

***Eternity—Don't Leave Earth Without Getting Prepared***  
***(A Study in Luke 12)***

**Prioritize Eternal Treasure over Earthly Things**  
**Luke 12:22-34**

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**Text:** <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> Life is more than food, and the body *is more* than clothing. <sup>24</sup> 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? <sup>25</sup> And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? <sup>26</sup> If you then are not able to do *the* least, why are you anxious for the rest? <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> 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? <sup>29</sup> “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. <sup>30</sup> For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. <sup>31</sup> But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. <sup>32</sup> “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

**Introduction:** We have been studying Luke 12 for the last couple of Sundays. In Luke 12, we have a record of Jesus’ teaching on eternal things. First, Jesus underscored to His disciples the importance of being prepared for eternity. That is, the most important question of your life is where you are going to spend your eternity. From that, Jesus begins to talk about our perspective, our priorities, and our practices in relationship to that eternity. In sum, if we are disciples (followers of Jesus) and our destiny is in Heaven, then we ought to be focused on that eternity while we are here on earth.

As the title of the message suggests, if we are Jesus’ disciples, we must prioritize eternal treasures over earthly things! To help us see the priority, we will consider a comparison, a clarification, and a conclusion.

**The Comparison**

First of all, the text helps us to again make that comparison between eternal treasure and earthly things. The comparison ought to be clear, but because we seem to place such a high value on our earthly possessions, maybe we ought to spell out the comparison once again.

When considering a comparison between the eternal and the earthly, we see that it is a comparison of:

1. Worry Versus Trust—If the priority of our lives is earthly things, there will always be worry. The pursuit of earthly things will always be accompanied with worry. If the pursuit of our lives is eternal rewards, the focus of our lives will be trust. The text gives us several examples of our worry toward the things of this world.
2. Unsafe versus Safe—It is not a matter of “if” our earthly possessions will be lost. They will be lost. Sometimes that happens while we are alive and therefore we live in constant worry that this will happen. Loss of earthly stuff always happens at the point of our death. But with eternal treasure, they are eternally secure. Someone described our eternal rewards as “a reward on deposit with God.” At your bank you have heard of the FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation), but have you ever heard of the real FDIC—the Father’s Deposit Insurance Corporation.<sup>1</sup> Your investment does not depreciate, will not get lost, and cannot be destroyed. That investment will return to you exactly as you deposited it.
3. Temporary versus Eternal—The obvious comparison is earthly things are temporary while eternal treasures are eternal. It just doesn’t make sense that we would spend so much of our effort in light of this comparison.

Suppose a first-century Hebrew is walking alone one hot afternoon. As he walks, he sticks his staff into the ground to keep his balance. With one of those jabs, he hears a “thunk.” Curious, he jabs again. Soon, he is uncovering a chest that is filled with precious stones of every color. But instead of taking the chest, he buries it again. To take it would be stealing. Instead, he decides that whoever owns the field is the rightful owner of everything in the field, including the chest. But, how can he buy the field? He decides to sell all that he has to buy the field. From that moment on, the traveler’s life changes. That chest is the object of every thought. Do you recognize the story? Jesus captured the story in a single sentence. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” (Matthew 13:44)<sup>2</sup>

When we compare the kingdom of this world to the kingdom of God (Heaven) there is no comparison. The kingdom of Heaven is of such value that it ought to become the object of our complete desire. Is that true for you? If people were to look into your life, your priorities, your habits, your spending, your calendar, would they conclude that you are focused on earth or on eternity?

### **The Clarification**

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<sup>1</sup> Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*, Lifeway, 2005, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. pp.1-2.

I know what you are thinking? I know what you are thinking because I have been thinking the same thing as you. You see I have been thinking on this text every day for about a month now. You are thinking, "O.K., so what am I to do? If I am going to be Jesus' disciple and be focused on eternity, not on earth, do I sell all my possession, quit my job, and just trust God? Can I ever buy something that is nice? Can I save money or do I just give it all away to the poor? What do I do? We need some clarification!

***Not a vow of poverty, but a vow of priority!***

The Gospel of Matthew has a word that Luke doesn't give us. Remember that the principle of Luke 12:31 also is part of the Sermon on the Mount that is recorded in Matthew 6:33. Matthew's version goes like this, "But seek *first* the kingdom of God ...." There is the clue to clarifying. It's not that we cannot have material possessions and earthly pleasures, it's just that we cannot get caught up in those things. We cannot try to find the meaning of life in those pursuits but rather we must seek first the Kingdom of God.

We have said that there are three things that last forever: God, the Word of God, and people. We must seek these things first. We must seek these things first with our time. We must seek these things first with our money.

So, how does this play out practically in our finances, for example? I came across this interesting suggestion in my reading preparation for this sermon.

John Wesley, suggested that we entertain four criteria when considering any purchase on ourselves or any member of our families. In this purchase, he asks:

- \* Am I acting as a steward of the Lord's goods?
- \* Am I making this purchase in obedience to the Word of God?
- \* Can I offer up this expense as a sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ?
- \* Do I have reason to believe that this purchase will bring me a reward at the resurrection of the just?

Paul Azinger, professional golfer, was diagnosed with cancer in 1993. He wrote about his experience in these terms. *"The next thing I know, I'm in an x-ray room lying on an ice cold table-shivering from nervousness. It was an awful feeling. As I lay there while the technician adjusted the machines, a genuine feeling of fear came upon me--I could die from cancer. But then another reality hit me even harder--I'm going to die eventually anyway. Whether from cancer or something else, I'm definitely going to die. It's just a question of when. In that same moment, something Larry Moody, the man who leads our Bible study on the PGA Tour, has said to me many times came to mind: "Zinger, we're not in the land of the living going to the land of the dying. We're in the land of the dying, trying to get to the land of the living. "My major championship, my ten victories before that, everything I had accomplished in golf became*

*meaningless to me. All I wanted to do was live. I don't know how successful you are. I don't know how big your house is, how much money you have, or how nice your car is. But I'm telling you, we came into this world with nothing and we're leaving with nothing. And everything we get along the way is a blessing from God. If you're finding your contentment and happiness in your accomplishments or from the amount of money and possessions you own, I'm here to tell you, it doesn't last. I've made a lot of money since I've been on Tour, and I've won a lot of tournaments. That happiness is always temporary. The only way you will ever have true contentment is in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I'm not saying that nothing ever bothers me and I don't have problems, but I feel like I've found the answer to the six-foot hole. I know I'll spend eternity with God. And I have a promise that as a child of God, He'll help me deal with anything. He promises to give me contentment no matter what life brings—even cancer. God did not intend for this world to be the best of all possible places. But it's a place where we can prepare for the best of all possible places.”<sup>3</sup>*

So, someone might say, “O.K., so to follow Jesus means I just forget about everything else. NO! Listen to these concluding words from Azinger.

*People often ask me now, "Zinger, is golf still as important to you as it was before you had cancer?"*

*Yes and no. Yes, of course, golf is important to me. I love the game; it is how I make a living. But no, golf is no longer at the top of my priority list. You won't hear me out on the course, saying, "Woe is me. I missed that four-footer, but at least I'm alive." Oh, no. I'm playing to win. But then, in many ways, I have already won.*

In business, in our family, in our church, we must seek first His Kingdom.

## **The Conclusion**

Finally, this text gives us a conclusion that sort of puts the exclamation point on this message. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” I think it is a good and true principle to say that where your heart is, that’s where you will put your money. But, Jesus said the exact opposite of this in this particular context. Did you catch that? “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” As you make an offering to God through the local church, you are going to have a keen interest in the ministry of that church. As you make an offering to God to a ministry, you are going to have a keen interest in that ministry. As you make an offering to God through a missionary, you are going to have more than just a passing interest in that missionary. The same is true as you place your financial resources in the things of this world. For example, if you buy stock in a certain company, you are going to be interested in the decisions of that company. You are going to have an interest in their successes and failures. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Azinger, “Facing Death,” originally published in *The Links Letter*, January 1995.

Right before this concluding word, there is a word that seems almost out of place. It is that word in verse 32 to not fear. But, that encouragement is not out of place at all. Jesus knew that to seek His kingdom first would cause a great many of us to fear. Don't fear; go for it! Decide that you are finished with making the things of this world your first priority. Seek His Kingdom first.

Missionary David Livingstone did. Livingstone was a missionary first to China and then to Africa. He spent 30 years in Africa. He believed it was his mission to pave the way for other missionaries to go to Africa. He stayed through great hardship. Upon his death, some of his close associates cut out his heart and buried it in Africa before returning his body to be buried in Westminster Abbey. Fitting, I think, for someone who gave his heart for Africa to have his heart buried in Africa.

If you died today, where would be the most appropriate place for your loved ones to bury your heart?