

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"FROM SELF-DEPENDENCE TO GOD-DEPENDENCE"

For individual study or group discussion

Over the past 20 years, US household debt has risen 47% from 8 trillion dollars to a current level of 17.06 trillion.¹ American household debt hit a record \$16.9 trillion at the end of 2022, up \$2.75 trillion since 2019, according to the Federal Reserve.² The Scriptures teach us that those who covet are neither rich nor are they ever satisfied (Ecc. 5:10; Prov. 30:15). We become slaves of our own making when we have the attitude of "only a little bit more, and then I will be content." Jesus warns us in today's passage to "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness," pointing us away from **self-dependence and toward God-dependence**. In Luke 12:13-34, *Jesus exposes the foolishness of self-sufficiency and self-indulgence, and also exhorts us to a liberating dependence on our Father who has given us the Kingdom.*

Jesus exposes the foolishness of self-sufficiency and self-indulgence (vv. 13-21).

The passage opens with a request for Jesus to arbitrate a dispute that a man has with his brother over his inheritance (v. 13). With a refusal and rebuke, Jesus reveals that his calling is not to stand as a judge over family disputes, but to warn of the driving, deceitful forces within our hearts. Jesus then delivers his warning about covetousness and greed in the form of a parable. In his commentary on Luke, J.C. Ryle summarizes the foolishness of self-dependency: "*The man who 'stores up treasure for himself—but is not rich toward God'—is the man whom God declares to be a fool! It is a solemn thought, that the character which Jesus brings before us in this parable, is far from being uncommon. Thousands in every age of the world have lived continually doing the very things which are here condemned! Thousands are doing them at this very day! They are laying up treasure upon earth—and thinking of nothing but how to increase it. They are continually adding to their hoards, as if they were to enjoy them forever—and as if there was no death, no judgment, and no world to come! And yet these are the men who are called clever, and prudent and wise! These are the men who are commended, and flattered, and held up to admiration! Truly the Lord sees not as man sees! The Lord declares that rich men who live only for this world, are utter fools! Let us pray for rich men. Their souls are in great danger!*"³

- Read Psalm 19:7-11 and Ecclesiastes 2:26. What treasures has Jesus given you that money cannot buy?
- What does it mean to be "rich toward God" (v. 21)? (cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 1 Timothy 6:17-18, James 2:5, and Jeremiah 9:24)

Jesus exhorts us to liberating dependence on our Father who has given us the Kingdom (vv. 22-34).

Jesus points us to consider God's tender watch-care for creation. Again, he uses birds as a metaphor for our inherent dependence upon him. Earlier in chapter 12, Jesus instructs his listeners to look at God's care for the sparrows (vv. 6-7) who are considered worthless, yet God protects them. In verse 24, Jesus draws his disciples attention to the ravens who "neither sow nor reap," yet God provides for them. Jesus recognizes our tendency to be "anxious" about the daily demands upon our lives, such as food, clothing, etc. Reassuringly, he promises that our basic physical needs will be met: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (v. 32). He wants us to be God-dependent.

- Think through Luke 12:13-34. Underline or mark repeated words or ideas, then discuss your observations.
- Discuss with your small group the top 2-3 things that you tend to be anxious about and explain why? How has God faithfully provided for you over the years? How is he faithfully providing for you now?
- Read LMPC's [mission statement](#). How does "...giving our lives away" reflect God-dependency?
- Read Proverbs 4:23 and compare it to Luke 12:34. Discuss how your behavior shapes your heart and your heart shapes your behavior. (cf. Deuteronomy 4:9, Mark 7:21, Luke 6: 45, and Proverbs 28:26)

DATE: August 27, 2023

SPEAKER: Brian/John Mark

SERIES: Gospel of Luke

PASSAGE: Luke 12:13-34

Family Dinner Table

"Orni-theology"

In Luke chapter 12, it is interesting to note how Jesus directs us to consider the birds as our teachers (vv. 6-7, 24). John Stott, in his book entitled *The Birds Our Teachers*, encourages his readers to be "orni-theologists." "*It was Jesus Christ himself in the Sermon on the Mount who told us to be bird-watchers! Nature study and Bible study should go together. Many Christians have a good doctrine of redemption, but need a better doctrine of creation. Scripture chides us because animals do better by instinct than we do by choice.*"⁴ Martin Luther also emphasized the importance of bird-watching in his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount. Referring to Christ's instruction to his disciples, Luther states:

"You see, he is making the birds our schoolmasters and teachers. It is a great and abiding disgrace to us that in the Gospel a helpless sparrow should become a theologian and a preacher to the wisest of men. Whenever you listen to a nightingale, therefore, you are listening to an excellent preacher...It is as if he were saying, 'I prefer to be in the Lord's kitchen. He has made heaven and earth, and he himself is cook and the host. Every day he feeds and nourishes innumerable little birds out of his hand.'"⁵

- When you consider the care God has for his creation, how should this encourage you to trust in his care for you?
- Read Psalm 104. In what ways does the earth, and all of life, depend upon God?

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¹ Household Debt and Credit Report - FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF NEW YORK. (2023). <https://www.newyorkfed.org/microeconomics/hhdc>

² Pitterson, S. (2023, February 16). Total household debt reaches \$16.90 trillion in Q4 2022; mortgage and auto loan growth slows. Federal Reserve of New York. <https://www.newyorkfed.org/newsevents/news/research/2023>

³ Ryle, J.C. *Parable of the Rich Fool*. Monergism. <https://www.monergism.com/parable-rich-fool-luke-1213-21>

⁴ Stott, John. *The Birds Our Teachers*. 1999, Wheaton, IL, Shaw Publishers. 9-10

⁵ Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works, Vol 21: The Sermon on the Mount*, translated by Jaroslav Pelikam. 1956, St. Louis, MO, Concordia Press. 197-98