

**D-Up: A Series on Discipleship**  
**A Disciple's View of Possessions**  
**Luke 12:13-21**

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**Text Introduction:** This morning I am continuing a preaching series on discipleship. We are calling this series of messages "D-Up!" For those of you who might be basketball fans, you might be familiar with that phrase. This might be a phrase that the coach yells out to the team when it is time to get more intense in their defense.

We have focused on our initial decision to follow Christ, on baptism and the importance of the church to help us grow as disciples. In more recent weeks, we have focused on daily reading of the Word and prayer. Today, I want to talk about stewardship.

Our text today comes from Luke 12. We are going to focus on one part of Luke 12, but try to explore other parts of Luke 12 for proper context. Let's begin at verse 13.

**Text:** <sup>13</sup>Someone from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

<sup>14</sup>"Friend," He said to him, "who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?" <sup>15</sup>He then told them, "Watch out and be on guard against all greed because one's life is not in the abundance of his possessions."

<sup>16</sup>Then He told them a parable: "A rich man's land was very productive. <sup>17</sup>He thought to himself, 'What should I do, since I don't have anywhere to store my crops?' <sup>18</sup>I will do this,' he said. 'I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones and store all my grain and my goods there. <sup>19</sup>Then I'll say to myself, 'You have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.'"

<sup>20</sup>"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared—whose will they be?'

<sup>21</sup>"That's how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

**Introduction:** I heard a story about the conversation between two men. One said to the other, "If you had two houses and I didn't have one, would you give me one of your houses?" His friend replied, "Absolutely!"

Then the first man asked, "If you had two cars and I didn't have one, would you give me one of your cars?" Again, the reply was, "Sure!"

"If you had two farms and I had none, would you let me farm one?" "Of course!"

Finally, “If you had two pigs and I had none, would you give me one of the pigs?” This time his friend answered, “Absolutely not!”

“Wait a minute,” his friend said. “You mean to tell me that you would be willing to give me a house, a car, and a farm, but unwilling to give me a pig?” “Well,” the man said, “I have two pigs.”

“It is easy to talk about what we would do if we had it. It is something else to talk about what we should do when we do have it.”<sup>1</sup>

Stewardship as a disciple of Jesus involves making money, giving money, saving money, and spending money. If we are disciples of Jesus—followers of Jesus, it matters how we make money, decide to give our money, save our money, and spend our money.

In the early church, several instances are recorded of the relationship to Jesus radically changing the view of possessions and giving.

- Acts 2:44—“They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need.”
- Acts 4:34—“For there was not a needy person among them...{they laid their offerings at the feet of the apostles}, and this was then distributed to each person as anyone had a need.”
- Acts 11:29—Upon hearing of famine, “Each of the disciples, according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brothers.” They did this through the elders.
- 2 Corinthians 8:3-4—“I testify that, on their own, according to their ability and beyond their ability, they begged us insistently for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints.”

There is an undeniable link in the New Testament of discipleship and stewardship.

Jesus’ telling of the parable of “The Rich Fool” is the answer to a question. The question comes as the result of a more extended teaching on following Jesus—fearing God and eternal life.

This context helps us to underscore the relationship between our finances and discipleship.

Consider these things:

### **The Disciple’s Direction Regarding Money—Eternal, not temporary**

#### **Basic Truth Regarding Stewardship:**

Our surrender to Christ transforms our view of possessions.

This is pretty basic to this passage. A relationship to Christ changes everything—even the way we view our possessions. At the very least, we should understand that our possessions no longer belong to us, but to Christ. When that happens, we see ourselves not as owners, but as stewards. In our surrender to Christ, we surrender all. We give up our rights to Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Max Lucado, Audio Bible Study, “Rules of the Kingdom,” *Becoming Money Smart* Series.

The direction of our life is not here, but there.

### **The Disciple's Duty Regarding Money—Unselfishly, not selfishly**

That is, we must think unselfishly, not selfishly.

The parable illustrates what happens when we make the emphasis of our life the acquisition of stuff.

- Selfish Greed—Wealth in the first century was rare. The land owners had all the wealth. Storing in the first century was almost unheard of. The key to understanding this parable is that this man had incredible, incomprehensible wealth. But even in all this wealth, he still wanted more so that he could store more.
- Selfish Glory—There is a definite emphasis on selfish thinking in this parable. Someone remarked about this man, “He never saw beyond himself.”<sup>2</sup>
- Selfish Goal—This man had a selfish goal. His goal was to lay up his goods so that he could take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry. This is a selfish goal.

### **The Disciple's Dependence Regarding Money—Trust in God, not self**

The parable is amplified by Jesus' teaching in verses 22-34. We are familiar with this same teaching in Matthew's Gospel in the Sermon on the Mount. The emphasis is the place of our dependence.

I am reading through the Bible this year for my personal discipline of reading Scripture. This week I surpassed an important milestone. I made it through Leviticus. But, I did what I asked you two weeks ago to do. I have been asking the Lord to speak through His Word—even in Leviticus. Last Tuesday as I was reading in Leviticus 25 and preparing this sermon, I saw something about dependence upon the Lord. In Leviticus 25 we read about the Lord's instruction regarding the land. God instructed Israel to let the land rest every 7<sup>th</sup> year. They could work the land for 6 years, but let the land rest in the 7<sup>th</sup> year. This was about trust.

Our view of possessions is about trust. Giving is about trusting. These are difficult financial times for many in our church. But, let me implore you to be faithful in trusting God. Your giving may decrease because your income decreases. However, do not let your giving decrease because your trust goes decreases.

### **The Disciple's Discipline Regarding Money—Accountable**

We are going to be held accountable. I know what you are thinking? I know what you are thinking because I have been thinking the same thing as you. You are thinking, “O.K., so what am I to do? If I am going to be Jesus' disciple and be focused on eternity, not on earth, do I sell all my possession, quit my job, and just trust God? Can I ever buy something that is nice? Can I save money or do I just give it all away to the poor? What do I do? We need some clarification!

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<sup>2</sup> John Barclay, *Daily Bible Study Series*.

*Not a vow of poverty, but a vow of priority!*

The Gospel of Matthew has a word that Luke doesn't give us. Remember that the principle of Luke 12:31 also is part of the Sermon on the Mount that is recorded in Matthew 6:33. Matthew's version goes like this, "But seek *first* the kingdom of God ...." There is the clue to clarifying. It's not that we cannot have material possessions and earthly pleasures, it's just that we cannot get caught up in those things. We cannot try to find the meaning of life in those pursuits but rather we must seek first the Kingdom of God.

So, how does this play out practically in our finances, for example?

John Wesley, suggested that we entertain four criteria when considering any purchase on ourselves or any member of our families. In this purchase, he asked:

- \* Am I acting as a steward of the Lord's goods?
- \* Am I making this purchase in obedience to the Word of God?
- \* Can I offer up this expense as a sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ?
- \* Do I have reason to believe that this purchase will bring me a reward at the resurrection of the just?

David Livingstone, a missionary in the 1800's, said, "I place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of God. If anything will advance the interests of the kingdom, it shall be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping it, I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time or eternity."

Missionary David Livingstone had a heart for the nations. Livingstone was a missionary first to China and then to Africa. He spent 30 years in Africa. He believed it was his mission to pave the way for other missionaries to go to Africa. He stayed through great hardship. Upon his death, some of his close associates cut out his heart and buried it in Africa before returning his body to be buried in Westminster Abbey. Fitting, I think, for someone who gave his heart for Africa to have his heart buried in Africa.

If you died today, where would be the most appropriate place for your loved ones to bury your heart?

Whatever you give, just don't call it sacrifice. You see, Jesus made a sacrifice for us. Whatever we can give is not a comparison to that kind of sacrifice.

So when man finds Jesus, it costs him everything. Jesus has happiness, joy, peace, healing, security, eternity. Man marvels at such a pearl and says, 'I want this pearl. How much does it cost?'

"The seller says, 'it's too dear, too costly.'

"But how much?'

"Well, it's very expensive.'

"Do you think I could buy it?'

"It costs everything you have -- no more, no less -- so anybody can buy it.'

"I'll buy it.'

"What do you have? Let's write it down.'

"I have \$10,000 in the bank.'

"Good, \$10,000. What else?'

"I have nothing more. That's all I have.'

"Have you nothing more?'

"Well, I have some dollars here in my pocket.'

"How many?'

"I'll see: Thirty, forty, fifty, eighty, one hundred, one hundred twenty -- one hundred twenty dollars.'

"That's fine. What else do you have?'

"I have nothing else. That's all.'

"Where do you live?'"

"I live in my house.'

"The house, too.'

"Then you mean I must live in the garage?'

"Have you a garage, too? That, too. What else?'

"Do you mean that I must live in my car, then?'

"Have you a car?'

"I have two.'

"Both become mine. Both cars. What else?'

"Well, you have my house, the garage, the cars, the money, everything.'

"What else?'

"Are you alone in the world?'

"No, I have a wife, two children...'

"Your wife and children, too.'

"Too?'

"Yes, everything you have. What else?'

"I have nothing else, I am left alone now."

"Oh, you too! Everything becomes mine -- wife, children, house, money, cars -- everything. And you too. Now you can use all those things here but don't forget they are mine, as you are. When I need any of the things you are using, you must give them to me because now I am the owner."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Juan Carlos Ortiz, Call to Discipleship, (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975), pp. 42, 43.