Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Anxiety-Free Living, Part 3
Scripture: Luke 12:32-34
Code: 42-174

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Open your Bible, if you will, to Luke chapter 12, it's verses 22 to 34 and it would be helpful for us to hear it read just to get it back in our minds. Verse 22 of Luke 12, "He said to His disciples, 'For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life as to what you shall eat nor for your body as to what you shall put on, for life is more than food and the body than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap for they have no storeroom or barn and yet God feeds them. How much more valuable you are than the birds. And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life span? If you then can not do even a very little thing, why are you very anxious...why are you anxious about other matters? Consider the lilies how they grow, they neither toil nor spin. But I tell you, even Solomon and all his glory didn't clothe himself like one of these. But if God so arrays the grass in the field which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you, O men of little faith? And do not seek what you shall eat and what you shall drink. And do not keep worrying. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek, but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek for His Kingdom and these things shall be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to charity. Make yourselves purses which do not wear out an unfailing treasure in heaven where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'"

Believe it or not, this passage is about where your heart is. In verse 22 Jesus said, "Do not be anxious." In verse 29 He said, "Do not keep worrying." In verse 32 He said, "Do not be afraid." And the ability to respond to that is a matter of where your heart is. If your heart is fixed on earthly matters, it's very hard to fulfill those commands, it's almost impossible. If your hope is only in the resources in this world and in this life, if you are dependent like the man in the earlier story on barns that contain all that you need for the future, if you have to rest on your own resources, take care of yourself because nobody else will, then it's reasonable to be anxious and it's reasonable to worry and it's reasonable to be afraid because circumstances in this life just are not that secure. It's a very troubled world that we live in and things change rather rapidly and we're certainly not in control of everything. So this idea of anxiety-free living that Jesus is talking about, this...this command to stop worrying, stop being anxious and stop being afraid wouldn't really make any sense if your heart was set on things in this life ‘cause frankly, as the Bible says, man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward. And even Jesus said in this world you'll have trouble. That's the way life is in a fallen world.

How then is it possible to have anxiety-free living? How is it possible to be free from worry? How is it possible to live a life that knows no fear? Well the answer is, it's a matter of where your heart is. It all depends on where your heart is. In the midst of life with all its issues one can become completely overwhelmed if one's focus is on this world, if all your investment is here, if your concerns and your preoccupations are here because everything changes. But if your heart's in heaven, nothing changes and the promises of God are all fixed and unchangeable and guaranteed and secure.

So it really is a heart issue, this matter of anxiety-free living. And Jesus offers sinners anxiety-free living, but it demands a transfer of their heart from earth to heaven. And while salvation certainly has to do with eternal life, that is to say rescuing us from eternal hell and taking us to eternal heaven, while the primary benefit of salvation is deliverance from the wrath of God and everlasting punishment. There is also the promise that salvation gives us in this life freedom from anxiety and freedom from worry and freedom from fear.

Now we've been going through this text already a couple of weeks. We looked at the fact that worry is a failure to understand divine priority in verses 22 and 23. We looked at the fact that worry is a failure to understand divine provision in verse 24. We looked at the fact that worry is a failure to understand divine privilege or prerogative. Only God has determined the length of your life, you can't add to your own life by anything that you do. That's His privilege. We looked at the fact that worry is a failure to understand divine preference. You certainly are more valuable to Him than lilies and He takes good care of them. Worry, we saw also, is a failure to understand divine paternity, the fatherhood of God, verses 30 and 31, "All these things the nations of the world eagerly seek." Of course, people who have no invisible means of support, people who have no relationship to God, people who have no heavenly Father, people who are of their father, the devil, have no one providing for them. The devil is a thief and a robber and a killer. And so they are on their own to make the best out of life that they can, every reason to be filled with stress and anxiety and worry and fear. There's nobody there. There's no invisible means of support. All you've got is the visible means.

But for us to worry about that is a failure to understand the fatherhood of God. The nations of the world live like this, we don't because your Father knows that you need these things. He knows the clothing you need. He knows the food you need. So just seek His Kingdom. Just put your heart in heaven and He'll add everything you need.

Sometimes it's very hard to do that. Over the last several months I've been having conversations with a young pastor named John Bukta(?). He's a graduate of our seminary, has a sweet wife, Patricia has spent a lot of time on the phone with his wife and three precious young children. He's...he's been pastoring a little over ten years and just now starting to feel like he's beginning to flourish and God's beginning to bless his faithful efforts. John and I have been in conversation and in prayer together on the telephone because he's on the other side of the country, because he's dying of cancer. And like

any loving father, he's very concerned about his wife and very concerned about his precious children and concerned that their needs will be met and...and...and we talked about that, how...how is my wife going to be supported and how is my family going to survive? And we don't know what resources we're going to have. He said, "I've preached now as long as I can preach." And the last time that he preached, they had to carry him from the pulpit to his bed. He was faithful to preach to the very end when he couldn't even walk. And yesterday I was talking with him and praying with him on the telephone and he said, "I just want to give you an update..." he had left four messages on my little answering machine but I was overseas so I didn't know and I felt so bad when I was home because I know he probably wondered why I didn't call him, cause he didn't know where I was.

But anyway, I called him and I said, "John, you sounded kind of low, what happened?"

He said, "Well I went to the hospital to have some treatments," and he said, "I was coming down the stairs after my treatment and I reached out for the hand rail and my bones are so brittle my arm broke, and then I fell and had other fractures." So he said, "I've been in the hospital."

And I said, "Well I just want you to know I was out of the country and I didn't know."

He said, "Oh, I'm so glad to hear that." But he said, "You know, I've reached the point now where I...I just want to go to heaven...I just want to go to heaven."

And through this whole discussion I've had with him, I've...I've just tried to encourage him in the provision that God would make. He can't add to his life span. God's already determined that. That's God's privilege. And as long as God wants him to live, God will take care of him and meet all his needs. That's the priority. And God cares more about him than He does about birds, than He does about lilies and the same thing is true of his wife and his children. God cares about them. And he said, at the end of our conversation yesterday, "Would you just ask your people to pray for me?" And I said, "Sure, John, what shall we pray?" He said, "Just pray that I will finish triumphantly so that my wife and my children see the triumph of my faith." And I said, "I'll tell everybody to pray for you." So you do that...pray. And I said, "You know, the Lord is going to allow you to finish triumphantly, that's the promise of His grace that you're not going to get until you need it at the very end, but you..." and I took him to 2 Corinthians 2 and we talked a little bit about how God always causes us to triumph in Christ.

I suppose from a human viewpoint you would say that everything went wrong in his life. But from a Christian viewpoint, everything went exactly according to schedule, faithful to the very end, did exactly what the Lord wanted him to do. The Lord sustained him as long as He wanted him to do it. And now the Lord will take over and care for his family in the way that God has promised to do. And I've encouraged him to rest in that care and love that God the Father provides for His own. The Lord withholds no good thing from us. Didn't we read that in Psalm 84? Nothing back, nothing is held back.

And that leads me to the last point in this little outline here. We've talked about if you worry and if you're anxious and if you're afraid, it's because you don't understand divine priority, divine provision, divine privilege, divine preference, divine paternity and one final point...if you worry, you fail to understand divine pleasure. Do you ever ask yourself the question, or have you ever thought about it? What gives God most pleasure? Well I could have taken you through a lot of passages in the Bible to say it pleased the Lord to do this, and it pleased the Lord to do that, and it pleased the Lord to do the other thing. One that jumps into your mind is a little phrase, "It was well pleasing in His sight." We know the Bible says it pleased the Lord to bruise Christ, God found pleasure...can you imagine?...God found pleasure in the death of His Son. And the Son Himself found pleasure in dying. He did it for the joy that was set before Him during the cross.

What does please God? Where does God find His pleasure? Where does He find His delight? Amazingly that takes us down to verse 32. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the Kingdom." He didn't say He'd give you something out of the Kingdom. He doesn't say He'd give you resources from the Kingdom. He says He'll give you...what?...the Kingdom. Your Father has chosen gladly, eudioko(?), to delight in, to take pleasure in. And that's a wonderful translation, He's chosen gladly. What delights God is to give you everything you need...every resource in His Kingdom. And in Romans 14:17 it says, "The Kingdom of god is righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit." Everything that brings about righteousness and joy and peace, every resource in the Kingdom your Father delights to give to you.

What would you worry about? What would you fear? Why would you be anxious? In verse 31, just seek the Kingdom and everything you need will be added. Why? Because it's your Father's delight to give you the Kingdom. Not to, as I said, to give you something out of the Kingdom, not to sort of dole out small elements of the Kingdom, but to give it all to you. That language is reminiscent of the fact that Romans 8 where it says we are joint heirs with Christ. Everything that He inherits in the Kingdom becomes ours as well. I mean, giving us the Kingdom is a staggering reality. When you become a believer, all that the Kingdom is of righteousness becomes yours. All that it possesses of peace and joy becomes yours.

And, of course, the scriptures talk about this over and over again. Jesus in the great Olivet Discourse in Matthew 25 says in verse 34, "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" All of God's righteousness, all of God's peace, all of God's joy, all of God's glory that makes up the reality of His Kingdom becomes ours. We literally become co-inheritors of the Kingdom with Christ.

Listen to Luke 22:29, "Just as My Father has granted Me a Kingdom, I grant you." My Father has given Me the Kingdom, the domain of salvation with all of its riches. He gave it to Me, Jesus said, "And I give it to you and you will eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom and you will sit on thrones

judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The Bible actually says, "Will sit on Christ's throne and rule and reign with Him."

There are aspects to the Kingdom. There is an eternal aspect, that's the heavenly Kingdom. There's a millennial aspect, that's the earthly Kingdom. But there is an immediate aspect and that is the spiritual Kingdom and all of its privileges we immediately inherit. We enter into the joy of the Kingdom and it's the joy of the Lord, it's called in Scripture, "Enter in to the joy of your Lord," Matthew 25:21 and 23. We enter into the love that exists between the Father and the Son as Jesus in His high priestly prayer in John 17 prays that we would be bound up in this eternal love. And Jesus also says this, "I come to thee and these things I speak in the world that they may have My joy made full in them." We receive His peace, His joy, His righteousness, His glory. That's what Paul means in Ephesians 1 verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ." We are blessed with all spiritual blessings, that is, of course, purposely a statement without any limits because there are no limits to the blessings. "If He has given us His Son, Romans 8:32 says, how will He not also freely with Him give us all things?" If He already gave us His Son, He'll give us everything that His Son has earned for us by His sacrifice. Peter says, "We have all things that pertain to life and godliness." Paul says, "My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." We have no lack in eternity, we have no lack in the Millennial Kingdom and we have no lack in the spiritual Kingdom of which we now are partakers.

I think it's so wonderful the language here in which the Lord says, "Not that He'll give us something from the Kingdom," but He says, "Your Father has chosen gladly to give you the Kingdom." And whatever it is that we now need from the resources of that Kingdom will be given to us. In 2 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 8, "God is able to make all grace abound to you that always having all sufficiency in everything you may have an abundance for every good deed." You know, the...the superlatives in that verse are almost relentless. "God is able to make all grace abound to you that always having all sufficiency in all things you may have an abundance for all good deeds." It's all just over the top resources.

So what are you worrying about? What are you fearful about? What are you anxious about? There's no reluctance on God. Your Father, and that celebrates the intimate love that the Father has for His own, has chosen to give you gladly the Kingdom. And by the way, see the phrase "little flock," do not be afraid, little flock, do not fear? There is bound up in that phrase, I think, a recognition of our vulnerability. I mean, to start with there are not many noble and not many mighty and we are the lowest of the low and the base and the nobodies and the nothings, 1 Corinthians 1. And it's easy for us to feel overwhelmed in this world of God rejecters and Christ rejecters and saints through the ages have always been beleaguered and despised and rejected and persecuted and martyred. And Christians have lost their jobs and they've lost their access to resources and they felt tremendous pressure and tremendous hostility from time to time and place to place through the history of the church. And so little flock sort of captures that. The phrase is a way to express that the Lord knows

that we're weak and feeble and small and overwhelmed. But this is not the survival of the majority here.

It really doesn't matter that we're nobodies. It really doesn't matter that we are few. It doesn't matter that we are small. The eternal God of the universe is our Father and He has chosen gladly to give us the Kingdom and all that is in it. You want anxiety-free living, worry-free living? Fear-free living? Come into God's Kingdom and you never need to be anxious again. He'll feed you and He'll clothe you to the end of His purpose for you in this life. And as you fix your heart on heavenly things and let go of earthly things, you will be providing for yourself an eternal reward in heaven which you will enjoy forever and ever.

Does this sound appealing? It should. I don't know that I could even imagine somebody who just heard that much of it saying, "Oh, I'm not interested. Personally I would...I really enjoy my stress, I have sort of an infinity for fear and worry and anxiety is something I really like." No, nobody likes that. No, if you just offer it that way, and say, "Jesus wants to take all the anxiety out of your life. Jesus wants to take all the worry out of your life. And Jesus wants to take all the fear out of your life. And Jesus wants to introduce you to God the Father who will give you all the riches of His eternal Kingdom now and forever. And you never need to worry again because your loving Father knows everything you need and He'll make sure you have it."

That sounds pretty good. I really can't imagine that at least at that point anybody is going to say, "Well, I'd rather be on my own than have the eternal God caring for me." Nobody in their right mind would say that. Well you say, "Then why don't people respond? Why don't people embrace the Kingdom? Why don't they rush? Why don't they storm the gates? Why don't they plead?" It sounds so appealing. All of God's care now, all of God's care in the glorious millennial future and all of God's eternal blessing in the new heaven and the new earth, eternity, it's an amazing offer. And Jesus knows that and you know that and that brings us down to verses 33 and 34, and here's the hook, here's the catch, here's the invitation.

At this point probably the buzz through the crowd to whom Jesus is speaking, remember now, 12:1 to 13:9 is one discourse Jesus gave to a crowd, very large crowd, tens of thousands of people. And the buzz through the crowd would be, "Wow, this is pretty amazing stuff here." And then Jesus tells them what to do. You want to enter the Kingdom? Verse 33, "Sell your possessions and give to charity." What?

"You want Me to take care of you? Then give up everything." Now if you were going to Bible college and the professor gave you a question and the question was: How do people enter the Kingdom of God? And you wrote, "By selling their possessions and giving to charity," you'd get it wrong. Right? What are you talking about? That's not how somebody gets into God's Kingdom. What is He talking about?

And then He goes on to say, "Make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing in heaven where no thief goes near nor moth destroys, for where your treasure is there will your heart be also." What in the world is He saying?

Well, this just seems really radical. It seems almost unchristian, It sounds almost contrary to the gospel. It's very much like Matthew 6:19, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, where thieves break in and steal, but lay up yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys, where thieves do not break in and steal, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." So Jesus had said this before. If you want to come into My Kingdom, you're going to have to let go of your possessions. It's exactly what He said to the rich young ruler recorded in Matthew 19:21 and Luke 18:22, two accounts of the same incident. You want to be in My Kingdom? Sell everything you have and give it to the poor. I mean, this just not seem right.

Go over to chapter 14 of Luke for a moment...Luke chapter 14. And I'm going to show you that this is not an isolated incident with Jesus, this is pretty much the pattern. Verse 25, another multitude of people and He turned and said to them, and here comes this same kind of invitation, "If anyone comes to Me..."so you want to be in the Kingdom, do you? "And doesn't hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he can't be My disciple." What is that? There He's talking about giving up your money, now He's talking about giving up your family and even giving up your own life and that's reminiscent of Luke 9:23, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross," which means even in death. And He says it there in verse 27, "Whoever doesn't carry his own cross and come after Me can't be My disciple." You've got to count the cost...He says. I'm offering you a Kingdom but to come into this Kingdom you must abandon everything in this world that is precious to you. Be willing to abandon it. He says, you know, it's like somebody going to build a tower, verse 28, he has to first sit down and calculate the cost, see if he has enough to complete it, otherwise he's going to build a foundation and then become a ridicule when he can't finish it. Or a king, verse 31, who goes to battle has to know the strength of his men, the number of his troops to know if he can win, or else he tries to negotiate. So verse 33, "You can't be My disciple if you don't give up all your possessions."

When there was some sort of would-be followers of Jesus who said, "You know, we're going to follow You." And Jesus said, "Good," you know, "follow Me." And they said, "Well, yeah we are going to follow you but first we have a few things we need to take care of, right?" And there was that...that sort of temporary kind of discipleship, that kind of discipleship chapter 9 in verses 57 to 62, "I'm going to follow You wherever You go but first I've got to go bury my father and first I've got to go home and do this." And Jesus says, "If you ever go that direction, if you're trying to hold on to that, you can't be My disciple." It's the same kind of language again and again and again and again. And you ask the question, Why does Jesus say this all the time? Because aren't we saved by grace through faith? Aren't we saved just by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Yes, but in order to genuinely put your life in the hands of the Lord, you have to abandon it. Luke 5:11 talks about James, John and Peter, "When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him." Verse 28 talks about Matthew, "He left everything and followed Him." What Jesus is saying here is consistent all the way through, consistent all the way through. Salvation is by faith. Salvation is by embracing the Messiah. Salvation is by turning from your sin. But true faith in Christ, true turning from sin has a kind of desperation about it. This is the way Jesus manifests the genuine desperation of the one who says he wants to be in the Kingdom. If there is anything that would prevent you from coming to Me, then you can't come. If it's family, if it's career, if it's ambition, if it's money. It's the same thing with the rich young ruler. He said, "I'm not...I'm not going to give away my money." The point is, until you're so desperate that you would hold on to nothing, you're not going to be sufficiently abandoning yourself to Christ. It's always a call from holding on to your life, your will, your material possessions, your position, your power to abandon it all, to deny yourself. So He's saying to these people...how much do you really want God to be your Father? How much do you really want to be free from all the stress and worry and anxiety and fear? How much do you really want the Kingdom? Enough to submit to His absolute lordship? This is about the Beatitudes, isn't it? "Blessed are the poor in spirit," the spiritually bankrupt, those who mourn, those who are meek, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. It's a level of desperation. It's real brokenness, real hunger for salvation that holds on to nothing, eagerly lets it all go.

So here is an invitation then to the Kingdom. But it appeals only to the desperate, only to the broken, only to the penitent, only for the hungry and thirsty whose desire to be delivered from sin and death and hell into the Kingdom of righteousness, joy and peace is so strong that they would pay any cost. So Jesus is saying what John the Baptist is saying, "Bring forth fruits unto repentance." You say you want to repent, do you? Are you willing to give up everything? Are you willing to make for yourself purses which don't wear out? In other words, instead of accumulating everything in this world in earthly barns, or earthly purses, are you...are you willing to put them into a heavenly purse? To put your treasure in heaven? Are you willing to give up everything in a spiritual investment with God...who will return to you eternal dividends? You will receive in heaven an unfailing treasure where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys.

So here is our Lord's invitation. It is an invitation to live in His Kingdom. It is an invitation to submit your life to the heavenly King and to invest everything into His care. To set your affections on things above, as verse 34 says, to put your heart in heaven. Heart is kardia, cardiac. It means feeling, thought, desire, will, the core of life...everything in that heavenly investment.

So how much do you want God's Kingdom? It's not about praying a little prayer. It's not about adding Jesus to your life. It's about abandoning everything you are to receive entrance into His spiritual Kingdom. And the truth is, the only way that entrance is made available to us is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When He said this, He hadn't died yet, obviously. He wasn't asking them to believe in

His death and resurrection, it hadn't happened. But like the publican who beat his breast later in Luke 18 and asked God to be merciful, if they came destitute, desperate, pleading, willing to abandon everything because salvation was that important, because deliverance from sin was that important, because deliverance from judgment was that important, because being in the Kingdom of God and under the care of God was that important, if they came that desperately in faith and repentance, God would forgive them on the basis of what Christ would do, even though they didn't know about it yet. That's how Old Testament people were saved, by being penitent and trusting in God who then later provided the offering.

So really this is a passage about where your heart is. If your heart's in the world, and you cling to the things of the world, you can't come into the Kingdom. But if you'll give your whole heart to the Kingdom, if you let go of everything in this world and when you...when God gives you all the blessings that He does in His Kingdom, some of them are going to be temporal blessings, financial blessings, you always know the purse you want to put them in is in heaven. That's where you want to lay that treasure, but it starts with putting your heart there and abandoning all your holds to things that are temporal. Only possible because of the cross, and, of course, our Lord is moving rapidly toward that in the gospel of Luke. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank You that You have invited us to enter Your spiritual Kingdom, Your eternal Kingdom of forgiveness, a Kingdom of blessing, a Kingdom of righteousness, Kingdom of joy, Kingdom of peace, a Kingdom of glory. And by Your Holy Spirit You have prompted us to gladly give up all that this earth holds and to yield ourselves completely to You, to put our hearts in heaven, set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth, to find our highest joy in You and know that You then find Your highest joy in us. We ask, Lord, that You would work in our hearts to bring all to that point of abandoning self, denying self, taking up the cross and following You, being concerned about what is eternal and what is heavenly and what lasts forever, placing our treasure there because our heart is there. And then resting, trusting, depending on Your wonderful faithful care. We thank You that it is Your pleasure. You've chosen gladly to give us the Kingdom when we are willing to let go of this world. We thank You that this is possible, that entrance is possible through Christ who was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we were healed. We thank You that He bore in His own body on the cross our sins. We thank You that He became sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We thank You for His sacrifice for us. Trusting in that sacrifice and turning from all that this world is, we desire to embrace You, Your sovereign care, to enter Your Kingdom and to live for You, to put our purse and our treasure in heaven and to enjoy the result forever. Amen.

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