

Materialism

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[0 : 00] Now if you turn to chapter 12 of Luke, from which we have read twice already this morning, I want us to think this morning through the subject of the Christian and material possessions.

The Christian and material possessions. Now it's a rather tricky subject because there is always a problem, and I've already been accused of this in a kindly sort of way of being perhaps a virgin and being political in some of my statements.

I have no particular intention, I don't think I'm a very political animal. But there is a danger whenever we start talking about riches or poverty that we align ourselves with some or other political party.

It is not necessarily the case. But Christ does speak, I think, quite clearly about the whole situation, and certainly of this relationship that those who profess to be his followers should have to the things of the world.

The relationship between the Christian and material possessions. And simply because we all have possessions of a greater or lesser extent, and because they are labelled probably as our own, and therefore we are attached to them to some degree, we also have difficulty in dealing with the subject.

[1 : 27] It becomes tricky because people perhaps feel a wee bit got at. We all do. I think basic to the whole relationship to the things that we have in life, is that the Christian has to have a very free, almost detached relationship.

It is not wrong to have things. But what becomes wrong is when we are over-attached in the wrong way to these possessions that we have. Now the disciples of Jesus are specifically called to live very loosely by the things of this world.

And yet the problem is, simply because we are human, and we are in this world, and we do have things, we can very easily get absorbed in them, preoccupied with them.

And as a result, as a consequence, we even become like a person who is not a Christian at all. Can we turn to verse 48 of Luke chapter 12, and take in the second half of that verse.

There is a very important principle outlined there. Verse 48. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded.

[2 : 48] And from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. Now if we can, as it were, think around that particular truth, that basic principle, that the more that we have, the greater our responsibility becomes.

But we'll come to that in time. I want us to think really of six different things, looking at the passage, the part that we read particularly. Three of them beginning with A, three of them beginning with R.

First is our assessment of material possessions. Our assessment of them. To think of this, we really have to go back to the section before we read.

That is the section head of the parable of the rich fool. We go there to the particular warning that Jesus gives in verse 15.

When he said, he said this to those who were there, to all of them, not just to the man who came with the problem of sorting out the family money.

[4 : 0 0] But to all of them he said, watch out. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

Now that again is a very dramatic statement from Jesus. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. It seems plain, it seems perfectly obvious that is so on one level.

And yet the very way that we are tempted to live our lives is the fact that a man's life does consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses.

Jesus says it doesn't. There is almost a conflict with the very basic human lifestyle that we have or we would want to have.

Now let me see again. It is not possessions that is wrong, that are wrong. A man may have many possessions and live righteously, live justly in the sight of God.

[5 : 0 3] God may be pleased with him, even though he is a rich man. If you look through the scriptures, in fact we say that God will reward people and will make them rich. Because they are living as he wants them to live.

And he doesn't scorn riches as such. But what is wrong is perhaps our own assessment of these riches. You take this case of this rich farmer.

The rich farmer is called a fool. It's a parable of the rich fool. But he wasn't a fool because he was a good farmer. And he wasn't a fool because he had a lot of money. He was a fool simply because he was so attached to what he had.

And to what profits he made. It was his wrong assessment of his possessions that made him a fool. In the whole of his life it revolved really around himself.

You can see that clearly if you read through the parable carefully. It revolved around himself. It revolved around his possessions. And within all his thinking and all his planning there was no room for God.

[6 : 1 0] And there was little or no room for others either. It was an imbalanced life. He had a wrong assessment of possessions. Now we have to ask ourselves and ask ourselves honestly.

How do we really evaluate the things, the possessions that we have in life. The things that we've been given or we've got one way or another. Watch out.

That's what Jesus says. Watch out. There's much more to life than possessions. Our assessment. Also I want us to think of our anxiety regarding material possessions.

If we have a wrong assessment of the things that we have. It will lead ultimately to anxiety. That was the problem with this man. God broke into the wrong thinking of this man.

And intimated that his life was going to be taken from him. We don't know how. We don't know what would have been written in on the death certificate. The cause of death. But I wouldn't be surprised that he was somehow tied in with some sort of anxiety.

[7 : 2 1] That was building up. Some crisis within his own thinking. That brought on an over concern. People die of such things. They die because they are over involved.

Over concerned with just how to make their daily living. Or what to do with their profits. And how to increase their possessions. Anxiety is a very natural consequence.

Of being involved with things. In this world at all. But for the Christian. Jesus says. Such anxiety. Is out of place.

It may be that we consider it quite normal. We sort of say. Well. It's natural to worry. And it may be very natural to worry. It may be considered normal in the sense that nearly every other person does it.

But it doesn't make it right. Anxiety of this degree. This over concern about things. Jesus says. Should have no place. Whatsoever.

[8 : 21] In a Christian attitude. In a Christian approach. To life in this world. It is not only wrong. Jesus says it is sinful. And it's sinful for this very reason.

That if a Christian becomes over concerned with things. That if he's going to worry about what he's going to eat. And what he's going to wear. And what everyone else he has to think about in life. If he's over anxious about these things.

It means that he is taking the burden upon himself. Of these decisions. And of providing for himself. And he is forgetting. He is blatantly admitting the fact.

That there is a God in heaven. That his God. Is his father in heaven. Anxiety. Reveals a lack. Of true faith. And that is what makes it sinful.

We worry. Over perhaps some of the bigger problems in life. We worry about things that we don't really need. And we worry about things we don't need to worry about.

[9 : 23] But we may worry even about these basic necessities. Or what we're going to eat. What we are going to wear. Here. Jesus says. We ought not. There is no need to. For why?

Because. We have one. Who is our God. Who is our father in heaven. If our trust is in Jesus. If we say. That we belong to God. Then our God. Is going to supply.

All our needs. According to the riches of his grace. Through Christ Jesus. Anxiety. Is really a failure. To trust God.

At a practical level. Now. As Christians. We may say. In fact. We do say. By necessity. By our profession of faith. We say that we have. A father.

In heaven. We say that God is our father. And yet. In our practical. Daily living. We are in a sense. Denied. We live. As if we had no father in heaven at all.

[10 : 20] And we. We become anxious. Over anxious. About things that we need not worry about at all. It becomes sinful. It is a lack of trust in God. God himself says.

Without faith. It is impossible. To please him. And if we are not trusting God. Then we are not pleasing God. We only make God happy.

When we trust him. We only make ourselves happy. As we sang. As part of Psalm 146. We only make ourselves happy. When we trust. In him. Anxiety.

Is wrong. When we worry over things. What happens to us. Is simply that we become. Like the pagans. And I don't know what you think of. When you think of a pagan man.

You think of perhaps somebody. Who came from. Some prehistoric age. Somebody. A caveman style. Who is living. Literally in the cave. In total uncivilization. Christian.

[11 : 20] But a pagan is not. A pagan is. Whoever is our neighbor. Who is not a Christian. That is what Jesus is speaking of here. The people who do not. Actually trust in God.

They are pagans. And if we are Christians. And yet in our daily life. We are actually becoming over anxious. About the material possessions. That we have.

Or more anxious about the ones. That we do not have. But we want. Then. We are becoming. Like these pagans. We are really saying. Well we don't trust God. Anyway. Now the people.

Who don't know God. Jesus says. They run after all these things. And it is only natural. They have nothing else. To hold on to in life. It has to be. They need these things. In order to give their life. Meaning and substance.

But the Christian. Doesn't need it. Because the Christian. Has a God in heaven. Who is going to give them. Every blessing. Through Jesus Christ. And every need. Supplied. By his grace.

- [12 : 15] Don't let your anxiety. Make you like a pagan. There is one third A.
There is our assessment. Our anxiety. And our attitude. And this is perhaps basic to it all. As I have said. Material things. In and of themselves.
They are not wrong. There is. And has been. Through. History. In different times and places. The idea put forward. That. Material things.
Are. In themselves. Evil. And perhaps. It even filters through. Into some of our own. Way of thinking. Or acting. Material things. In themselves.
Are not evil. But our attitude to them. May well be. And it's really. A matter of priorities. We were talking about this. Recently. But this is what it's all about.
- [13 : 10] It is. Where your treasure is. There will your heart be also. It depends if we are wanting to put. First of all. The. The kingdom of God. And his righteousness.
And then we will discover. That all these other things. All these other possessions. Will be added to us. It is a matter of priorities. It's a matter of our own attitudes. But if these things. If our possessions. Are our priority. And we worry about them. We're better actually. To get rid of them. Look at what it says.
In verse 33. Jesus. Says very specifically. To the little flock. Who belong to him. Sell your possessions. And give to the poor. Rather than building up.
More and more. And rather than becoming. More and more. Anxious about them. Because of the increased responsibilities. That you have with them. Get rid of them. Never get rid of your anxieties. And get to know.
- [14 : 07] Even more. Of the blessing. Of your father in heaven. In your own life. Our attitude. Our chief interest. As Christian people.
Ought not to be. In the fading things. Of this life. That is really the whole point. That is the whole emphasis. That we have. There is another dimension. To the Christian life. And to the Christian viewpoint.
That looks beyond. The things that we can have. And touch. And see. And handle. And possess. We can look beyond. To the things that are unseen. But are lasting. Are eternal.
And really the heart of the matter. Is this. And it is a matter of the heart. It depends really. What we are attached to. Are we really attached to Christ. Where Christ is.
Seated at the right hand of God. Are we setting our affections there. Or are we attached. To the things that are around us. And which we become. To depend on. Day by day.
- [15 : 01] As if they were all important to us. It is a matter of priorities. It is a matter of the heart. But this is a fact. For us all. And you can assess. Your own standing before God.
Today by it. In verse 34. That where your treasure is. There your heart. Will be awesome. If you love the things. Of this world. Your heart.
Will be involved. And attached. To these things. That's where your treasure is. That's where your heart is. If you really love Christ. Your heart will be. Where Christ is.
If you love. The concerns of the kingdom of God. Your heart. And your whole life. Will be involved. In the concerns of the kingdom of God. Wherever your treasure is. There your heart.
Will be awesome. That. Is to be the Christian's attitude. It's a matter of priorities. It's a matter of the heart. But then we come. To the question.
- [15 : 58] Of our own relationship. This is the first. Of the three R's. Our relationship. To material possessions. And in fact. Our relationship.
To this life. And to the possessions. Of this life. Depends. On our relationship. To Jesus Christ. How really. Do we view. Our own connection.

To Christ. If we say. We are Christians. How do we stand. With Jesus. What is the relationship. Between him. And I. And that is what we find.

When we move on. Into this next. Parable. Beginning at verse 35. Jesus is there. Speaking of the relationship. Of the Christian. To himself. As.

A relationship. Of servant. To master. Servant. To the Lord. And though this is a new parable. It is really a continued thought. Christians.

[16 : 53] Are servants. Of Jesus Christ. They are people. Who not only. Sort of. Belonged. To them. By some. Variable. Profession of faith. They are people. Who belong to him.

Heart. Life. Soul. Everything. We are not. Our own masters. Now that truth. Affects the Christian. In all that he is.

And in all that he has. As well. If we belong to Christ. Every part of us. Belongs to Christ. And that's what a servant means. Now I think as Christians.

We are only too ready. To qualify. The terms of our service. We'll say. Oh yes Lord. I'll be your servant. But let me write in this. Just as a sort of condition. Of my own service.

And we are saying. We will serve in certain areas. But there are other parts of our lives. That are not going to come under your control. Your. Your mastership. But it cannot be. Either we are a servant of Jesus Christ.

[17 : 50] Or we are not a servant. Of Jesus Christ. Or at least. Either we are a good servant. Or we are a bad servant. You see. We can't say. Well I'll be a servant.

But. What. Suits me. Has to be. Understood. What suits me is not important. It's what suits Jesus Christ.

He is Lord. He is mastery. He is dictating the terms. And that always has to be. We are not our own. We are bought. With a price. We do not belong to ourselves.

Any longer. And because of that. Because we are servants. We are under the control of another. The ownership of another. Then we have to answer.

At the end of the day. For what we are. For what we have. We have to answer. To our superior. To our master. To our savior. Jesus Christ. And our standing.

[18 : 45] At the end of the day. Depends. On our relationship. To Jesus Christ. We are servants. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. How often. The apostles. Sign themselves.

As such. Servants. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what we are. Every Christian is. That's our relationship. Then.

We see also. In that connection. Our response. To the Lord Jesus. In this parable. We find in fact. Two kinds of servants. What we could call.

A good servant. And a bad servant. One who is obedient. And one who is disobedient. These two kinds. Now both these servants. Believed something about their master.

They believed. That he had gone away. But that he was going to come back again. They both believed that. There was no. They didn't try to change. The facts. Of what their master had said.

[19 : 42] I will come back. They believed that. But the bad servant. Simply thought. That his master would be delayed. Longer than he really was.

Now you see it within the Christian church. How easy it is. To fall into these two categories. Servants yes. But good servants. And bad servants. Those who are so attached. To Jesus Christ.

They are looking for the coming of Christ. And they are working. Along towards the coming of Christ. Or those who are. For lack of a better word.

Could be described as bad servants. Who are. Yes they believe that Jesus is coming again. That is part of their. Theological statement. But. They do not believe.

That he is going to come back. All that soon. And so they begin to. Abuse. And misuse. Their. Their servanthood. The. The. Act. As people who are not.

[20 : 40] Any longer. Responsible. Servants. Now that is a great problem. With us. As such. They are not already. They are not fit.

To meet the master. You know. If somebody is coming. To your house. Somebody important. Is coming for lunch. Or whatever. Coming to stay. For a day or more. You make special preparations.

Perhaps depending on how much you. You think of them. Or how much you fear. Or dread them. Or depending. But. You make special arrangements. For special people. And so it is. With those who are.

Servants of Jesus Christ. They are those who. Who really take his coming again. Seriously. They will be prepared. They will be ready. They will go to. No ends in order to be ready. I wonder.

What we are ourselves. Something you have to answer. For yourself. Are we servants of Jesus Christ. At all. Are we those who have put our trust. In the Lord Jesus. And if so.

[21 : 40] Are we good servants. Or bad servants. Are we looking for the coming again. Of the Lord Jesus. As that great. Desire in our own hearts. And are we working towards that.

People who will be ready. And totally unashamed. If Christ were to come today. What is your response? Now there is one last thing.

I want us to think of. And that is our responsibility. And this is what takes us through. To the verse that we selected. As our text. Look again at verse 48. The second half. From everyone who has been given much.

Much will be demanded. And from the one who has been entrusted with much. Much more. Will be asked. Now that.

There is a basic. Guiding principle. For the way that we are to operate. It outlines clearly. Our own responsibility. Before God. And it's a truth.

[22 : 42] That stands as a truth. For every person in the world. Even if they are not Christians. That those who are given much. A lot more will be asked for them. Proportionately.

According to what we have. We will have to give an account for. All of us. We hear much today about. Creating.

Wealth. Within society. Within the world. We hear a lot from certain political parties. Particularly of. A. The ownership. Of wealth. But the fact is.

When we look. At our own lives. These. Statements. Are not altogether true. Because we neither create. Nor do we own. The things that we have in life.

One sense. We may create them. We may go and make something. Literally. Physically. Or we may go out and. Earn our daily bread. So that certain things. We go and buy. With the money that we earn. By our sweat.

[23 : 40] And tears. And so on. Or it may be. That we can say. That we own certain things. They are mine. Rather than somebody else's. But in the last analysis. We neither create.

Nor own. We are given. Now that is what we find here. In this verse. That everyone who has been given much. Much will be demanded. If you take that further through.

To the apostle Paul. He asks us. To ask ourselves. Is the question. What have you. That you have not received. Thinking through. In your own existence. From your own experience. What have you got in life.

That you have not received. From God. Is there anything. The fact is. There is not. Everything we have. Is given to us. In this one sense. Not really created.

By us. Or owned by us. It belongs to God. And therefore. We are acting here. As servants. Or perhaps even. In the better term. Stewards. We have been entrusted.

[24 : 36] With certain things. That we are not all equal. It is. I think. Arguing against the facts of life. To say that.

That all men are equal. We are equal in certain respects. But we are certainly not equal. In the things that we have. And even if we were going to. Share out equally. Today. Within the world. The things that exist.

We wouldn't be equal tomorrow. Because. Some will always have more. And some will always get less. And that's the way it goes. That's a fact of life. We are therefore not equal. In that sense. But we all have things. And we are all responsible.

For what we have. In the proportion. That we have them. You know. The great fast is made. The whole of. Certain. Political aims.

Are that we should. Increase our wealth. Or that we should. Increase our standard of living. That we should. Improve ourselves. Let us have more. And more. Why do you not know. That that would be the best thing. For us.

[25 : 31] Because the more that we have. The more responsibility. We have to go with it. It can become a greater burden. To us. But certainly.

Let me say again. It is not wrong. To possess. And it is not wrong. Even to be rich. In the sense. If we can classify that word. If we can. If we can say. What that word really means. It is not necessarily wrong.

To have plenty. We may even. Because of a certain. Money aspect. Or greater affluence. In any area. We may have. Greater potential influence.

We may. Be better able. To serve God. And to serve our fellow men. May it so be. If we have things. To use. On the other hand. It may not.

It may be just a greater. Noose around our own neck. The more that we have. But this is certainly true. And this is true. For us all. The more that we have.

[26 : 25] The greater. Our own responsibility. And we have to think. Of that responsibility. Not only towards God. In some sort of vague sense. That we have to give. On an account. At the end of the day.

But we have to. A responsibility. Of using what we have. While we have it. Here and now. James speaks. In very direct terms. Indeed in his letter. Of the person.

Who has something. Who is a Christian. Says he is a Christian. He has things. He sees another Christian. Who doesn't have the things he has. And he says. Oh I love you brother. But he doesn't give him a penny.

He doesn't give him anything. To help him along in his need. Is such a person. A Christian at all. James well asks. We have to. Use what we have.

In order to help. Those who have not. Now part of the. The whole issue. Of tear fund. And of having a particular day. Perhaps to concentrate. On the work of tear fund.

[27 : 22] Is to bring before our own minds. The vast. Vast needs of many. Many people. Throughout the world. Now we cannot. We don't pretend. To meet them all. Or even. Even a fraction of them.

But even to think. That we shall. Go anything towards. In our hearts. And by our actions. And by our prayers. And by our money. To help anywhere. And also we have to think. Of the Christian community.

Nearer home. And we have to think. Of our own relationships. Within the Christian fellowship. Of this congregation. To remember. Our own responsibility.

Before God. If God is given to us. He's given in trust. So that we will use it well. And wisely. In his service. It belongs to him. Not to us. That is our responsibility.

And we will be. Have to give an account. For what we have done. With what we have. At the end. Of the day. What are we doing. With the things.

[28 : 19] That God has given to us. Do we. Ourselves. In the first instance. Belong to Jesus Christ. Can we really put ourselves in that. Wonderful category at all.

Have we trusted Christ. Ourselves. To know him as our own saviour. And as our own master. And are we really walking. In that relationship. Of service. So that what we are.

And what we have. Is used not. In a selfish way for us. But is used for him. And for his people. And for his glory. May God help us.

And may he help us. To put his word. Into practice. Now shall we join together. In prayer. Amen. Our God.

And our Father. We thank you. That you have given to us. Your word of truth. So that we will not walk. Merely by our own. Principles.

[29 : 16] And our own. Basic instincts. But Lord. That we will be guided. Aright. And that we would live. In a way that. Does not just please ourselves.

But please as do. Though Lord God. We do ask this day. That you would forgive us. Because. Because so often. We have received freely. From your hand. And we have acted selfishly.

Or we have. Misused. What you have given to us. Lord. Make us. Each one of us. To be those. Who put our trust. In the Lord Jesus. So that we would not be accounted.

Either pagans. Or outcasts. At the end of the day. But may we as such. In trust in you. Trust you. Every day. Every step of the way.

For what we need. And may we use. What we have. Much or little. For the sake. Of our saviour. And of your kingdom. And of your people.

[30 : 14] Lord. Take away from us. We pray. All our sin. Continue with us. In our times. Of fellowship together. Be with each one of us. This day. In what we do.

And may what we do. Be such. As will please you. We ask it. In the name of our saviour. Jesus. And for his sake. Amen.