:25] So, real discipleship has got to have a clear perspective about what really matters. and what matters is eternity. That's what matters to Jesus above everything else.

Back in chapter 11, verse 34, if you look there, you'll see that Jesus uses the image of the healthy eye that brings proper enlightenment to our lives and contrasting it with the bad eye, the wrong perspective of life that darkens all of our thinking about everything.

So, he says, your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light. But when it's bad, your body is full of darkness. And he goes on to slate many apparently religious people and says that they're self-deceived.

They're the worst of all worlds because they think that they see the light. But in reality, in fact, they're just totally in the dark about the real things of God because all their focus is just on this present world, says Jesus, and not at all on the eternal world of God's kingdom.

And Jesus says that's short-sighted. In fact, it's worse. It's total blindness. So here you see in chapter 12, he's focusing our eyes on things that are eternal.

[11:45] And only that, says Jesus, can give us true perspective on our present lives. Only when we get that clear, he says, in verses 4 to 12 here, will we be liberated from the fear of men.

Not just from fraudulent moralism, but from fear of other people. From what they think of us.

Because Jesus, you see, he says, is the only judge that matters before God himself.

There'll come a day when everyone will stand before God and the only thing that matters is what Jesus thinks of you, not about anybody else at all. Verse 8 of chapter 12. It's very important.

I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. But the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

So, the only judgment that matters is what God thinks of us, not the fear of what men may think of us. and likewise, in our passage today, he goes on very particularly to focus on the folly of materialism, which is another ever-present danger to all Christian people.

[13:03] That's what verses 13 to 34 are all about. The powerful self-deception of materialism, the blinding, the hardening power of covetousness.

But not only that, he also talks about the power of simple anxiety and worry over just the ordinary things of life, the present-day needs and things that we have in this world, things that seem much more natural to us, but actually, when we are taken up with them, can become equally crippling to our Christian lives, to our lives of discipleship.

And so that's an area that Christian disciples constantly need to be challenged about. And in this section, Luke records Jesus himself teaching his followers two starkly contrasting ways to live their lives in this world.

There's the way of folly that seeks gain, but in the end only loses everything. And there's the way of freedom that seeks real gain only where it will never ever be lost, only in the place of solid joys and lasting treasures.

The way of folly or the way of freedom? Which way are we going to live? I guess that not all of you here this morning are people who would claim to be Christians.

[14:28] Maybe that you've just come here because you're interested in what Christians believe. Although most of us, I guess, here this morning are, or would call ourselves disciples of Jesus. But the interesting thing here in this passage is that Jesus is talking to everybody.

We're told here specifically he's addressing the crowds who were interested in him, who wanted to find out more. Verse 15 tells us that he's speaking directly to them. He said to them the crowd.

Verse 16, he told them this parable. That's the crowds who are coming and just wanting to find out who this Jesus is and what he's teaching. But when we come to verse 22, you'll see that he also turns very specifically to those who are committed disciples and he speaks to them.

And in fact, we'll find that perhaps the sharpest challenge of all comes to his disciples. So what that means is that Jesus has something here to say to absolutely everybody. Whether you're a Christian disciple or whether you're just interestedly wanting to find out what it's all about.

He has something to say to all of us. And I want to summarize it under simply two statements. Jesus teaches us here that you will only be a fool if you live your life for the things of this world. [15:42] That's the message in verses 13 to 21 of this passage of Luke. Live like that, says Jesus, the way that almost all of us do live, whether we're Christian or not, and we will find out in the end that we've been living a way of absolute folly.

Right away in verse 13, you see, we're reminded, aren't we, the power of self-interest and self-deception, even within the professing church. We're a bit shocked at Jesus, I guess, if truth be told.

There's all these seekers, all these disciples, all these people gladly wanting to hear him. And what does Jesus say in verse 1 of chapter 12? Beware hypocrisy. Don't be sham.

Don't come pretending that you're just interested in me and my kingdom. Because the fact is, you're just preoccupied with your own life with something quite different. That's rather shocking, isn't it? It's not a very seeker-friendly approach that Jesus takes there. You'd be rather shocked this morning. My first word of welcome was, welcome to St. George's Tron. Now, don't be a bunch of hypocrites. Why have you come this morning?

[16:50] That's what Jesus says. But he says it because he knows very well that very many people are, although when they're coming to church, looks as though they're really interested in what they're hearing from Jesus, that actually they're very preoccupied with other things.

And that's often the case, isn't it? And we see that here in verse 13 because Jesus, as we've seen from our reading, Jesus is in the middle of a sermon about eternal things, about ultimate things, about heaven and hell, about judgment and forgiveness, about standing before Jesus on the last day.

That's what he's talking about. And this man that speaks in verse 13 shows us very clearly by his words that he's not really listening to that at all.

He is totally preoccupied with something completely different. Right in the middle of this sermon on eternal things, he's taken up with his finances, with his inheritance.

That's the thing that's on his mind. That's what cannot let him go. So he bursts in and interrupts right in the middle of Jesus' sermon about everything that really matters in time and eternity.

[18:04] And he says, tell my brother to share his inheritance with me. My brother's not giving my fair share of the inheritance. And Jesus, I'm sorry, I know this is a very important sermon you're preaching, but let's get down to the really important matter for my life, and that's my brother and his inheritance.

He's like a dog with a bone. He can't leave it behind. And he wants Jesus blessing on his scheme. You tell my brother to share his inheritance with me.

It's a matter of justice, Jesus. Surely you want justice, Jesus. Isn't that what you're all about? It's a very common thing, isn't it? Lots of people are very, very preoccupied with getting Jesus involved in their particular issue of justice in life now.

Surely that's the main thing in your teaching, Jesus. Surely that's what we're saying. Justice now is what matters, Jesus. And especially as far as I'm concerned in my life. Well, that's what this man's saying.

But it doesn't fool Jesus, does it? No, he says, that is not the main thing at all. In fact, what he says to this man is, this is a dangerous preoccupation for your life.

[19:24] This business of your inheritance and what you deserve. Because it's blinding you to reality. It's blinding you to what life is really all about and what really matters. It's stopping you hearing this gospel that I'm preaching.

Beware of that attitude, Jesus says in verse 15. Do you see? Be on your guard against all covetousness. Because that's what that is.

Life's not all about possessions, says Jesus. What he's saying to this man is your whole perspective on life is completely wrong. Now these possessions here that Jesus is primarily referring to in this man's case, of course, is money and wealth.

But he's clearly also implying, isn't he, that anything at all that preoccupies us in life so that it blocks us from seeing the real truth and the real priorities, anything at all like that is just the same.

And friends, many of us I'm afraid do live like that, don't we? Preoccupied with some other matter, maybe a matter of personal injustice. But it prevents us from hearing what Jesus wants us to hear.

[20 : 38] And those people have something in life that they just can't let go of, that they must have, that they won't lose it. Well, it might very well be wealth. Indeed, that is a very powerful motivation, isn't it?

But for others, it's not actually money. It could be some other kind of success, sporting success, academic success, a career, an ambition, whatever it is. Or a relationship, perhaps.

Or maybe a matter of justice, a matter of personal justice, about some kind of injustice that you have encountered, some grievance, something you've suffered.

But whatever it is, it so preoccupies your mind and your heart that it stops you actually grasping reality. It stops you grasping the truth about Jesus and the overriding priority that Jesus has in teaching us about what really matters in life.

That is eternal life. And you see, if we have that preoccupation, what it does is two things. It ruins any peace and any contentment that you can have in this life now, but it also leads us in the end to momentous loss and ruin.

[22 : 01] You see, this chap is clearly consumed by his situation. He's unhappy. He's miserable. He's got no contentment. All his time and energy is taken up with sorting out these material things.

And that is so like, isn't it, our world of consumerism, where the cares, the concerns of life, the worries, the demands of life take up all our thinking, all our waking hours, our pensions, house prices, the budget deficit.

That's constantly being thrown in our face all the time, isn't it? And that's why, I guess, we're such a miserable society most of the time. We are the Prozac generation. Well, it tells you something, doesn't it, about a culture when the two fastest selling drugs in the history of the world have been Prozac and Viagra.

Now, that tells you something about a society. But all that isn't the worst of it. You see, far from it. And that is Jesus' point here in the parable in verse 16 to 21.

You know it very well. It's a very simple parable. Here's a man, says verse 16, who was rich. And he thinks, he thinks that life is all living about the present.

[23 : 17] And he thinks, you see, that he nurtures his soul, he nurtures his soul on material things. Verse 19, I'll say to my soul, I will protect you with wealth.

That's what he's saying. He thinks he's finding security through all of that. Relax. All is well, he says. We'll get these barns absolutely full and then we can eat and drink and relax and be merry.

Is he right? Well, no, he's wrong, isn't he, says Jesus. He's wrong badly on two counts. First of all, that life isn't all about the material.

Material wealth and achievement or whatever it is. None of these things can actually bring him satisfaction. And he's also wrong in thinking that his soul is something that he is in control of.

No, it's not, says verse 21. It's under God's control. And God will require it of him. And that means that what really matters, according to Jesus in verse 21, is not being rich in your barns, but being rich towards God.

[24 : 30] What really counts is investment in eternity. And that's the only thing that's going to matter in the end, says Jesus. And that's the real bite of this parable.

Yes, it's true, wealth does indeed have a hardening power. But wealth itself isn't the problem, according to Jesus. The real issue at heart is that Jesus wants us to see the sheer folly of living for the present, whatever that means.

Living as if this world was ultimate. Living as if this world, not the eternal world, was the focus of our life and the thing that gives perspective to our life in every way. And that's the whole context, isn't it, of this chapter.

It's all about seeing with an eternal perspective. And any preoccupation, whatever it is, that stops us seeing with an eternal perspective is disastrous.

It'll end in misery, but it'll bring us great misery and discontent now. What am I going to do with all my crops, says this man. It's the problem of the material world that's dominating his life.

[25 : 39] Even his success becomes a problem. My barns aren't big enough, I'm doing so well. So it's a problem now, but worst of all, it shows us up to be fools in the end.

And you see, our whole society, friends, colludes in this delusion. The delusion that we're living for the present, for this present moment.

Does it all the time. Our society is living in a constant flight from reality. But it's a sheer self-deception because a day of reckoning will always come.

And that day will show us to be fools. In many ways, that day of reckoning has already come in one sense, hasn't it, for our western countries. Populist government and financial systems have been in delusion over many decades.

Deluding us that things can only get better, that we can get richer and richer, that we can spend money we don't have and borrow from the future. That we can mortgage the future to pay for the present.

[26 : 44] That's what we've been doing. And a day of reckoning is coming rapidly when there's a great crash, where we're shown to be fools, that things that go up can come down.

But you see, we all do that constantly in every way in our lives because we look to the present and not to the future. We think that everything that matters is really the things of this world.

That this world's things, achievements and blessings, will somehow ultimately satisfy us and fulfill us and give us meaning, bring us redemption, whether it's money, whether it's career, whether it's finding the perfect relationship, the marriage we want, the family we want, all of these things.

But hear what Jesus is saying. All of these things, even the good and the best things, all of them are going to fade away one day. Look down to verse 33.

Treasures fail, says Jesus. Thieves remove them. Moths destroy them. I don't know about you, but I have experienced at least the last two of those.

[27 : 53] I've experienced both moths and thieves. Not long after we moved here from London, as you remember, twice our house was burgled and we experienced the reality of things disappearing in the middle of the night.

What a hassle that is. Then a couple of years later we found we brought moths with us from London as well. And the telltale holes were there through all of some of our best clothes.

What a hassle that was. Just the other week I heard from a good friend of how his parents' house had completely burnt to the ground and they lost every single shred of everything that they collected all through their whole life.

Every last photo, every last piece of everything. Utterly irreplaceable, even by the insurance. But Jesus says all these things that we see, everything before your eyes today, one day is going to fade.

It won't be there. Even bodily treasures, even the investments that we might make in having the body beautiful, full of fitness and stamina and all the rest of it, whether it's by health training or whether it's by buttocks or anything else, even that's going to fade.

[29 : 05] I suppose it won't be moths, it'll be worms, won't it? It'll get our bodies. And we can't deny that day of reckoning, can we? You can put it off for a while perhaps with medicine and so on, but like taxes, death is the only other great certainty in life, isn't it?

For Jesus' sake, just be realistic. One day for all of us, our soul will be required of us, says Jesus in verse 20. And all the things that we have lived for, everything that we have in this world is going to be gone.

And that's why Jesus says, very simply, you will be shown to have been a fool if you've just lived your life for the things of this world. If your life's investment is in these treasures and not in the treasures of God.

Now you might be thinking to yourself, well that's alright, that's one in the eye for the rich, but I'm just a student, or I don't have much money, I don't have big barns, I don't have big bank accounts. And maybe you're saying, well I'm a Christian, I'm not a materialist like that.

Well we don't all have barns and big bank accounts, that's true, but we do all have bodies, and we do all have lives in this present world. And notice in verse 22, Jesus turns to his disciples, his closest followers, and he gives them a very strong warning, they who had given up much to follow him, and they who didn't have great bank accounts and barns.

[30 : 38] He says to them in verse 22, don't you be just like that? How can we be like that, Jesus? They might say, that's not fair. Yes you can, even as Christian disciples, you can be like that, says Jesus, by being anxious and worried about the things of this world, even things like food and clothes and ordinary things, never mind great barns and great wealth.

You see what he's saying? He's saying that Christians can and do often actually live very, very like the pagans, focused on the present, desperate to find fulfillment now in the present and the things that we need and things that we think we must have.

But notice Jesus answers that, not by saying to his followers, look you must just be a bit less materialistic than you are, a bit more frugal, don't waste money on food, don't be profligate, don't do these things.

Now that's not what Jesus says at all. Jesus' answer is much more radical than that. Jesus says, when you have a clear perspective on eternity, you won't live for these things in this world at all, not at all.

Nothing in this world is going to preoccupy you. Not even the most basic things in life, not even, verse 23 says, things about food and clothes.

[32 : 01] No, you'll understand, says Jesus, that life is more than food and clothing. You really understand the gospel of the kingdom, says Jesus, you'll be living for a different world altogether, all the time.

You'll be living for eternity. So you see, you'll only be a fool, says Jesus, if you live for the things of this world. But more than that, the second part of what Jesus says is this, you will only be free if you live your life always for the things of the world to come.

Live like that, says Jesus, the way so few of us really do live, even as believers, and you'll discover that that actually is the way to true freedom and to true fulfillment in your life now, today, in this world.

Jesus is saying that if you really grasp the gospel, if you really understand his message, then you will have a totally new perspective about the future, and that will transform your whole view of this world in the present life.

Your eye will be healthy, and so your whole body will be flooded with light, liberating light, light that transforms your whole view of the world now in the present.

[33 : 16] Now, what is that perspective? Well, if you look down to verses 32 and 33, you'll see Jesus states it there very clearly. First, in verse 33, it's the clear understanding that the only thing that's permanent, the only thing that can be relied on and whose treasure is worth having is the kingdom of God, a treasure in heaven that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

Only that treasure in heaven will never fail. Only that treasure in heaven can never be taken away from you. Only that treasure in heaven can never be destroyed.

And therefore, only a life furnished with these things is a life that can find its true fulfillment. In second, verse 32, Jesus says that that has already been given to those of you who trust in me. It's your father's good pleasure, he says, to give you the kingdom, so fear not. See, the only thing that truly lasts, the only thing in life that is really worth having has been given, has been given to followers of Jesus by our heavenly father.

It's been given us already. So when we know that we have already the title deeds of a permanent, lasting home, of an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you, that's how Peter describes it.

[34 : 48] When we know that, and that it's ours, why would we ever, ever want to invest all our energies in something that's merely temporary, that's merely passing? That's what Jesus is saying.

Sure, like me, some of you watch that program on TV, Grand Designs, where Kevin MacLeod looks at all these interesting buildings that are being renovated or built, and I find it quite fascinating. I remember watching it once, and there was a family who were building a dream home, and I think it took them something like two years to build it. They had a marvelous plot of land. I think it was in Wales, a place of beautiful scenery.

But for that two years, while they were building this dream home, they lived in a tiny caravan on the plot of land, just beside where the house was being built. It was messy, it was tatty, it was very frustrating.

The caravan itself wasn't up to much, and it really needed an overhaul. But you see, that family would have been mad, wouldn't they, to invest all their time and effort in sprucing up that caravan and making that caravan as good as it could possibly be?

[36 : 00] Imagine if they had put all their effort into making that absolutely luxury, marvelous caravan with the best view of any caravan in the whole world. But in the end, their permanent home had never been furnished.

They never got into it. They never finished it, because they'd focused all their time and attention on that caravan. Well, you'd say, you fool. And so it is with our lives, Jesus is saying.

We're living for our permanent home, not for our earthly caravan. And only when you see with that perspective will it transform everything about the way that we live in the present now.

First, as Jesus tells us here, we'll understand, he says, that we live in God's sight. That is, that we live now in the care of a heavenly Father who has given us freely his kingdom.

And that is what liberates us. Liberates us from anxiety and from worry about all of the things that we do need in this present world, in this caravan life, if you like. We're not to become ascetics.

[37 : 07] Of course not. Even a caravan needs some provisions. It needs some things, doesn't it? But Jesus says we need not fear. Look around, he says. See how wonderfully God has decorated this present world.

See how wonderfully he cares for it, even though it's just passing. He feeds the birds, verse 24. He decorates the earth with great beauty.

Look at the glory of the lilies, verse 27. Even the withering grass, he says, verse 28, that's here today, gone tomorrow, has a beauty from God, our heavenly Father.

And think, says Jesus, when you look at that, how much more he values you. Verse 24. More than the birds.

Verse 28. Much more than the grass. As you drive home today, and you look at the beauty, lit up in today's lovely summer sunlight, think to yourself of that.

[38 : 10] And listen to Jesus' words. How much more value are you than the birds and the grass and the sunshine and the beach and all of these things? He has given you his eternal kingdom as a home.

He's given his son to death so that you might be his. So much does he love and he care for you. Don't be slaves to anxiety and to worry, says Jesus, about trivial things, food and clothes and daily life.

Don't live like faithless and ignorant pagans who don't know your heavenly Father. Look at verse 30. For the nations of the world seek after these things and your Father knows that you have need of them.

He's your Father. No, verse 31. Trust him. Seek his kingdom that he's promised to give to you and all that you need will be yours.

Yes, it will. Seek these things. Set your heart on these things alone in this world and you'll be miserable in life and in the end you'll lose everything in death.

[39 : 18] But seek what will last, says Jesus, and you'll be liberated now from anxiety and from worry, even from the ordinary things that you do need in life.

Because you know that you're living in the sight of a generous heavenly Father who loves you and who will give abundantly all that you need. And second, when you see with true kingdom eyes, you'll also, says Jesus, know that we live with God's sight.

In other words, we live in the light of the revelation about time and eternity. And that is what liberates us also from covetousness, from greed for things that we don't need in this present life.

We have security of real treasures, says Jesus, that can't be robbed, that can't fail us. And that enables us not to wrongly value treasures that God may give us or may not give us in this life.

Things that are merely passing and fading. It means that we won't pursue them as if they were of permanent value. If we don't have them, we won't covet them. Nor will we cling on to them if we do have them.

[40 : 28] A kingdom perspective, says Jesus, liberates us to be truly generous-hearted people who use our passing wealth and possessions for permanent gain.

Verse 33. Sell your possessions, give to the needy. That's not losing, says Jesus. That is gaining real treasure. Treasure in heaven, he says, that will not fail.

He's not advocating communism. He's not advocating that we should pauperize ourselves by giving everything away so that we need looking after by others.

Of course he's not. That would just contradict so much of Jesus' teaching elsewhere. But he is advocating open-hearted generosity, isn't he? And he says that this does bring reward, treasure in heaven.

Now don't worry, Jesus is not saying we can buy salvation. Of course he's not saying that. He's already said in verse 32 that God has given us the kingdom freely as a gift. But the Bible clearly does, though, talk about reward and loss as well for believers, doesn't it?

[41 : 39] Talks about it in lots of places very clearly. And very clearly here that is what Jesus is saying. We can provide for ourselves treasure in heaven, says Jesus. Now we tend to get edgy about that sort of thing, don't we?

Because we think of rewards as being rather arbitrary and somehow corrupt. We think of big city bonuses. We think of massive bonuses for bankers who then bankrupt their own bank and bankrupt the country.

rewards. But that's not the kind of way that the Bible talks about rewards at all. That's not what Jesus is speaking about here. C.S. Lewis is usually so helpful in talking about this kind of thing. He says we mustn't think about the Bible's understanding of rewards as being arbitrary like that. The kind of arbitrary reward we sometimes give to our children. Look, if you practice your piano every day until the very end of the school term, then at Christmas I'll reward you with a bicycle for Christmas.

That's the kind of way we sometimes do rewards. But noses see us this. That's completely wrong. The reward is, in fact, the fulfillment of the thing itself.

[42 : 46] The real reward for practicing the piano every day for years and years and years is that one day you will be able to play the beautiful music of Brahms and Beethoven and others. That's the reward, isn't it?

And that's the real reward in so many things that really matter in life. It's the fulfillment of the thing in itself. And it's in that sense, you see, that our good works as Christians follow us into glory and into eternity.

We will be, for eternity, what we have become here in this life. What we've become by the investments that we've made in the grace of the kingdom of Jesus.

And we will receive in eternity what we've made ourselves fit for here. The capacity that God's grace has chiseled out of our hearts and our lives to receive his kingdom blessings and responsibilities because we have made them the substance of our life here, now, today.

And that capacity comes more and more as it has taken over from other things, merely passing things in these our earthly lives. that's how we build up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

[44 : 01] You see, friends, it's only when we live with that kingdom perspective, the future of God's eternal kingdom is the only real goal in life that we'll be liberated, that we'll be fulfilled in our lives here in this passing world.

We'll only be free, totally free, now, if we actually live now for the world to come. So let me ask you, are you, are you now discovering that freedom?

Or will you, in the end, be sure not to have been a fool all the way through this life? It's a big question, isn't it? But Jesus says, the only question that really matters.

Well, how do I know if that's the case? How do I know? Well, Jesus' last word in verse 34 really gives the answer, doesn't it? For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Is your heart invested wholly in eternal things, or is it invested in worthless and passing things? And the answer is easily found. Look where your treasure is.

[45 : 16] Look at the things that you really value in life that you couldn't do without. Are there possessions, or positions, or privileges, or people perhaps, relationships, that if you lost them, your entire life would fall apart?

Well, if so, then that is your treasure, isn't it? Is that the case, or is it really true that you could say with the Apostle Paul, I consider everything loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord?

It's a very penetrating question. Where is your real treasure? What is it that really fills your mind? What is it that really fills your diary?

What is it that really empties your pockets? What is it that fills your prayers and your thoughts? Is it Jesus? Is it his people? Is it those still to become his people?

Or is it me? Is it my finances? Is it my family? My career? Only these things. Well, Jesus is saying in this passage to you, whether you're just an interested observer or whether you're a follower of his, he's saying, beware the fraud of moralism, vain religiosity to impress others.

[46 : 40] No, no, it's what God sees that matters, so don't be a fraud. Beware the fear of men. Craven compromise to protect yourself from others, but no, says Jesus, it's only what God can do that matters.

Don't be afraid of men. Beware the folly of materialism, investing in a world that's fading and that will be destroyed.

It's only what God gives that matters and can last, says Jesus, so don't be a fool. Be free. Live for eternity.

Seek the Lord and his kingdom and you will have all these things, everything that you need truly in life now, lovingly provided by a heavenly Father who delights to bless his children.

But you'll have much, much, much more, more than you can ever imagine is possible and you'll have that forever. Don't be a fool.

[47 : 43] Listen to Jesus and live for eternity. God said to him, Fool, this night your soul is required of you and the things you've prepared, whose will they be?

So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God. A fool. But Jesus says, Fear not, little flock, for it's your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with money bags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, our Heavenly Father, we pray that you would indeed turn our eyes and the eyes of our hearts to the treasure of eternity, to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and our King and to his kingdom and therefore to live in this caravan of life, longing and looking for that day of his coming and so living for that day, even now.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.