**God Is Pleased To Give Us His Kingdom**

Key Verse Luke 12:32 – *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”*

In today’s passage, Jesus teaches His disciples how God graciously provides for all our needs in this life to the extent that He gladly offers His kingdom as well. Furthermore, through both parables and examples from nature, Jesus illustrates how our acknowledgement and dependence on the Lord enables us to overcome the power of greed, the many worries we all have in life and serves as a template for how we should properly view our material needs. I pray through this passage we may entrust all our needs (material, physical and spiritual) to our Lord who truly knows our every need.

**Part 1 – The Parable of the Rich Fool.**

From last week’s message, Jesus warned his disciples and the assembled crowd to guard their hearts against the “yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” because in the end, all things that seem hidden will be revealed (1-2). Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for how the appeared outwardly spiritual and holy but their hearts were full of pride and self-righteousness. These two sins are often the hardest ones to see in ourselves and cloud the way we view ourselves and our situation. So it is quite interesting that just as Jesus concluded his rebuke, a man in the crowd called out to Jesus with a request; **“Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”** Even though we do not know the exact details, it is safe to assume that this man did not feel he received his “rightful” portion of the inheritance from his brother. The man must have seen himself as a victim of a grave injustice and hoped he could gain Jesus’ support or have Jesus use his authority as a rabbi to rule in his favour. However, while this man saw himself as a blameless victim, Jesus knew what was in his heart and saw him for who he truly was.

Let us read verses 14 and 15 together – “Jesus replied, **“Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.””** The main issue here was not the inheritance but how the power of greed had taken hold of him. Jesus delivers a very stern warning because for greed is one of the worst sins of all. Greed is desiring anything more than we actually need it. Greed is another form of idolatry (Colossians 3:5)*.*When it comes to greed, the word “enough” does not exist. Whether is it power, knowledge, food, pleasure or anything else under the sun, greed makes us divert all our time, energy and strength for the sole purpose of gratifying our sinful desires. Yet even though it comes in many forms, Jesus primarily warns against greed that leads to us accumulating and placing our worldly security on our possessions.

To illustrate this, Jesus teaches them though a rather interesting parable. May we read verses 16-20 together – **““The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’”**

Let us break down the parable a little further. The Rich Man experienced a harvest so bountiful he had no idea what to do, so his conclusion was to tear down his old barns to build bigger ones and store the crops so could enjoy the fruits of his labour for years to come. This very much sounds like our modern-day dream of winning the lottery or, more realistically, saving enough money for us to go into early retirement. Unlike the Prodigal Son from another parable who spent all his wealth the moment he received his inheritance, this Rich Man had his eyes on the future. While this looks prudent and wise to most of us, God talks directly to the Rich Man and calls him a fool. Biblically speaking, a fool is someone who is morally degenerate and has a broken value system but worst of all deny the existence of God in their own life. As Psalms 14:1a states **“The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.””** Look at the number of times the Rich Man uses first-person pronouns in those very few verses. There was not a single mention of God or a word of praise and thanksgiving to God for blessing him so abundantly. In his own godless self-absorption, the Rich Man views all this as his own doing, seeking to keep it all to himself instead of offering it to those who were truly in need. And this is probably why God demanded the Rich Man’s life the very moment he already had his future all planned out.

When we do not acknowledge the Lord for all His many blessings, we are no different from the rich fool who only sought security in this life through his own possessions. While he tried to keep his body safe, his spirit was darkened so badly by greed that he could not give thanks to God. Our lives are not measured by the earthly possessions we obtain but by the spiritual relationship with Him. When we truly seek the Lord, we receive the great gift of His presence within us that far exceeds whatever happiness or refuge worldly possessions may offer. When have the Lord within us, we realize that we already have everything we need in life; and that is Jesus. I pray we may learn from this parable to always give thanks to the Lord for all our blessings in life and to not allow them to take the place in hearts reserved only for Him.

**Part 2 – Do Not Worry; Trust in God & Seek His Kingdom**

Jesus focuses more on His disciples and addresses the problem of “worrying”. The disciples had already left everything behind to follow Jesus, so they may not have struggled as much with greed. But we have seen on many occasions how prone they are to worrying. Jesus addresses them in verses 22 and 23 by saying, **“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.”** When Jesus says this, he is not telling His disciples that they should stop caring about eating or hygiene or clothing. What Jesus wants is for them to see these important everyday concerns in the right perspective i.e. with the knowledge that the Creator takes great care of us. Jesus asks His disciples to think about the ravens and the lilies. May we 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 your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”** Ravens are scavengers. They cannot hunt. They neither produce nor store food. There is nothing they can do for God yet God provides for them as well as for all life on earth. So how much more will He provide for us whom He made in His very own likeness? As for the lilies, God clothes them with beauty that not even King Solomon could measure up to. Yet greater still, when we really have God with us, He elegantly clothes us both outwardly and inwardly. Through these two examples, Jesus shows up how much God cares for each and every one us by showering us with His many blessings.

All the worrying that occupies our minds will not add a single hour to our lives. It can lead people to experience serious health issues, illnesses and even death. Then, what benefit does it give? None. We gain nothing from worrying. So why then do we worry? It is rooted in taking God’s responsibility upon ourselves because we have no faith in Him. Instead of recognizing God as our Creator and Provider, we put ourselves in His place. We cannot be God so when we put ourselves in God’s place in our own lives, we do nothing but worry. Thus, we should regard worrying as a warning sign. It means we are not humbly entrusting our needs or concerns to God and our hearts are further away from Him. Look at the last words of verse 28. **“O you of little faith!”** Jesus reveals how our worries begin to creep into our mind and spirit when we have little faith in God. Have you ever noticed the difference between little children and adults in their eyes? You see all kinds of worry in the eyes of older people, but joy, happiness and trust in the eyes of little children. Little children trust their mothers, fathers or teachers and authorities such as police and firemen. They have faith in the sense that whatever they need and whatever problem comes up, someone will take care of it. So how much more does our Heaven Father provide for us when we put our faith in Him? Even with the little faith we have in Him, He lavishes upon everything that make up our lives.

May we read verses 29 to 31 together please; **“And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”** Because Jesus frees us from pursing earthly security, He urges us as His disciples to seek the kingdom of God. Simply put, seeking God’s Kingdom is desiring and placing God first above all others. It means talking to God Himself through prayer, knowing Him more through studying His Words, and obedience to His commands. It means growing our inner beings in His image and to reveal His glory to the people around us. It means leading others to know God and to live for His purpose. Ultimately it is to restore God’s rightful reign over all mankind and over the world so that it may become paradise once more and forever, just like what it says in the Lord’s Prayer; **“Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.”**God’s utmost desire is that everyone may be saved through His Son Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:9) To seek His kingdom means to share His desire, and participate in His work of salvation of all people on earth.

May we read our key verse for today together please; **“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”** To say God is pleased when we seek His kingdom feels like an understatement. God is thrilled and overjoyed when we seek Him and when we ask for His providence for we trust Him as our Father just as a child trusts in their parents. Often times, we do not even bother to ask. When we do ask, we do so half-heartedly, expecting as little as possible from Him so that our hopes do not get broken yet God is so pleased He offers Himself to us as the main prize and everything else that comes with it as a bonus. As Romans 8:32 says, **“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”**

During my lengthy job search I worried so much over two things; money and having to go back to school. I sent out so many resumes to the point where I completely lost track of all the job boards and employment websites I became a member of but did not receive any response whatsoever. There were even times when both my debit account had a negative balance and my credit card was over the limit at the same time because any money I made went towards paying bills and OSAP. Yet every day and every month, the Good Lord provided me with enough to get by. Because I am such a self-reliant person, God probably used to time as an opportunity to teach me dependence on Him and His great providence just like in the Lord’s Prayer; **“Give us today our daily bread.”** But one of things that stuck with me the most was a section from Psalm 37, namely verse 4, **“Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”** This does not mean God would give me everything I wanted but that when I find my joy in Him, He gives me what my heart desires, which is Jesus Himself. He enabled me to endure many discouragements along the way which made to moment when I finally got the job all the more joyous. Praise God.

In today’s passage how pleased God is to give us His Kingdom, which is another way of saying Himself. We have so much to be thankful for and that Jesus frees us from the worries in our lives. I pray that no matter situations we are faced with in future, we may entrust them all to the Lord who readily lavishes all of Himself upon us.