

Luke 12:22-34 home group questions

By Phil Bailey

Theme: God promises to provide our basic needs, so we can invest in his eternal kingdom.

Aim: Do not worry about basic needs; trust God to meet them.

Then, instead of storing up earthly possessions, use them to bless neighbours now (especially the poor) and invest in more permanent treasure in heaven.

Summary:

Jesus calls us to seek first God's kingdom instead of storing up possessions on earth (see verses 13-21) and worrying about our own basic needs. So he starts with 5 reasons to trust that God will meet our basic needs:

- 1) There is more to life than food and more to the body than clothes (v.23) – not least that we are made in God's image, so we find our core identity and purpose in representing him on earth, ruling over the other animals – not just copying them!
- 2) God feeds unclean birds like ravens, so how much more will he feed his image bearers (v.24)!
- 3) Worry is a waste of time and energy (vv.25-26). It doesn't generally prolong or enrich our lives; it makes them poorer (mentally and emotionally at the very least).
- 4) God clothes wild meadow flowers with surpassing beauty, even though they are here today and gone tomorrow. How much more will he clothe us (vv.27-28)?
- 5) We are not pagans, but children of a loving heavenly Father who knows our needs before we ask (v.30). So why would we run around after food and clothes like headless chickens as if God wasn't real or didn't care?

Instead of worrying, we can seek God's kingdom. At a basic level, that means submitting our lives more fully to the reign of his king, Jesus, and calling others to enter the kingdom too. But there is one particular way that Jesus focuses on in this passage: 'sell your possessions and give to the poor' (v.33). When we give up money and/or possessions in order to help the poor, we are seeking the kingdom in both its 'now' and its 'not yet' senses. In the 'now', we show the presence of God's kingdom and the goodness of his reign on earth, by reflecting his own concern for the poor (that concern is clearly seen in passages like Luke 6:20-26 and James 1:27-2:12; see also 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 for the reason why God chooses mainly those who are insignificant in the world's eyes). But when we cash in earthly treasure and give to the poor, we are also investing in the kingdom in its future, 'not yet' sense, by storing up treasure in heaven and the new creation (v.33). God, his lavish generosity, wants to reward the sacrifices we make for him! And our investment in heavenly treasure is utterly secure, because he is *well pleased* to give us the kingdom (v.32).

Questions:

- 1) What do you treasure most in your life (v.34)? Does this reveal an area for fresh repentance and growth in faith?
- 2) Which of Jesus' reasons not to worry do you need to take to heart the most? How could you help each other with that?
- 3) How might your approach to money and possessions change if you trusted God more to provide?
- 4) Assuming that most of us rarely sell anything to give to the poor, what holds us back?
- 5) How do Jesus' words in vv.31-33 encourage you to grow in zeal for his kingdom (including willingness to sell possessions for the poor)?
- 6) You might like to discuss the paper Phil circulated on some Biblical priorities in giving to the poor. How could you individually or MRC as a whole keep hold of these priorities and act on them?