

Nokesville UMC Sunday Worship
August 7, 2022
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Wallet!
Luke 12:32-34

(1)

Please allow me to start today's sermon with my personal story. I was born and grew up in Korea and lived there until I was 29. Living in Korea, I never had money worries. It was not because I was born in a rich family, but because my father always told me, "Never mind about money matters! You are a student, so what you have to do is to study hard." He was a schoolteacher, so he had to say so. But I believe my father thought money matters were his concern as a father. This was his way to express his love to his son. So, I thought I didn't have to mind money matters—I didn't have any economic activities in Korea and even in the States for the first 7 years. My father had supported me and my family until I was in my mid-30s. My case was not a special one. I believe most parents in Korea might have had the same mindset as my father to support their children until they come to start their stable life. And this is one of the reasons that parents become unstable in their old age. You may find big differences between parents in Korea and in the States.

After I completed my master's degree, only then I came to make money. But the first couple of years, I used up all my monthly wages within the month so that at the end of the month, my bank balance was always the same. But I came to learn about 401k, IRA, and other pensions and to recognize their importance for my old age after retirement. I was in my early 40s when I recognized it. I felt it was late but not too late. Now, I live a frugal life to save money for my old age. I hope someday after I retire, I will have a stable life with Joanna.

But I was surprised because there was a man like me and like you in today's passage who worked hard during his youth and was about to enjoy his life after retirement. Through his story, let us find out what Jesus wanted to say to His disciples and to us today, find good news, and apply it to our lives.

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Even though about 3 years was a short period of time, Jesus spent most of His time with His disciples. They traveled together, ate together, worked together, were welcomed or excluded together... And when time and situations allowed, Jesus taught His disciples many things about the Kingdom of God and its related topics. And one of them was—don't be surprised—about money. Money was also related to the Kingdom of God. But His teaching about money was not how to make and invest to make more money. Rather, it was how to use money for the Kingdom of God. The Gospel of Luke chapter 12 is His teaching about money to His disciples about 2,000 years ago and His disciples today in this sanctuary.

Jesus shared a parable. There was a man. He produced bountiful crop from his spacious fields, so he stored up many grains and goods during his youth. And now he became old and found what he had stored up so far. So, he said to himself, "I have stored up plenty of grain and goods, enough for several years. Take it easy! Eat, drink, and enjoy myself" (v. 19). But Jesus said, "'Fool, tonight you will die. Now who will get the things you have prepared for yourself?' This is the way it will be for those who hoard things for themselves and aren't rich toward God" (vv. 20-21). Probably, the only purpose of life for the man who stored up

grains and goods was to enjoy his old age. But as the Bible says, what if God calls him that night? Was his life meaningful? What was his life for? Why did he work so hard?

Without Christian faith, we can focus on ourselves or our family. So, during our youth, we work hard and store up enough money for the rest of our lives. That's why many people wait for their retirement and dream of their life after retirement. Who can blame them? They worked hard during their youth, so they deserve it. But God always asks His children one more thing that people without faith cannot understand.

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Let's examine today's passage and find out what that one thing is. In verse 33, Jesus said, "Sell your possessions and give to those in need." Jesus did not say to spend whatever we want on ourselves and then give to those in need. Jesus urges us to actively participate in the saving work or ministry for those in need. And we know that the early church in Jerusalem lived and practiced as Jesus taught— "they sold [their possessions] and...distributed to each as any had need" (Acts 4:34-35). I cannot tell you to sell all your possessions and share them with the needy. But I also cannot tell you to spend whatever on yourself and your family first and then give to those in need. Rather, how about this? As we set aside a portion of mortgage, utility bills, food, rent, gas, and others from our wages, we set aside a portion of money to support those in need. This might be a way we constantly and sustainably live with and practice Jesus's teaching.

And in verse 33 again, Jesus said to make a wallet that doesn't wear out. What does this mean? Do you have a wallet in your pocket? I have. In my wallet, I have a driver license, a debit card, a credit card, and some cash. You know that they all have the expiration dates; so after the dates, I cannot use them unless I renew the cards. And the bills will disappear if I buy something with the cash. Even years later, my wallet will be worn out so that I will need a new one. Here, a wallet and everything in the wallet stand for earthly things. They are used for purchasing earthly things and for satisfying our earthly desires. And the wallet and everything in it will disappear someday. But the wallet that Jesus mentioned is different from the wallet we have. And everything in the wallet that Jesus mentioned is different from that in our wallet. It will not be worn out, and it will be filled with treasure in heaven. And this is only possible when we help those in need with our possessions. Helping others in need is a way to fill the wallet with treasure in heaven. They stand for heavenly things. And for those who are doing so, verse 32 says, "[our God] delights in giving [them] the kingdom of God."

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Please don't limit the means of helping others to money only. If so, is a poor man who has nothing to share with the needy ineligible for the kingdom of God? In addition to money, we can help the needy with our talents, time, physical strength, spiritual support, and more. So let me ask you a question. Do you fill your wallet with cash and credit cards or heavenly treasure?

Our church keeps providing you opportunities to help our neighbors in need such as a back-to-school supply collection for Nokesville School, VBS, collection of Teddy Bears, Teddy Bear Blues, grocery gift cards for Good Spoon, Pennies for Potatoes, Christmas Angel Tree, Fellowship Dinner, and others. By participating in the ministries with your money, efforts, time, talents, and more, I am pretty sure that your earthly wallet will be thinned, but your heavenly wallet will be thickened with heavenly treasure. Please be with us together for these church ministries, store up heavenly treasures together, and enjoy the kingdom of God together on earth and in heaven. Please remember what Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be too" (v. 34). Where is your treasure, on earth or in heaven? Amen.