

TREASURE MAPS – Kirsten Anonby

Luke 12:22-34 | May 15, 2022

CONNECT:

Any of you who have parented or in any way overseen several children at once, know that a lot of your time is spent helping children navigate their relationships with other people (especially each other). I've found that I very often am reminding my kids, in some shape or form, of this simple statement: *People matter more than things . . . (Your sister matters more than the size of your cake slice, your relationship with your brother matters more than getting to read that comic book, giving your grandma space to sit on the couch is more important than your own comfort) . . . people matter more than things.*

As my kids get older and are more capable of abstract thought I say this phrase to them. And I find that because of its sheer simplicity, it sticks with me as a kind of an inconvenient truth; because I find that I too need to remember that people matter more than things, than my own comfort, my own way.

Sometimes it's merely inconvenient to remember, but other times it's quite hard, actually, especially when those things give us a sense of security that we will have enough; that our kids will have what they need, that we will be taken care of in our future, or in times of weakness and vulnerability.

Being human can carry with it a lot of worry, and a lot of concern that we will have enough. Our world is full of the longing for things that will keep us comfortable and safe. Our world is full of the fear of what will happen if we don't end up having enough.

We are currently exploring Luke 12 through a series called "Treasure Maps." In this series we're talking about money, because Jesus talked about it. He talked about it quite a bit. Jesus certainly wasn't one to shy away from a topic just because it was difficult or controversial, especially when it's a topic that deals so much with our hearts.

Because talking about money isn't really about money, it's about our hearts. It draws out all sorts of questions about our longings and fears, what's driving us, what gives us confidence and security. It's really a wrestle with whether we're running after the right things. It's about finding the right treasure map . . . to the right treasure – the one that really satisfies – that brings abundant life.

INFORM:

Setting the stage:

When I think about the section in Luke 12 that Janet read a few moments ago, it's striking to me how applicable the words are today. Isn't this a comforting part of Jesus' teaching to read? It's one of those sections where Jesus' teaching feels like it relates directly to the worry and anxiety we often find ourselves in.

This is because worry is not new . . . Jesus' teaching resonates with us because the people he was talking to in the ancient near East worried about their day-to-day needs.

In fact they had even more to worry about than many of us do. Jesus' audience were mostly subsistence farmers—peasants trying to survive under an oppressive government. They were trying to put food on the table and clothes on the backs of families while enduring poverty and exorbitant,

unfair taxation. They weren't worrying about retirement – they were most likely worrying about the next week – or the next meal.

In that context it seems downright ludicrous and perhaps irresponsible to tell the people not to worry. It feels like Jesus might be giving reckless direction – might be “out to lunch” about the real needs of the people around him.

Or maybe Jesus' new way of seeing provision is exactly what they (and we) need to hear.

When you listen to Jesus, one pattern you can begin to see is that He cares about things that other people don't care about, and some things we really think are important He doesn't care about at all.

In 2007 I got a new roommate named Karissa, who was American-Chinese. I was already setup in an apartment, so Karissa essentially accepted the kitchen and living room things that I had. A few months after we moved in together, my friend Shawna (who is half Japanese) came to stay with me for the weekend. In a moment when I wasn't around, Karissa approached Shawna with a question. Karissa pointed to the rather full basket I had in the kitchen of whisks, spatulas, pancake flippers, and ladles. “What are these?” she asked Shawna, completely mystified. After Shawna told me this story I realized that my roommate cooked everything with two tools: a rice paddle and chopsticks. She had no interest in or use for my vast collection of tools. She had grown up learning to cook in a different way.

Jesus sees us with a different perspective that comes from his understanding as our creator, of what it means to be human. Some of the tools (the securities) that we cling to, he has little interest in, because He knows running after them won't really help us.

And he sees the weight that worrying after those securities brings. Jesus is speaking here out of his great compassion on us as people, and his great desire to lift the heavy load of worry that we carry.

So he begins with the audacious and completely counter-cultural statement not to worry about our lives. And then he explains why:

- 1) **He tells us we don't have to worry because we can trust our Father God, because you can see his character when you look at how He cares for the natural world, and His love for you is greater.**
 - a. Dave talked two weeks ago about the two clues on Jesus' treasure map–
 - i. The raven
 - ii. The wildflowers in the field
 - b. Jesus explains that even an unclean bird like a raven is provided for – not because it has barns to stockpile it's food, but simply through the graciousness of God. If you remember way back to Luke's sermon on the parable of the rich fool, you might remember a man who did make himself barns to protect his exorbitant number of crops – who was not generous. The raven has no barns, but by its nature it relies on the creator for food – and is provided for.
 - c. Jesus then shows the lavishness of God, by pointing out that even something as temporary as grass is made beautiful with wildflowers.
 - d. These two clues point towards the lavish grace and generosity of God poured out day after day—good gifts from the creator to the creation.
 - e. How much more, Jesus argues, is your creator concerned with feeding and clothing you—the pinnacle of His creation – His children, made in his image, chosen and loved.

- 2) The second reason why we don't have to worry is because our Father knows what we need. I find the end of verse 30 in our text for today of great comfort:
- a. *"for the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them." – vs 30*
 - b. Sometimes I think it's difficult for us to remember just how much God understands our modern world . . . and our very human needs.
 - c. **First off, God is smart.**
 - i. I think at times we might make take our picture of Jesus wandering around 1st Century Palestine in sandals and a handspun robe. And we might feel like he's a bit out of step with our world.
 - ii. But our complicated, modern world isn't too much for Him. He's not looking at the stock market the way my roommate was looking at my kitchen utensils. He gets it.
 - d. **Secondly, God is practical:**
 - i. He's not afraid to get his hands dirty.
 - ii. This is so true that He chose to become one of us. To enter into all of the mess of our world. We know that Jesus knows what it's like to be hungry, to be cold, to see the people we love suffer.
 - iii. So when Jesus says "your Father knows that you need them" – these necessities of life – He knows what He's talking about.
 - e. These points might sound obvious, but they're important to emphasize because sometimes our imaginations of Jesus can become distorted by the schism we've created in our modern world between the spiritual and the secular.
 - f. **The Schism between the spiritual and the secular**
 - i. Our modern world, with its emphasis on secularism, has created a special box for anything related to God – and called the box spirituality.
 - ii. This has been one of the most distorting concepts for us and our understanding of how God relates to us and what it means to be a Christian, because it leads us to label only certain things in our life as spiritual. And the rest? Well, we end up with an underlying feeling that this isn't God's box.
 - iii. When we're dealing with worry about provision we can end up with two different assumptions:
 1. God doesn't really involve Himself with something as practical and unspiritual as money, or
 2. God doesn't really care about this part of our lives.
 - iv. Neither of these are true. Because the entire separation between the sacred and secular is a lie.
 - v. Our provision matters to God because WE matter to God. And He is smart enough, practical enough, engaged enough, and certainly loving enough to know what we need.

So we don't need to worry because we see evidence of God's character in how He cares for creation
 We don't need to worry because our Jesus knows what we need.

- 3) **And we don't need to worry about the essentials of life because being human is about so much more than food and clothes.**
- a. "Life is more than food" Jesus tells us, "and the body more than clothes."
John 4:31-34
 - b. There's a great little moment in John 4:31-34. Jesus has just finished his encounter with the Woman at the Well. He's just read her mail and told her everything about herself, and has revealed to her that He is the Messiah. She runs off to tell everyone about him.
 - c. Then enter the disciples, stage left.
 - ³¹ *Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."*
 - ³² *But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."*

³³ Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

³⁴ "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. ³⁵ Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. – John 4:31-34

- d. But Jesus isn't talking about food: He's full, but full of something else.
 - e. Have you ever been full of something else? Have you ever felt full because you saw Jesus do something amazing, and you got to be a part of it? Have you gotten to be a part of seeing a heart or body be healed, a wrong righted? A broken system restored?
 - f. I think Jesus was not interested in this moment in lunch because He had seen a life transformed – He had just lived out one of those moments where he was being fully and completely who He was meant to be.
 - g. When Jesus tells them that life is more than food and the body more than clothes He is essentially telling them to look UP. Because to be human is about more than just subsistence.
 - h. We were meant to be more than the beasts of the field who simply survive – No—we were meant to be creatures who reflect the very image of the creator – and we were meant to be co-labourers with Him.
- You'll notice in verse 29 that Jesus tells us not to set our **heart** on what we will eat or drink.
 - The pagan world – meaning the world that doesn't trust in God – runs after these things – and is it any wonder they do.
 - The resources of the world are finite – and we need to make sure we get our share – otherwise we will be trampled underfoot by the throngs of desperate people seeking to care for their families, their health, their retirement, their security.
 - Jesus calls us to set our hearts on something different: "*But seek his kingdom, and all these things will be given to you as well.*" – vs 31.
 - Before serving here at LWC as a pastor I was a campus pastor, which means that in those 18 years of my life people (including Living Waters) gave money to support me in that work. Essentially, they gave money to free me up to build Christian community so people could meet Jesus on university campuses like SFU and UBC.
 - That's essentially what Jesus is wanting to do for us. He's wanting us to know that He's got the pragmatics, that we can trust Him.
 - Because He has something more worthwhile for us to focus on.
 - As we get into the last few verses Jesus gets clearer on what's really worth focusing on:
 - ⁴⁵² "*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 never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.* ³⁴ *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*
 - Last week Leanne talked about how we are not orphans, making our way alone in the world. No, we have been adopted, and we are heirs. That fits so well with our passage today:
 - We do NOT need to be afraid, because our Father has given us everything.
 - And this means that we can be free – free to give things away to people who really need them. Free to invest in the kind of treasure that doesn't wear out.
 - Because Jesus looks at us, and our world, and the real treasure – the real treasure that doesn't wear out – is PEOPLE.
 - Made in the image of God, precious beyond any measure to Jesus.
 - *There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations – these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a*

gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit – C.S. Lewis

- People matter more than things.
- Our money will go, and our comforts will not, in the end, bring us deepest kinds of comfort we long for. In the end what is satisfying is seeing the goodness of God bringing life and healing. Our Father has been pleased to give us the Kingdom – and to share it – to let it pour out through our lives.

MOVE

I think that we are living in a time when this passage can be a particular kind of anchor for us. I could hazard a guess that for most of us the world around us feels generally less stable than it has in the past. How will this affect our worry? Our posture towards the needy? Our capacity to love those around us?

When our lives get harder, when our pocketbooks get slimmer, when our future feels less secure, we want to do what the world does:

We worry.

We want to set our hearts on making sure we have enough

We want to spend the energy and resources we have to look out for ourselves.

But the thing about this way of life is that the more difficult life gets, the more intense the pressure and worry. The deeper the worry, the more exhausting the struggle, the more overwhelming the fight for fewer and fewer resources. There is no peace.

But choosing to trust Jesus in the very moments where things get difficult – trusting for his provision when you really don't know how things are going to work out . . . this is the place where intimacy with Jesus really begins.

This is where we find out that really have been adopted . . . and we really do have a Father who has given us the Kingdom.

When life is easy and comfortable Christians don't tend to stand out very much. Complacency isn't our best look as a people.

But when hardship comes we see the difference Jesus makes in a person's life. When the world is falling apart, we see Christians rise up and run towards the danger – we see the formerly timid rising up in the love and fullness of the Spirit to follow Jesus, the first responder that Luke talked about on Palm Sunday -- following Jesus into danger with generous hearts, released from worry and ready to give whatever they have.

I want the difficulty in my life to make me not more fearful, but more free.

One of our church's values is generosity. We talk about it a lot – we talk about it because it's beautiful. I've always loved that about our church, but let me tell you, seeing it as tangibly as I worked in the office over Christmastime was amazing. It came in waves, flood relief, gift bags for homeless women, for women in prison, hampers for families, gifts for residents of care homes, our generosity giving at the end of the year. I see how our church's communal value of generosity builds that in us as people.

As the needs of the people in our neighborhoods and our world increase, I look forward to seeing what Jesus does in and through our community. Because our Father has been pleased to give us the Kingdom,

And he's teaching us, slowly but surely, that people matter more than things.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does worry look like in your life? What worries do you have difficulty laying down?
2. Do you have any stories of when you experienced the provision and care of God in a significant way in your life? How did these experiences shape your relationship with Jesus?
3. Do you see God as smart? As practical? As engaged in every aspect of your life? Does believing that God is actively engaged in providing for you require you to change your picture of God?
4. Can you think of a time when you were fed by doing God's will, like Jesus was after talking the woman at the well in John 4? What was that like?
5. What does it look to walk in faith and trust in times of financial uncertainty? How does that challenge you? How do you think it might build intimacy in your relationship with Jesus?
6. What do you think Jesus is calling you to? Inviting you to?