

## Luke 12B

- Today we leave the larger discussion of the Pharisees' rejection of Jesus and their negative influence on the people
  - For the rest of Chap 12 and into Chap 13 Jesus turns toward an important topic
  - In fact, this is one topic that receives the most attention in the gospels of any single earthly issue – the issue of pursuing wealth and security
  - And if there is a more relevant topic for today's church, I don't know what it is
- We begin in verse 13 as Jesus is interrupted by a man asking Jesus to settle a family dispute

[Luke 12:13](#) ¶ Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the *family* inheritance with me."

[Luke 12:14](#) But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?"

[Luke 12:15](#) Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not *even* when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

- As a respected Rabbi or Teacher, Jesus was expected to be able to answer life's difficult questions,
  - So when someone was embroiled in a dispute of some kind, it was common for the complaint to be brought before a Rabbi asking for a ruling
  - The teacher didn't have authority to actually compel the parties to do anything
  - But if the teacher was respected, his opinion could carry significant weight and be very persuasive in settling the dispute
- This man approaches Jesus and ask Jesus to side with him in a family dispute over an inheritance
  - Take note with me of a couple of important details

- First, the man is seeking to bring Jesus into this matter on the basis that he assumes that Jesus has authority that his brother will respect
  - The man must ascribe some sort of authority to Jesus, otherwise why would he expect Jesus' opinion to have any effect on his brother's decisions
  - Obviously, the man hopes Jesus will agree with the man's interpretation of the facts, and order the brother to split the family inheritance
  - Which means that this man has reason to expect his brother to do what Jesus says
  - He sees Jesus as having authority
- The second thing to note is that the subject of the man's concern is wealth
  - Apparently, the man's father had died, and the brother had gained control of the family wealth and was refusing to share it
  - So the man is appealing for Jesus to help him gain the wealth he has been cheated out of
  - And we should add that the request is legitimate, in that it sounds like he has a reasonable complaint against his brother
- So what does Jesus say in response to this man's request?
  - Jesus asks the man who appointed me as your judge?
    - It's a clever question, because it draws the man's attention to his assumption about Jesus' authority
    - The question forces the man to consider why it is that he believes Jesus can solve his problem and compel his brother to do anything
    - Just why does the man value Jesus' opinion on this matter?
  - We can only assume by what little the scripture gives us here (only Luke records this story) what the man thinks of Jesus
    - But perhaps the man sees Jesus as an influential teacher who can persuade the religious authorities to bring about justice

- Or maybe he sees Jesus as a wise man, much like Solomon in his day, someone who can propose a creative solution to break their impasse
  - Or maybe he assumes someone with miraculous power to heal like Jesus could cast a spell on his brother to compel him to act
  - Or maybe he's just desperate to seek allies from anywhere in his battle against his brother
- But even if none of those possibilities is true, one thing we know for certain
  - The man did not approach Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, as God
- Ironically, Jesus says the man wants Jesus to act as his judge
  - It's ironic because Jesus is the judge of the world

[John 5:22](#) "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,

[Acts 10:42](#) "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

- But the irony here is that the man has asked Jesus to be his judge in this earthly matter and yet at the same time the man doesn't recognize Jesus as the true and righteous judge of heaven and earth
- It would be very easy for us to look down on this man with scorn for how he diminished Jesus' significance to that of merely a small claim court judge
  - As his soul is perishing for lack of faith, he's worried about how much wealth he can accumulate in his lifetime
    - And his only interest in Jesus is for what Jesus can help him get in this life
  - We shouldn't race by this moment too quickly without first examining ourselves at least a little
    - Because this is the perhaps the chief mistake of our generation, if not of all generations

- Many have heard of Jesus, they may have even been raised in a family who attended church regularly
  - Yet their perspective of who Jesus is and what they can expect from a relationship with Him is completely self centered
- Our culture has largely reduced Jesus to nothing more than a genie in a bottle
  - When we need something miraculous, something that will meet our desires for comfort or security or something that builds our ego or takes away adversity, then we rub the bottle and poof, we expect Jesus to come to our aid
    - And when this formula doesn't work the way we expect, we're told that it's our fault
    - We never stop to think that it wasn't God's will that he indulge our selfish desires
    - No, we're told we didn't rub the bottle right
      - We didn't pray right, we didn't have enough faith, we didn't repent of some hidden sin
      - So we try harder next time, expecting better results
  - And in between these moments of need, we expect Jesus to stay inside that bottle and leave us alone
    - We don't want to think about changing our lives or our desires
    - We aren't interested in what He has to say about sacrificing of ourselves in service to God
    - We don't want to know about the need to endure trials in joy
    - We can't stand the thought of forsaking the world for the chance to earn treasure in heaven
- We might want to dismiss this man as just another unbeliever blind to the truth, but consider who Jesus is taking to when he speaks in verse 15
  - Jesus transitions into a warning of greed,

- And if you jump down to verse 41, it's apparent that even Peter was swift enough to pick up on the fact that Jesus has His disciples in mind as he delivers His lecture on greed and wealth
  - And He has you and me in mind in these verses too
  - The poor unfortunate man who asked Jesus the question is merely the first casualty here, but Jesus begins to work on every heart in the crowd with His response
- Jesus says that life does not consist of what we accumulate in this world – we are not our possessions
  - This fact remains true even if we have an abundance – some might say this is especially true if we have an abundance
  - If I asked you to define greed, how would you define it?
    - The truth is most people simply think a greedy person is someone who gets more than they do
      - There's one piece of pie left, and someone eats it before we can take it
      - That person was greedy
      - The neighbor has a fruit tree in the back yard, but won't allow you pick any of his fruit
      - Clearly, he's greedy
    - That's the wrong definition of greed
      - The Biblical definition of greed is probably best found in Ps 10:

[Psa. 10:3](#) ¶ For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire,  
And the greedy man curses *and* spurns the LORD.

[Psa. 10:4](#) The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek *Him*.  
All his thoughts are, "There is no God."

- The picture of greed given in the Bible is someone who spurns the Lord and does not seek Him
- His thoughts are that there is no God

- Put simply, we are greedy when we want more than what God intends for us to have
- The best example out of scripture is the nation of Israel in the desert
  - God was providing them with all they needed, but they were greedy and wanted more

[Num. 11:4](#) ¶ The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, “Who will give us meat to eat?”

[Num. 11:5](#) “We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic,

[Num. 11:6](#) but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna.”

- God answered that greed with a month of meat, until they had meat coming out of the nostrils, scripture tells us
- It was greed that led them to want more than what God had determined to provide them
  - This is what scripture means when it tell us to be content

[Heb. 13:5](#) *Make sure that* your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,”

[Heb. 13:6](#) so that we confidently say,

“THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID.  
WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?”

- The man who addressed Jesus was not content with what God had seen fit to give him
  - He felt that his loss of the inheritance had to be rectified
  - It left him without something he had coming to him, and he was determined to get what he had coming
    - Now there was nothing wrong with him receiving part of his father’s estate
    - The problem was in the effort he was expending in trying to get what he thought was his

- Rather than saying what the writer of Hebrews said (verse 6)
- He was preoccupied with obtaining the wealth that had been denied him
- He was so preoccupied with that wealth, that when he stood before the Son of God, he wasn't asking about eternal life or how to reach heaven
  - He was asking for Jesus to help him obtain wealth
  - His preoccupation with the wealth of this world had blinded him to the need to pursue true lasting riches
- And this is not just a problem of unbelievers....believers are increasingly losing any distinction in the issue of wealth
  - We have become the world: same goals, same lifestyle, same desires, same pursuits
  - And just like the unbelieving world, we're senselessly storing wealth up in earth rather than heaven
    - Don't we understand...it's a matter of limited time, limited energy, limited opportunities
    - We only have so much time on this earth and if we use that time accumulating earthly wealth, we've wasted our time
- Look where Jesus goes next:

[Luke 12:16](#) And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive.

[Luke 12:17](#) "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?'

[Luke 12:18](#) "Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

[Luke 12:19](#) 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry."

[Luke 12:20](#) "But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?'

[Luke 12:21](#) "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

- This farmer is blessed with the ability to produce more than he needs
  - His farm land produces in abundance
  - And with such abundance, you would expect that his life was carefree
    - He would have had the freedom not to worry about income or provision
    - He should have had so much time to serve God and use his wealth to further God's work
  - But instead what did this do with the abundance?
    - He worried about it, he spent more time trying to figure out how to store it
    - So he wasted how many additional years planning and building warehouses to store the excess of what he received
      - What does it mean when we hoard and store the excess of what God provides?
      - It could mean we are so untrusting of God's promise to provide, that we feel the need to create a little insurance of our own
      - Insurance against the possibility that God might not keep His promise to provide
    - And some might say, Steve what about Joseph? He stored up what God gave Him?
      - True, but he also had a specific instruction from God to do so
      - And when the famine was over, he stopped hoarding and storing because He trusted God to provide
      - Unless we've had a dream lately with lean cows and withered stalks of grain, we shouldn't use Joseph as our excuse
- And the tragic ending of the parable simple points out the foolishness this man's wasted time

- Once he achieves his life goal of creating a storehouse filled with enough wealth to ensure he will always be comfortable, God takes his soul off the earth
  - The man wasted his whole life serving himself because he didn't trust the Lord for a provision enough to let go and spend his time serving Him
  - And the irony or ironies, the moment he had finally achieved security, he loses his life
  - Jesus says that the man who stores us treasure for himself in this way is not rich toward God
  - No, he's a fool (definition in Ps 14 is someone who disregards God)
- Could we ever count the number of people who waste their entire lives amassing a huge retirement account only to leave it to their kids
  - And when we stand before Christ on our judgment day and He evaluates our work for His glory and His kingdom, how much credit do you think we're going to get for leaving our kids a big inheritance
- But what if we spent every day God gave us on earth serving Him, without a minute's thought to how we would find food or clothing?
  - Can we even imagine how amazing that kind of life would be?
  - Or to be sure, we'd probably have a less impressive house, car, clothes, 401K
  - But on the other hand, think about how content we would be? Think about how rich we would be in eternal blessing? Think about how pleased our Lord would be.
- But right about now, reality hits us again
  - Our fear returns
    - We ask ourselves can I just walk away from my job?
      - Well, did Jesus say walk away from a job? Or our house? Or our savings?

- No, but He says don't let the decisions you make in your life be determined by those things
  - They are not what matters in life
  - Life is made meaningful by our opportunities to know and serve the Lord
  - And if we're too busy trying to accumulate those other things, we won't have time or energy or interest in doing what God wants
- Jesus emphasizes the need to let go and trust God in the next verses

[Luke 12:22](#) ¶ And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not worry about *your* life, *as to* what you will eat; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on.

[Luke 12:23](#) "For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

[Luke 12:24](#) "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and *yet* God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!

[Luke 12:25](#) "And which of you by worrying can add a *single* hour to his life's span?

[Luke 12:26](#) "If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?

[Luke 12:27](#) "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

[Luke 12:28](#) "But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more *will He clothe* you? You men of little faith!

[Luke 12:29](#) "And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying.

[Luke 12:30](#) "For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things.

[Luke 12:31](#) "But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

- Jesus begins, "For this reason..."
  - For what reason?
  - For the reason mentioned in the preceding verses
    - The man who spends the time God gives him on this earth storing up treasure for himself is not rich toward God
    - He is not devoted to God's desires and God's glory but his only desires and his own glory

- For that reason, don't worry about your life
  - Meaning, don't worry about where your ability to provide for yourself and your family is coming from
  - Stop worrying about it...now...Stop right now.
  - Because if we keep worrying, we have returned to what the man in the parable was doing
  - We have returned to serving ourselves instead of God
    - Remember what we said last week, whatever we fear most will determine our behavior
    - And if we fear that God will not provide, then we begin to fear poverty, financial insecurity, the inability to fund a four-year degree for each and every child, etc., etc.
    - But instead, serve God and leave it to Him to take care of those provisions
- And just in case we should start to doubt whether God is capable of providing our needs, Jesus makes an argument of logic called from the lesser to greater
  - He says first thing to get straight is aren't in as much control as you think you are
    - All this worrying we're doing to ensure we have enough money, and enough stuff and a big enough house to put it all in isn't doing what we think it is
    - Think about the farmer...God had ensured that his land would provide an abundance, so what did his hoarding really accomplish? Nothing more than he would have had anyway by the hand of God
      - Meanwhile, he wasted his life storing up grain that just rotted when he died
    - God is in control, and no matter what we do, we'll only achieve what He wants allows us to achieve
  - So point number 1 is we aren't achieving even what we think we're achieving when we worry about our earthly needs

- Secondly, Jesus says you can know that God will provide because He is faithfully providing everyday for billions of creatures far less valuable to Him than you and I are
  - He feeds billions of birds everyday, though not a single one has lifted a finger to a plan for tomorrow
  - He brings new flowers every year, clothed in wondrous beauty, without then working a day to make it happen
  - He covers fields with a blanket of grass only to have it collected and burned, so won't He at least clothe the bodies of His beloved children?
    - And when we nod our heads to these verse and agree in our hearts that our God is faithful to keep His word
    - But then we leave this place and return to our daily worry for those very things, what does it say about our willingness to trust our Lord
      - How foolish will we feel the day we stand before Him as we finally grasp the truth of His promise to provide and we reflect on how much our life we wasted by not living according to that promise
- Finally, in the last verse we read today Jesus delivers one of the single most important truths we could ever hope to understand in our walk on this earth
  - If we will spend our time and energy seeking His kingdom
    - Seeking it first within ourselves as we study His word, learning His character and nature and listening to the counsel of the Holy Spirit
    - Then seeking it in our world, by our words, our priorities our choices, where we spend our time and energy
  - Then He will add to our lives all those basic things we need
    - He will bring us the food we need, the housing we need, the clothing we need
    - He may not bring us the mansion on the water, He may not give us filet mignon for every meal, He may not bring us designer jeans and the latest toys

- But He'll bring us contentment and He'll bring us peace beyond anything we could hope to achieve through those material things
- And he will reward us in His kingdom