

Luke 12:22-34; I Peter 1:3-6; Pursuing Treasures in the New Year I. The Command II. The Reason III. The Benefit

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, tis the season to mark new beginning. We celebrate a New Year as a community- I have now been with you for 3 years as your pastor- and we are welcoming new elders and deacons into our church. It is common at the beginning of a New Year to make resolution- and the top 3 resolutions are 1- to eat healthier; 2- to exercise more; and 3- to save more money. This third resolution concerning money gets at the heart of our passage for today- the pursuit of lasting treasures. We are also at the end of the Christmas season- instead of worrying about the parties and the present- now we start to worry about the bills as we have to pay for everything we purchased! In this season of resolution and worry Jesus comes to remind us of God's promises. The context in Luke 12 which we considered a few weeks ago is that of the Parable of the Rich Fool. Remember the man who was so rich he had to build bigger barns but remained poor towards God? He neglected his soul in the pursuit of ease. If Greed says- you cannot get enough- Worry says- I will not have enough. Well- today we see that Jesus Christ commends the pursuit of lasting treasures.

I. The Command

We start with the commands given by Jesus. Throughout these verses there is a repeated emphasis on denying- forsaking or rejecting a certain kind of thinking. Jesus is telling us not to do something. He starts in v. 22- do not be anxious. Do not worry- do not give any thought to- do not spend any troubled time on. Well- what are we not to worry about? Well- we are told not to worry about anything really! The fact is- worry is a sign of small or weak faith. To be anxious about the things of this world is to display the thinking of this world! So do not worry about your life. Do not be anxious about your job, retirement- how many years you have left. Do not set your heart on food or drink. Do spend your time in caring about tomorrows meals. Neither set your mind on cloths or shelter- or the needs of your body like your health or the state of your wealth. Jesus is speaking to all areas here. Do not be filled with the concerns about the things of this life. He

continues in v. 29- do not seek- do not pursue or go running after what is fading and passing. Again- do not worry- do not have a doubtful mind that is stretched thin and always churning. And one more time in v. 32- do not fear. Do not be afraid for the future, nor let your mind and heart be troubled. The fact is, anxiety, fear, and worry are signs of doubt. Do we think that God can and will provide? How many of us here have not spend hours at night tossing and turning- worrying about what might be only to find out that God had it all well under His control! Not only is worry bad for your health- it displays a worldly thinking! So do not fret! Instead of worrying- Jesus gives us positive command in v. 33. Instead of hoarding and scheming like the rich fool- Jesus tells us to give it away! Be generous- give to those in need! Note the contrast- instead of spending time and thought about the gathering, acquiring- saving and spending on your own desires- give it up and give it away! This is a clear application- if you are filled with worry about something- how about selling it! If you are worried about how to spend and save- give your money away! You see- faith frees us to be generous- to give to the Lord and His church- thus we become rich towards God! Godliness with contentment- a cheerful giving- proves the right position and attitude of the heart! If a possession is a source of constant care- sell it- Jesus says! It seems so simple and yet it is so profound! Do you need to build bigger barns for your crops or your cars? Give them up and notice how your fears subside!

II. The Reason

Well- what is the reason behind this radical change? Why should we not fear- what reasons motivate us to move from greed to generosity- from fear to faith? Jesus continues by giving us multiple reasons why our worry is misplaced. The first is found in v. 23- you need not worry about food/ drink and clothing because life is about more than these passing, surface things. Or as He said in v. 15- your life does not consist in the abundance of things! What is life all about? What is the purpose of your entire being? Will a bigger house make you a better Christian- will more expensive cloths make you a better servant of the Lord? Will driving a more expensive car secure a safe arrival? To be clear, Jesus is not saying you can't have a new car or house. But He is saying- these things are not the purpose of life! The point of your being here- the reason you are on

this earth is not to get more than others! The fact is, worry is connected to greed and mistrust! Greed focusses on the passing while neglecting the eternal. Worry stunts spiritual growth! So if gathering things is not the purpose of life- if you were created to be more than a consumer- what is the purpose of life? To be rich towards God! To glorify God and enjoy Him! To bring glory to the One who truly deserves it! God wants us to delight in Him- and to choose to worship Him with our being is to choose what is better! Obeying His commands because His way is best! The fact is- human nature tends to see God as a mean or reluctant giver. We think God is holding out on us! Either we respond with legalism- trying to obey God to get something from God. Or with antinomianism- doing what we want and neglecting the Law- because we think we know what is best! But the Christian seeks to obey God because God is good- loving and kind! We want to obey God's Law because we believe God knows what is best for us! We respond with faith and grateful obedience! So the 2nd reason we do not fear and we are generous is because we have a right view of God! What is God like in v. 31- He is a loving Father who knows what we need! And in v. 32- He is a generous and benevolent Father who delights to give us the kingdom! It is His desire and delight to give us true- perfect riches- His promised gift! The antidote to fear- to the scrooge and schemer- is to acknowledge what is true about God! Just look at how He takes care of the raven and the flowers of the field! He is your loving Father- you are His beloved child! So the opposite of worry and anxiety is faith- it is a child-like trust in the Father who is the fount and source of every good and perfect gift! And this faith is built on sound logic- Your Father is loving- you are worth much more than birds and flowers to Him- He knows your needs- He has promised you a heavenly kingdom. And if you think about it- worry is quite useless anyways. Worry inhibits action and fills your belly with stones. You can't change anything by worrying about- you can't even add a minute to your life or a dollar to your bank account by fretting! So why do it? Rather focus on who your heavenly Father is! The way to be free from anxiety is to resist the desire to covet- and to be thankfully confident in God!

III. The Benefit

So finally we come to the benefit! Your father has promised to provide everything you need. He will give you food, drink, clothing and shelter as long as you are called to walk upon this earth. And He will add His blessing to that which He gives so that you have the strength to do what you are called to do! So pray- give us this day our daily bread. And then leave that request in the able hands of your loving, heavenly Father. The first benefit is a calm and quiet soul. As Christians, we need not live in a constant state of anxiety- we need not fear the future- because our God holds that future and all things must come to us from His loving hands- and will be worked out for our good! That is good news we all need to hold close to our hearts! Faith says- He knows- He has never failed me yet- and He will provide! By the Spirit, we learn to place our full faith in Christ to save- and depend on the Father to provide- thus our hearts become calm and we can truly and rightly enjoy the blessings He sends us in this life! The second benefit is found in v. 33- those who are rich towards God will receive a reward that cannot be lost- an inheritance that will never wear out or grow thin. When we seek first the kingdom of God- we get the kingdom of God as v. 31 says! We have an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading as we read from I Peter 1! The joys and delights such as no eye has seen, and no mind can even comprehend or imagine! The very thing we delighted in- God and His glory- is the treasure we receive- being welcomed by God into His glory! What is the benefit of a godly contentment- of a faith fueled generosity – of a quiet heart that depends on God for all things? The benefit is a calm heart in this life and future glory in the life to come! Let that be your desire for this next year!

To conclude, of all things we can pursue in this next year, let true treasures be your chief pursuit! Why not give away what you cannot keep in order to gain what cannot be lost! As I have said before, if you think that this world has more to offer- then by all means pursue passing things. But if you know that the treasures of this world do not last- then set your heart on things above where God is! Then you will be truly rich today and forever! Jesus Christ commends the pursuit of lasting treasures. So seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness- knowing that all these other things will be added to you!