

GOD IS PLEASED TO GIVE US THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Luke 12:13-34

Key Verse: 12:32

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."

We have been studying the gospel according to St. Luke, part II. As we have studied, Luke, the evangelist and historian, is mainly dealing with the universal truth of God and the absolutes of God. It's amazing that he wrote this 2,000 years ago. But the problems he has dealt with seem as if they were today's story. Today's passage deals with man's greedy-

ness and its consequences, which result in death. This passage teaches us how to overcome anxiety. Most importantly, Jesus teaches us what our true human security and everlasting reward is. May God bless us to learn what the danger of greediness is and what God's true reward to man is.

First, greedy young man (13-21).

Someone in the crowd said, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me" (13). Perhaps his father had died a few days before. To mankind, the most important events are birth, marriage and death. Therefore, this man had to be overwhelmed by sorrow over his father's death and cry a lot. It was time for him to be serious about life. To our surprise, this man was only carried away about his share in his father's inheritance. In short, he was overcome by greed.

How did Jesus answer him? Look at verse 14. "Jesus replied, 'Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?'" When he heard what Jesus said, perhaps this man became as frigid as he could be, thinking that his share of the inheritance might not be obtained. However, Jesus did not say this to brush the man aside, but to help him know the absolutes of God in regard to greed. Jesus saw the deep root of greed in all people through this one man and he turned to the crowd and said, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed..." (15a). What is greed? Well, greed is greed, and these days greediness is largely condoned. Nowadays greedy people are envied and admired openly.

Look at verse 15a. "Then he said to them, 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed....'" First of all, greed is as vital as weeds, which cannot be rooted out even when the most assiduous weeding is being done. In short, we are helpless to remove ever-growing weeds. Likewise, greedy people are helpless because of their greediness.

Greed also leads man to death. There was a king of Samaria named Ahab. He was greedy to get Naboth's vineyard (1Ki 21). Once Ahab mustered his guts and went to Naboth to buy his vineyard. But Naboth refused to sell it, saying, "It is my fathers' inheritance." Then King Ahab went home sullen and angry. He wantonly refused to eat before his wife, sobbing. Soon Queen Jezebel plotted with elders and nobles to kill Naboth. In this way, Queen Jezebel took Naboth's vineyard and gave it to her husband. Then God sent the prophet Elijah to say, "This is what the Lord says: In the place where you killed Naboth dogs will lick up your blood" (1Ki 21:19b). Ahab's tragedy is that he did not know that the result

of greed is death. James 1:15 says, "Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

Jesus said a universal truth in verse 15b. It says, "Man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." It is true that man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. One young man was poor. He could not receive formal education due to his poor family situation. Through many hardships, he could come to understand the rugged American individualism. He wrote many novels based on rugged American individualism. As a result, he received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1954. Soon he became a man of great fame and wealth. But one day he committed suicide with his hunting gun. People say that his suicide was caused by his mental illness. But it is obvious that he was possessed by multi-millions of demons and he was under the torment of the devil. There are many people similar to him. Money cannot solve man's problem.

Greed also leads man to nihilism. Read verses 16-20. A rich fool thought he would be happy if he had material abundance. So he worked hard and became very rich. He stored harvested crops in all his barns until they were full. Finally, he made a happy cry. Look at verse 19. "And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" He thought money was everything. He wanted to enjoy sinful pleasure with money. But his decadent way of thinking reveals his foolishness. First, he made a happy cry, saying, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry" (19). But in reality, his lifestyle was based on nihilism, the premise of which is, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1Co

15:32b). A young man studied architecture. He made some money. Then he became proud. He abandoned God's mission and bought a good house in the suburbs. As soon as he moved into an overly luxurious house for him, he was attacked by liver cancer and died after six months. His wife is in huge debt. She suffers from deep despair and nihilism.

The rich fool did not know what man really is. He also never knew the spiritual world. He worked hard and saved penny by penny. Finally he obtained abundant material wealth. He earned his money through hard toiling. So he should use his money preciously. First, he must use his money for the glory of God. Next, he must use his money for the needy. Finally, for himself and his children. But with his wealth he wanted to only enjoy a pleasure-seeking life. He did not know that his pleasure-seeking life would gradually corrupt him until he looks worse than a leper. He was a fool. He was a man, but he did not know what man really is. 1 Peter 1:24,25a explains what man really is very properly. It says, "For, 'All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.'" Man is both body and spirit. Spirit is everything (Jn 6:63). Those who believe in Jesus have eternal life, the grace of forgiveness of sins, and the peace of God, and the glorious kingdom of God as our inheritance. Amen.

The rich man was blindly selfish. As we studied in the Lord's Prayer (11:2-4), God is our Father and we are all brothers and sisters. Since the rich fool became wealthy, he was supposed to share his great wealth with the needy. But to his eyes, the helpless and the needy were unseen. This man cared for no one. He was like a father tiger, who eats everything all by himself and leaves only bones for his wife tiger and cub tigers. God did

not make man selfish. God made man as a blessing to others. But this man was selfish. He only thought about himself and his money and pleasure. He had no idea to care for the helpless. He had no idea to care for the needy. This selfish man is similar to the notorious tax collector Levi in the New Testament. When we read the Bible, David was wandering with his followers because of King Saul's plot to kill him out of his jealousy. David suddenly became a political criminal. Once, David was in the desert called Carmel. David and his followers protected Nabal's shepherds from raiders to feed their sheep well for a long time. Once David needed some food supply. So he sent some of his men to Nabal for some food. But in his blind selfishness, Nabal said, "Who is David?" He implied that David was a political criminal (1Sa 25:10). David's men were greatly humiliated and came back empty-handed. Soon Nabal heard that David was coming to him. Nabal's heart failed and he became like a stone. God struck him and after several days he died. This story tells us the end of selfish men.

Most importantly, the rich man in the parable was godless. Look at verse 21. "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." This verse indicates that this man lived in the world leaving God out. In short, he was a godless man. Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good." This rich fool did all the evil things a godless man could possibly do. What was worse, he thought he had full command over his life, as if he had created himself. But no sooner did he begin to enjoy his acquisition of wealth and pleasure than God appeared to him and said in verse 20, "You fool! This very night your life will be 'demanded' from you. Then who will 'get' what you have prepared for yourself?" (20)

Second, do not worry (22-26).

Jesus knew that people who live in this world habitually worry about their future security. There are innumerable anxiety patients and those who are suffering from heart disease because of their anxiety. Look at verse 22. "Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear." Jesus knew that they eagerly wanted to be his good disciples but they also worried because others worried. It is common sense for anyone to worry about his future. Why then did Jesus tell his disciples not to worry? It is because worrying makes people form a habit of worrying. What is worse, worrying hinders us from believing in the promise of God.

When Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not worry," he wanted to plant faith in God in their hearts, especially for his chosen ones. Read verses 24-26. "Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?" By telling them a plain story, Jesus set his disciples free from anxiety and helped them to consider the providence of God.

Third, God is pleased to give us the kingdom of God (27-34).

Jesus rebukes his disciples, saying, "O you of little faith!" So Jesus told them a beautiful story. Read verses 27,28. "Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his

splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!" This parable of the lilies teaches that God indeed cares for his children and the world. Jesus told them a beautiful story of lilies so that they might open their spiritual eyes and understand the promise of God. Look at verse 31. "But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well." This is God's promise. St. Matthew valued this promise most. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." May God help us not to worry. May God help us to believe in the promise of God.

How could the disciples overcome their anxiety about the future and seek his kingdom? The disciples accepted the promise of God through Jesus. From then on, instead of worrying, they mastered to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. They sought God until they found him (Dt 4:29). They did their best to please God by believing the promises of God. They lived a life of faith. They strove to expand the territory of the kingdom of God as their mission. When they lived based on the promise of God, God made them successful whatever they did. Like the disciples, we also must hold onto the promises of God absolutely and experience that God's promises are true. With this promise we must encourage others to have faith in God for their salvation.

Man wants reward for his hard work. Probably the disciples unintentionally expected a kind of reward for their future. So Jesus said in verse 32, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." Five dollars is visible. The kingdom of God is

invisible. How can the kingdom of God be their reward? People in the pagan world run around for fame and money as their reward. But they do not know what they are doing. At least they must know God appointed their lifespan. Job 1:21 says, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." Though they came to this world with empty hands and must pass away with empty hands, still these days many people think that they can live in this world forever with money. Many people think money is their reward for their hard work. But money is temporal and spoiling. However, to the precious children of God, the kingdom of God is the true reward. Jesus' people must sell worldly treasures to obtain heavenly treasures, that is, the kingdom of God (33). The kingdom of God is built by the blood of Jesus and it's forever (Rev 5:12). And there are no tears in the kingdom of God (Rev 21:4). Those who believe in the kingdom of God are the children of God. The children of God have eternal life and the grace of Jesus and the peace of God. While on earth, they live as holy pilgrims. May God help us not to worry but believe in the promises of God.