



# TREASURES ON EARTH

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The inner essence of worship is treasuring Jesus as infinitely valuable above everything. The outer forms of worship are the acts that show how much we treasure God. Therefore, all of life is meant to be worship because God said whether you eat or drink or whatever you do — all of life — do it all to show how valuable the glory of God is to you (1 Cor. 10:31).

Money and possessions are a big part of life, and therefore God intends them to be a big part of worship. So the way we worship with our money and our possessions is to get them and use them and lose them in a way that shows how much we treasure Jesus, not money.

Luke 12:33–34 has to do with the big pattern of how we worship with our money (and by implication it relates to what we do with our money in corporate worship, as we'll see below). "Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Observe three things from this important text on money.

First, embracing Jesus as our great Treasure carries a strong impulse toward simplicity rather than accumulation. Focus for a moment on the words "sell your possessions" in verse 33. Who is Jesus talking to? Verse 22 earlier in the passage gives the answer: "his disciples." Now these people were, by and large, not wealthy. They didn't have a lot of possessions. But still He says, "Sell your possessions." He doesn't say how many possessions to sell.

To the rich ruler in Luke 18:22 Jesus said, "Sell everything you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." In this instance, Jesus directs the man to sell all of his possessions.

When Zaccheus met Jesus, he said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold" (Luke 19:8). So Zaccheus gave fifty percent of his possessions.

Acts 4:36–37 says, "Barnabas... sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." So Barnabas sold at least one field.

Thus, the Bible doesn't tell us how many possessions to sell. But why does it say sell possessions at all? Giving alms — using your money to show love for those without the necessities of life and without the gospel (the necessity for eternal life) — is so important that if you don't have any liquid assets to give, you should sell something so you can give.

But now think what this means in context. These disciples are not cash-poor rich people whose money is all tied up in bonds or real estate. Most people like that do, in fact, usually have fairly deep savings. But Jesus didn't say, "Take some of your savings and give alms." He said, "Sell something, and give alms." Why? The simplest assumption is that these folks lived close enough to the edge that they did not have cash to give and had to sell something so they could give. And Jesus wanted His people to move toward simplification, not accumulation.

So what's the point? The point is that there is a powerful impulse in

the Christian life toward simplicity rather than accumulation. The impulse comes from treasuring God as Shepherd and Father and King more than we treasure all our possessions.

And the impulse is a strong impulse for two reasons. One is that Jesus said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth [literally: those who have things] to enter the kingdom of God!” (Luke 18:24). In Luke 8:14 Jesus said that riches “choke” the Word of God. But we want to enter the kingdom vastly more than we want things. And we don’t want the gospel choked in our lives.

The other reason is that we want the preciousness of God to be manifest to the world. And Jesus tells us

But there’s a second point to see here in verse 33: the purpose of money is to maximize our treasure in heaven, not on the earth. “Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.” What’s the connection between selling possessions here so you can meet the needs of others (the first part of the verse) and accumulating treasure in heaven for yourself (the end of the verse)?

The connection seems to be this: The way you make moneybags that don’t grow old and the way you gather a treasure in the heavens that never

not big accumulations of money here, are the people who will constantly dream of ways to simplify and serve, simplify and serve, simplify and serve. They will give and give and give. And of course, they will work and work and work, as Paul says in Ephesians 4:28: “so that [they] may have something to share with anyone in need.”

The connection with worship — in life and on Sundays — is this: Jesus commands us to accumulate treasure in heaven, that is, to maximize our joy in God. He says that the way to do this is to sell and simplify for the sake of others. So He motivates simplicity and service by our desire to maximize our joy in God, which means that all of our use of money becomes a manifestation of how much we delight in God above money and things. And that is worship.

But there’s a third and final point to make from Luke 12: Your heart moves toward what you cherish, and God wants you to move toward Him. “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (v. 34). This is given as the reason why we should pursue treasure in heaven that does not fail. If your treasure is in heaven where God is, then that is where your heart will be also.

Now what is this seemingly simple verse really saying? The word *treasure* I take to mean “the object cherished.” And the word *heart* I take to mean “the organ that cherishes.” So read the verse like this: “Where the object that you cherish is, there will be the organ that cherishes.” If the object you cherish is God in heaven, your heart will be with God in heaven. You will be with God. But if the object that you cherish is money and things on the earth, then your heart will be on

the earth. You will be on the earth, cut off from God.

This is what Jesus meant in Luke 16:13 when He said, “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” To serve money is to cherish money and pursue all the benefits money can give. In this case, the heart goes after money. But to serve God means to cherish God and to pursue all the benefits God can give. Here, the heart goes after God.

And that is worship: the heart’s cherishing God and seeking Him as the treasure above all treasures.

In conclusion, let’s relate these three points from Luke 12:33–34 to the corporate act of worship we call “the offering.” This moment and this act will be worship for you, regardless of the amount — from the widow’s mite to the millionaire’s thousands — if by giving you say from the heart: “One, I hereby trust you, God, as my happy, generous Shepherd, Father, and King so that I will not be afraid when I have less money for myself in supplying the needs of others. Two, I hereby resist the incredible pressure in our culture to accumulate more and more and cast my lot with the impulse to simplicity for the sake of others. Three, I hereby lay up treasure in heaven and not on earth so that my joy in God will be maximized forever. And four, with this offering I declare that since my treasure is in heaven, my heart goes after God.” ✦

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here that selling things and giving alms is one way to show that God is real and precious as Shepherd, Father, and King.

So the first point from Luke 12 is that trusting God as Shepherd, Father, and King carries a strong impulse toward simplicity rather than accumulation. And this brings worship out from the inner, hidden place of the heart into more visible actions for the glory of God.

fails is by selling your possessions to meet the needs of others. In other words, simplifying for the sake of love on earth maximizes your joy in heaven.

Don’t miss this utterly radical point. It’s the way Jesus thinks and talks all the time. Being heavenly-minded makes a radically loving difference in this world. The people who are most powerfully persuaded that what matters is treasure in heaven,