

Part one of a two week sermon series:
SET YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE

8/4 **Luke 12:13-22** – when times are good and we're too relaxed

8/11 **Luke 12:23-34** – when times are bad and we're too anxious

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. Amen. (1 Peter 1:3-4)

Beginning with this Sunday, we will consider a two part series drawn from Luke chapter 12. In this chapter from Luke, Jesus addresses the preoccupation over earthly prosperity and security. He does so in two ways – He first addresses those who have things go exceptionally well and become spiritually complacent; He then addresses those who have things go exceptionally poorly from an earthly standpoint and become overly anxious about the future. In both instances, Jesus draws us back to the middle ground where our security is found only in Him.

That first portion which the Holy Spirit uses to lead us to SET OUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE comes from,

Luke 12:13-21 ¹³ Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴ But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵ And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." ¹⁶ Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. ¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' ¹⁸ So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' ²¹ "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

A 401K for Your Soul

1. Investing in myself leaves my soul eternally broke
2. Investing in Christ leaves my soul eternally rich

In Jesus name dear fellow redeemed,

Growing up my parents kept a vacation jar. Back in the days when you bought things with paper money you would begin to accumulate amounts of coinage. My parents would save this in a glass jar until vacation time and then we would use it toward something special while on vacation. Just what are your investment goals? Do you have a piggy bank of sorts? Are you something you are saving up for something special?

The world answers such questions much differently than Christians. Our culture is built around goals that include not just a family vacation, not just saving for something special, not just living comfortably; our culture wants to live extravagantly. The American dream is not just to build a barn to store the crops that will feed your family, but to build bigger barns ... barns big enough to hold extra toys and gadgets, an extra car, a boat, an addition on the house, a bigger house, a retirement that includes a golf membership and weekly spa treatments. How easily greed is turned into glamour. But the issue being addressed in our text is not really about the money or how rich you are financially. We're talking about your soul's investments. Where is your eternal interests accumulating? What is the status of your soul's 401K?

1. Investing in myself leaves my soul eternally broke

13 Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

What does my brother owe me and what can Jesus do about it? Our natural man is interested in nothing else than the earthly satisfaction it can get for itself in this world. Even so-called Christian teachers have turned this into a spiritual marketing strategy. Preachers like Joel Osteen make it a theological agenda to help you meet earthly goals and promise you earthly satisfaction. So also much of the charismatic movement is built around this. They will tell you that if you pray hard enough and believe strongly enough, you can make that Toyota turn into a Mercedes.

14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?"

Jesus is no earthly judge. He does not come to show you how to better serve yourself; He comes to show you how He can better serve you. He does not come to give you what your heart desires; He comes to remove what your heart desires. He is not here today to answer questions about your earthly retirement; He is here today to answer questions about your eternal retirement.

Notice how this man in our text is already rich to begin with. For him to bigger his barns was to concern himself with only making himself more comfortable, more extravagant. *17 He thought within Himself.* He pondered. He reasoned. He calculated. This is what Jesus expresses when He says: "He thought." We should not think that just because we are not rich going on richer that this does not apply to us. In

our pondering, reasoning, calculating, where do the needs of our soul factor in? How much time do we spend thinking within ourselves about satisfying our earthly needs or sinful urges compared to the time spent pondering the needs of our soul.

19 Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Is this statement true? Can we invest enough, plan enough, store up enough goods to make our soul secure? Literally it says, “relax, eat, drink, and celebrate!”

Where sin lies is not in the relaxing, the eating, the drinking, nor in the celebrating. The sin does not lie in the riches he possesses either.

1 Timothy 6:9–10 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Notice how Paul is not primarily focused on riches or money, but on the desire to be rich, the love of money, and the distraction such earthly things provide. This is not about saving for a vacation. This is not about investing in retirement. This is about the attitude of the heart. This is about a false sense of security in something other than God’s good grace.

Greed dulls our senses. Either we suppose that a powerful government, a big bank account, a careful financial plan will secure our soul from evil; or we suppose that lack of these things is the reason why I’m unhappy or not going to be safe.

As Luther puts it in his commentary on the 1st commandment - "This is the most common idol on earth. He who has money and possessions feels secure [Luke 12:16-21] and is joyful and undismayed as though he were sitting in the midst of paradise. On the other hand, he who has no money doubts and is despondent, as though he knew of no God" (Large Catechism I 7-8).

In our Old Testament text from Ecclesiastes we find the writer Solomon speaking from his God-given experience as perhaps the most powerful king of his time period: “Vanity ... I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.” Investing in ourselves is indeed an empty pursuit. In the end, it leaves nothing in our hands to show for ourselves but a the fleeting wind. It is fleeting, because while it may provide short term satisfaction, it simply will not last. All the earthly riches could be yours, and you would still be left spiritually broke.

And so Jesus uses words like “watch out!” ... “beware!” ... “take heed!” “Life does not consist in the abundance of one’s possessions. In the end, God will demand our soul, and where will such earthly accomplishments get us? God is not interested in your bank account or your property – in fact He says, you must leave it behind. God is

asking for your soul. And a soul that invests in one's self is left broke, unable to produce the spiritual riches that God requires.

Vanity. All things continue as they were. Jesus points out in Matthew 24 that just as in the days of Noah, so also there is nothing particularly unusual about the ways of the world. They ate, drank, married, and took their ease. And then the end comes. People will be eating, drinking, and taking their ease; living the good life; laying up treasure for themselves, and empty in their investment toward God. Grasping for the wind of self-investment, we leave our soul eternally broke.

2. Investing in Christ leaves my soul eternally rich

Rather than biggery, we should be beggery. We are poor. We are broke. Thus Christ comes with a new investment strategy – one which only He could give, one which only He could make prosper. We have been taken from bigger to begger and in repentance we turn to the only source of security in these eternal matters – Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?"

Scripture does describe Jesus as judge and arbitrator, just not in the ways that the man was thinking. An arbitrator is an unbiased intercessor who is hired to help settle legal and financial disputes. We read in 1 Timothy that *"there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus is, in a sense, your arbitrator. He has come to divide a heavenly inheritance, one with eternal dividends. He alone can dish out what we so desperately need – credited righteousness. His concern is not to cushion your retirement or give you that new thing you so desire. His work could very well be to take those things away from you, to prevent you from "taking your ease" so you will find your riches only in Him. Jesus is the Man who appears on your behalf before God. He is unbiased in His work – offering his services freely to all. He does not excuse your debt nor does He try to ignore it. He bears it by living for you, by suffering for you, by becoming a beggar on your behalf.

2 Corinthians 8:9 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

Life does not consist in the abundance of your earthly riches. Rather it consists in the abundance of your heavenly riches. And this is why the Son of God has become your intercessor – to provide us with value where we possessed nothing *John 10:10 10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

And so we invest in Christ, our true life. *Romans 4:3–5 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." 4 Now to him who*

works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. 5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

You are rich. God has emptied your barns of all selfishness. He has swept it clean so not a speck of it remains. In its place He has filled those barns of your soul with Jesus' selfless works; His righteousness is credited to your account. You who are ungodly by nature have been forgiven, justified by the righteousness of Christ.

This is the only lasting rest, the only lasting treasure your soul will ever find. The yield is eternal. So be on your guard against covetousness as Jesus says. Keep your thoughts sharp.

Colossians 3:1-4 1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Our life consists in hidden possessions – things that won't be revealed until we appear with Him in glory. Our life is Christ. Because of His resurrection, you now have risen from death; you are raised from the selfish pursuits of your flesh. Now you are alive and invested in things above. This is seen in the way we live our life. Our family budget now factors in the needs of others: the work and budget of the church, the mission opportunities that are before us, the future Christian Education opportunities of our children such as the blessing of Immanuel Lutheran High School.

When our crop yields plentifully, we don't look at it as an opportunity to be rich toward myself, but to be rich toward our families and the work of God's kingdom.

Such investments is steady in good times and bad. The context in which Jesus speaks reveals He is looking to the difficult times that His disciples will soon face. They will be brought to before authorities for Jesus' sake. Many will lose their livelihood, their house, and even members of their family for the sake of this heavenly treasure. For them to be invested in themselves would have left them broke when such a test arose.

There is great joy in simplicity of life. We go forth to our daily tasks with a new contentment. We can eat. We can drink. We can rejoice. We can be rich in sharing our goods with those in need. Ecclesiastes 2 – 24 *Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.* It all goes back to our attitude. The new man within us is ready in richness toward the mission of Christ and the Church. As the hymn writer puts it, "We give Thee but Thine own, Whate'er the gift may be; All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee."

We have found eternal rest from our selfish labors and should enjoy this retirement labor God has planned. So empty the barns of selfishness that you might store heavenly

riches; store up a love that is always on the look out, ready to share the riches of Christ's salvation with others. This is a 401K plan for your soul that returns eternal dividends. Amen.