

Christian, the True Treasure is Already Yours!

- I. The world chases temporary treasures
- II. The Father gives eternal treasure

*(Luke 12:29-34) And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. {30} For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. {31} But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. {32} "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. {33} Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. {34} For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Tell me, does anyone recognize the two guys on the screen? Even if you don't know their names, you maybe recognize what TV show they're on. The name of their show, on the History Channel, is what? Yes, American Pickers. This is Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz from American Pickers. I like that show. I don't get to see it a lot because it's on cable TV, but I love the storyline. Two guys traveling the United States looking in old barns and dusty attics, picking through endless piles of junk, all in search of that one-of-a-kind item, that rare find, that real treasure. And of course, just to prove what a great deal they got on it, at the end of each segment, they'll list what they paid for each item and what they hope to sell it for.

I don't know about you, but I kind of envy those guys. To have the ability to sort through old stuff and determine which piece has the most value, to be able to distinguish what is trash and what is treasure—I wish I had that skill set. Maybe you feel the same way. Actually, you do have that skill set. God has given you the ability to identify true treasure. No, maybe it's not the ability to identify treasure in an old storage shed. Rather, God has given you the ability to identify treasure in your life. When God worked saving faith in your heart, when he called you to be a follower of Jesus, he gave you the us the ability to know what real treasure looks like when it's been given to you. Or to put it another way, Jesus' followers know where to find true treasure.

In our text for today, Jesus speaks about some of the various forms of treasure that people in our world are looking for in life. He talks about what happens when people can't properly distinguish what is true treasure and what isn't. And the underscores that believers have already been given the greatest treasure of all. Our theme for today is simply this:

Christians, the true treasure is already yours!

We'll look at that from two angles. On the one hand,

- I. The world chases temporary treasures.
- But, II. The Father gives eternal treasures.

Our text for today is actually connected to the parable that Pastor Zank preached on last week, the parable of the rich fool who was only concerned about building bigger barns so that he could store up more things for himself. That man wasn't concerned about God's eternal treasures. He was fixated on his own earthly treasures. Treasures which, of course, were all taken away from him the moment 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?"*

If you think about it, that man personifies the thinking of a lot of people in our world today, doesn't he? This idea that our goal in life is to gather, yes to hoard up, as much earthly treasure as possible, to focus our attention on things that only serve as temporal bodies on this side of the grave.

Now, please don't misunderstand Jesus' parable. Is Jesus saying that it is wrong to store up earthly possessions? Is he saying it's wrong to have some extra clothes in the closet or a refrigerator or pantry with plenty of food in it? Is he saying that it's wrong to save up for retirement? No, Jesus not saying that. Is Jesus saying that it's a sin to be wealthy? No, sometimes God makes even believers very wealthy. Think of people like Abraham or Job or King Solomon. God gave all those men an abundance of material possessions.

No, the problem arises when people set their hearts on their material treasures. When they begin to think, "If I have enough food to eat, plenty of clothes to wear, a nice car to drive, and a house to live in, and a fair-sized retirement account, then I'll be just fine. Then my heart can be at rest. Then I'll be able to say (with the rich fool), now I can... *"take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."*

But you see, that's the way the world thinks. It sets its sights on the here and now, the things you can see and touch and taste. It thinks in terms of "What will bring me satisfaction, fulfillment, pleasure, on this side of the grave?"

And if we're honest with ourselves, we'll admit that there's a little voice inside of each one of us that says the same thing. We all have a sinful nature that tempts us to see our lives only in terms of our bodily needs, what we eat or what we drink or what we wear. But those are all so temporary. Those are not eternal treasures. That's why Jesus says in the opening words of our text, namely, *"Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink."* Why not? Well, Jesus says, because that's what the unbelievers do. Jesus puts it this way, *"For the pagan world runs after all such things."* Did you catch those two verbs there? "Do not set your heart on such things" and "the pagans run after such things? Those both come from the same Greek root word. It means to seek or to strive or to desire. It's talking about what's in here. Don't set your hearts on merely material things.

Now, someone might say, "But shouldn't I be concerned about what I'm going to eat or drink? Don't I have to work to make sure there's something on the table? Yes, but notice that Jesus says here in our text, *"Do not worry about it."* You see, there's a big difference between thinking and planning about how you are going to put food on the table, and on the other hand, worrying whether God will provide what you truly need. One is good stewardship and the other is a lack of faith.

And let's be honest. Sometimes, that's exactly what we do. We worry. We worry about whether we've got enough to pay the bills, or how long our health is going to hold out, or how long our loved ones will be around. When we focus on all those temporary treasures, we end up feeling stressed out, yes even afraid—which is exactly why Jesus says what he does here in our text. Jesus knows what we're going through. So what does he say? *"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."*

Yes, while I. The world chases temporary treasures, II. Your Father gives you eternal treasures. Let's take a little closer look at Jesus' words. He begins, *"Do not be afraid."* That's in response to all the times that were tempted to worry, all the times we're afraid that God is not going to meet our needs. But what does Jesus say? *"Seek his kingdom and all these things (namely all the physical things you need) will be given to you as well."*

Now go back to Jesus words. *"Do not be afraid, little flock."* That's a reminder that you

have a good shepherd, who laid down his life for you, one of his precious sheep. But not only do you have a shepherd; you have a Father, *your Father* in heaven. Not some impersonal roulette wheel controlling your fate, but a Father who knows you personally and loves and cares for you as his own dear child. It's that Father who "*has been pleased.*" The Greek word there is "eudokeo." It means "to have good thoughts toward," or "to feel good about," In effect, God has enjoyed doing what, he has been pleased to do what? "*To give you the kingdom.*" Not sell you the kingdom, not make you earn a spot in the kingdom, but GIVE you the kingdom

Now, before we defined exactly what the kingdom is, I want you to notice something. Notice that Jesus doesn't use the future tense here. He doesn't say that God will someday be pleased to give you the kingdom. No, this is past tense. He's talking about something that has already happened. God has already been pleased to give you the kingdom. That helps us define what Jesus means by the kingdom. Jesus is not saying merely that "Someday, dear Christians, God will take you into heaven. No, what Jesus is saying here is that God has already brought you into his kingdom. You are in his kingdom right now, the kingdom of grace. By the washing a holy baptism, or by the power of His Word, God the Holy Spirit has established his kingdom in your heart, and brought you into his Kingdom, the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints.

Do you realize what that means? It means that all the things that really matter, I mean the things that matter for more than your body here on Earth, but that matter for your body and soul for eternity—they are all already yours in Christ. Think of those eternal treasures: 1. The knowledge that your sins are forgiven. God's holding nothing against you. 2. The assurance that nothing can separate you from God's love—not death, or famine or danger or nakedness or sword. 3. The confidence that whatever happens in your life, God is going to use it for your good. 4. The certainty that when you breathe your last breath, you're going to be with Jesus in heaven.

My friends, those are the real treasures in this world. Treasures that the unbelieving world doesn't see, treasures they don't appreciate. They can't distinguish trash from treasure. But by God's grace, you can. God has opened your eyes to see the true treasure he's given you in Christ. And really, it's that knowledge, that appreciation of true, eternal treasures that changes our attitude about the temporary treasures that God gives. Isn't that right? I mean, when we know we have eternal treasures, it allows us to kind of loosen our grip on the earthly treasures. It gives us the freedom to do what Jesus says in our text, namely, "*Sell your possessions and give to the poor.*" Notice, Jesus doesn't say, "Sell everything you own and take a vow of poverty." He's simply saying, "Hang on to your eternal treasures and share your temporary treasures."

Ultimately, knowing what your true treasures are makes all the difference in the world. This past week I had the chance to stand beside a man who is dying. Things looked bleak for him. He was in pain. His family was hurting. What would I say to him in that situation? I simply told him what Jesus had already told him and told you and me, too. "*Do not be afraid, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.*" That man knew what real treasure looks like. And now, by God's grace, so do you. God has given you true treasure in Christ. Cherish it, in life, and death and forever. Amen.