January 11/12, 2025

Where Is Your Trust?

Re-Think Stewardship Series

Luke 12:13-34

Pastor Ryan Harmon

Before we open God's Word this morning, I did want to give you an update on where our year-end giving ended up. You might recall that during November and December, we were giving updates frequently, and we were aiming at a goal, and our goal was $2.4 million to hit where our budget needed to be. So, we do want to give you an update this morning. All the numbers have been crunched, and our team has let us know where we ended up, and so you'll see that here on the screen. That represents about 95% of the way towards our goal. Now I have two responses to that. Okay, my first response is gratitude…gratitude! We believe that God is our provider. We believe that He provides for our needs, and we are thankful for the way that He has worked through the hearts and through many, many individuals who have faithfully given for years at Lincoln Berean Church, people who have responded to His call to be generous, and so we are filled with gratitude. That's the first response. The second response is just that we have to deal with the reality of the situation. We're about 5% short of where we want to be at this point in the year, and so, just like any one of us would at home, we'd have to think about that and plan wisely. And so I want to make a commitment, but I also would like to just offer a challenge. The commitment, first, is that we are blessed as a church, as we always have been, with an amazing business office, an amazing business team made up of lay people, and they keep a close eye on all of these things to help make sure, ensure, that we are being good stewards of what God has provided. And so we're going to continue to do that, making adjustments as needed, as we go through the rest of our fiscal year. So that's my commitment to you as a church. We are going to be diligent in that. But I also want to offer a challenge, a challenge to join us in prayer, prayer that God would provide for our needs and that we would adjust things wisely based on what comes in. It's also a challenge for us to consider and to pray, with God, whether giving would be a way that He is calling you to enter into the work that He's doing here at Lincoln Berean Church. So, a commitment and a challenge, with gratitude and with a response to the reality of the situation.

Now, our topic this morning is in our Re-Think Series, and our topic is stewardship. It's money. And I just want to say at the very beginning, I understand how convenient that seems. All right, I get it. Oh boy, Ryan, you announce it, and then what do you know? You talk about money. I get it. I just want to let you know that this was planned, of course, far in advance. Whether we hit our goal or didn't hit our goal, this was going to be what we talked about. And, in fact, if you've been coming to church here at Lincoln Berean for a while, you know that every year, as we turn the calendar page from December into January, we find it a good thing to talk about money. The question is, "Why?" Why do we think that's a good thing to do? The simplest answer is because the Bible talks about money. The Bible talks about money quite frequently, and so we take our cues from the Bible. We talk about what the Bible tells us to talk about. And so that's the simple reason. But that leads to a bigger question. The bigger question for each one of us is, "What does money, what does our treasure, have to do with our faith?" And the surprising answer is, "It has quite a lot to do with our faith." That's what we want to explore together this morning.

If you have your Bibles, open with me to Luke Chapter 12. We're going to be beginning in verse 13. But as you turn there, I'll give you a little bit of context. Luke 12 takes place in the midst of Jesus' long march towards Jerusalem, and ultimately towards the cross. Now, as He was going, as He was making His way, He still was demonstrating the kingdom and teaching. And so crowds gathered, and the crowds were remarkably big. Verse 1 of chapter 12 tells us that thousands of people gathered around Him, so many it says, that they were piling on top of one another…just an amazing scene. And in the midst of that, Jesus continued to teach, continued to instruct on what it meant to follow Him, what it meant to be a disciple of His. So as we get to verse 13, then Luke draws our attention to a singular voice that rises up from the crowd, and that's what we find in verse 13:

> **Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the *family* inheritance with me."** (*NASB, Luke 12:13)

Now I don't know about you, but that strikes me as an odd question to bring to Jesus, especially in this moment. Of all the things that I could come and give to Him, I don't know that this would be what I would give to Him, but to a first-century audience, this would have made perfect sense. It was quite customary, at this time, that people would bring their legal disputes to rabbis, to teachers, to experts in the law, because God's law had something to say about these things. And so the rabbis would kind of serve as judges, and they would, essentially, sort these things out. They'd make a ruling. And this man, most likely a younger brother, was upset because his older brother, who in that time was due a larger portion of the inheritance, wasn't giving the younger brother what the younger brother probably deserved and was legally justified to receive. And so he came to Jesus, and he said, "Hey, can You settle this for me?" Of course, he was hoping for a ruling in his favor. And so the question, of course, is whether Jesus would respond to his request. Verse 14:

> **But He** (that is, Jesus) **said to him, "Man, who appointed Me as judge or arbitrator over you?"**

Jesus wasn't having it. The man did nothing wrong by bringing this question. This was a customary thing to do, but Jesus made it very clear He did not come into the world, He did not come down, in order to settle finite, technical, legal disputes. He had something much bigger in mind. So, He continues, verse 15:

> **Then He said to them** (That is His disciples, certainly the 12 around Him, but also the larger group that was with Him)**, "Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed. For not *even* when one has an abundance does his life consist of possessions."**

That word **beware** is a strong word of caution. "*Watch out. Be on guard. Take notice. Be vigilant."* One of the amazing things about Jesus, and really about God's word now, in general, for us, is that so often people would bring Him questions that were somewhat superficial, and He was so insightful. He knew the human heart to such a degree that He could immediately move past the superficial question, the surface level issue that someone brought, and immediately go right to the depths of the heart, to the spiritual issue that was behind that question. Scripture still strikes us that way. We come and we have a concern. And what God so often does is, we open His Word as He

cuts right to the heart of things and helps us deal with deep things that are happening inside of us. That's just what Jesus does with this man. He moves from a question about the family inheritance straight to a spiritual issue, a deep matter of the heart.

So, He looked at His disciples, and He said, **"Beware, be on your guard against greed."** Greed, that word in the Greek, could be translated literally *to have more*, and that's precisely what greed is, just this longing for *more*. How much is enough? More! More is enough…more money…more things…a better reputation…the accumulation of more and more, and greed is never satisfied. Greed constantly looks to advance itself. And as greed begins to take over a life, what inevitably starts to occur, is it starts to confuse what life is really all about. It begins to believe and help the person—the heart that embraces greed—believe that what life is really about is the accumulation of more at the expense of others. And so greed, over time, makes someone self-focused and consumed with this idea of more and, ultimately, self-obsessed. That's what greed does. So Jesus said, **"Be on guard against greed."** This man brought a legal dispute. "I want my portion of the inheritance." But Jesus essentially looked back at him and said, "An inheritance is a legal question. I have a matter of the heart, a spiritual problem that is much more important. Greed will ruin a life."

So the question is, "How will He address it?" And as He was so apt to do—what He loved doing—He decided to tell a story. He tells a parable. Verse 16, He begins His parable:

> **And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry."'** (Vs. 16-19)

Jesus loved to tell parables. Parables often present a simple problem with a fairly clear solution that essentially teaches a deep insight about the soul and the world and God. And that's exactly what this parable does. This parable is commonly referred to as *the parable of the rich fool*. The problem is that this man had land that produced so much harvest, produced so much product, that he couldn't possibly sell it all, or, if he did sell it all, it wouldn't make good economic sense, because, of course, that would drive the prices down. So he had to decide what to do. He decided what he would do would be tear down his barns and build bigger ones, so he could save his resources, save his goods for a future year…ultimately maximizing his earnings. It seems like a pretty wise solution. Now, in that moment, he kind of anticipated this future moment when everything would be saved up. And he thought, "Man, that will be so good. I will be at ease; I'll finally be able to relax." And so he spoke to his soul. He referred to the deepest part of him, and he said, **"Now take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry."** Essentially, you have made it; your striving can cease! You finally achieved your goal in life. Now, Jesus was a genius storyteller, and what's so amazing about this parable is actually, at this point, I'd be tempted to call this parable, *The Parable of the Wise Business Manager,* the parable of the wise and shrewd farmer. It seems like a really good solution. This makes good economic sense, and it's because of that, that verse 20 shocks us as we read it. Verse 20:

> **"But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?' So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."** (Vs. 20-21)

So the man is dreaming about the future, anticipating this future moment of abundance and luxury and rest. And in the midst of that dream, God shows up. God came in and said, "**You fool**!" God rebuked him. **Fool** in the Bible is shorthand *for someone who has disregarded God, set God aside, relied on their own thinking.* There's no question that this part of the story, this part of the parable, would have completely caught Jesus' audience off guard. It would have made them kind of sit up in their seats. That's exactly what a good parable does. It surprises you. This parable certainly would have surprised the audience. The rich man seemed to be making really wise moves, shrewd moves. And so the question is, "Where exactly did he go wrong? What justified him being called a fool?" I think the insight comes from what we read in verse 19. It begins to give us some insight that this man was essentially trusting in himself. He was staking his life on his abundance of goods, on his accumulation of resources, and then his rest. His contentment was based upon achieving that goal. Verse 19, he said this to himself, **"Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come. Take your ease, eat, drink and be merry."**

The rich man wasn't rebuked for being rich. Richness is not the problem here. The problem that God came in and addressed is where he had placed his trust. His trust was in his own ability to secure his own future. He completely disregarded God. Over and over again in this parable, the pronouns are all personal. It's "my", "our", "my" life. He thought to himself, "I'll store up goods for myself." He completely disregarded God and disregarded the things of God. He began to place his trust and consider that the point of life was the accumulation of goods, when he would finally be able to enjoy life…when he took care of himself. And as he thought that way, he began to take on a heart of greed, and greed is incapable of considering who God is, and considering others in our midst who might be full of need. This man decided life was about more. "How do I add more and more?" And rather than investing in the things of God, being rich towards God, he invested in himself. And so Jesus made it very clear, while this man may have had storehouses that were full, full to overflowing, his life was empty. His life lacked purpose, lacked meaning. He missed it.

The parable really serves as a cautionary tale for Jesus' original listeners, of course, but also for us, it's a cautionary tale. And Jesus summed it up by saying, "The fool stores up treasure for himself, but it's better to be rich towards God. Invest in the things of God. Have your consuming passion, the point of your life, be who God is and the things that are important to Him. I think we can all agree we live in a world that is saturated in greed, a world that is filled with this call, this endless call to accumulate more and more, and also along with it, a promise that when you accumulate more, you'll finally be happy. That's the world we live in and in a greed-filled world, the caution for each of us is to take Jesus' words quite seriously. Beware. Be on guard against greed, the part of us that can start to believe that greed actually is the path. Accumulating more is how I'll finally find rest. That's the question. How do we make sure more doesn't become where we place our trust? It's important that we say greed is not a rich person's problem. Sometimes we think that way. Greed is not a poor person's problem. Greed is just a human problem. Greed is a problem of the heart. Greed is something that can take over any human heart, whether someone who has a lot or someone who has a little. It's easy to start to think that if I just had a bit more, then I would finally be satisfied in life. And what this parable is saying is what truly matters isn't

how full your storehouses are. What truly matters is whether you are investing in the things of God, whether you are pursuing Him, whether you are considering Him.

The brutal fact for us is in our greed-soaked world, so much of our world is motivated, is propelled forward by greed. Not everything is that way, but so much of it is that greed becomes normalized, becomes just the way things are. And so the challenge for us as we read this text, is to let it sit with us long enough that we actually will allow Jesus' words to examine our hearts and expose places that maybe we've fallen into the world's way of thinking about things. The world is so subtle and it's so persistent in just every commercial over and over and over again. And so look at Jesus' words and say, "Now, Lord, examine my heart, expose where maybe I've gotten out of alignment." It's the great challenge for us this morning, as we read these words.

Jesus knew these were challenging words. They were challenging words to the people of His day, and so because of that, He wasn't done. He wanted to continue. But it's so important as we continue that we understand Jesus wasn't giving a new law. He wasn't saying, "Now," rigidly, "here's what has to happen." As Jesus taught, what He did so often was invite people into an entirely different way to live life. There's a quality of life with God that is available to those who surrender to Jesus. He was constantly inviting people to enter into discipleship with Him, that they might live a different kind of life, and that's precisely what He goes on to describe. As we continue, I'm going to move through His words rather quickly. This isn't the day that we're going to dissect every word. What I want to do, and hope to do, is that you can just catch a sense of the tone, the picture He is painting. This is the life He has made available. It's the life that our souls deeply long for. So He continues in verse 22:

> **And He said to His disciples, "For this reason, I say to you, do not worry about *your* life *as to* what you'll eat; nor for your body *as to* what you'll put on. For life is more than food and the body more than clothing."** (Vs. 22-23)

Raise your hand if you want to be done with worry. Yeah, me too! Worry is anxiety about the future. How is it going to go? Am I going to have enough? Am I going to be okay? It's fear. It's the anticipation of fear essentially. It's believing that bad news is coming. So Jesus just says, "Don't do that. Just be done with that." It's an invitation to a different kind of life. Now I will admit to you this morning that worry is something that in my entire life has been an issue. In my earliest days, I remember worrying about the silliest things. I don't know why. I'm not trying to. I don't try to worry about things, but it just happens. Sometimes my wife will say, "Why would you even worry about that?" And I say, "Oh, I don't know. Why would I even worry about that? I don't want to worry about these things."

But Jesus' listeners, they also had plenty to worry about. These were peasants. They were living hand to mouth. They were constantly facing the threat of invasion. Their livelihood was constantly on the line. Death was always looming. Lifespans were quite short. This was a difficult time to live. And so in the midst of this, He looks at these people, these people who are the poorest of the poor, some of them, and just says to them, "Hey, don't worry!" I'm sure they thought to themselves, "Yeah, right. Real nice, Jesus. Don't worry." So Jesus continued, and He gave them an object lesson. I imagine, as He was teaching, that he kind of looked over to his right and He saw something. And He said, "This is a good example." He says in verse 24:

> **"Consider the ravens,** (the crows) **for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and *yet* God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!"**

Look at the birds, the crows. I mean, they're not even beautiful. They're like scavengers. Look at them. They don't worry. They gather. Yes, they do things, but they don't sit with anxiety about the future, and God cares for them. The next line he uttered, I am sure, was humorous. I think all of them probably chuckled a little bit. He said, "Well, you're so much more valuable than a bird." And I think they all know, of course, that humans are more valuable than birds. We know that in our mind but the question is, "Do we believe it…do we believe it?" God provides for His creation. He provides for the birds, providing a way for them to endure a long, cold, hard winter. They're not worried about whether they're going to make it. He provides for them. You are so much more valuable than the birds.

This week, perhaps, it'd be a fun little exercise, as you're walking around and you see a bird—not a really pretty one, like a robin or a blue jay—let's say like a barn swallow, a crow. No one likes crows I don't think. If you like crows, sorry. Ask yourself, "Do I believe I am more valuable to God than that bird?" But the way He cares for His creation is something that pales in comparison to how much He values me and how He's going to provide for me. Well, he continues in verse 25:

> **"And which of you by worrying can add a *single* hour to his life span? If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?"** (Vs. 25-26)

In other words, worry is fruitless. It makes no sense. No amount of worry can add years to your life. Some translations translate this as dealing with height. There's no amount of worry that can add any length to your height. No one can worry and get taller. You just can't change these things. It makes no sense; it's completely illogical. So why do it…why do it? As He continues, I, again, in my imagination, imagine Him looking over and seeing those birds hanging around some flowers. And so He continues:

> **"Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon, in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more *will He clothe* you? You men of little faith!"** (Vs. 27-28)

Again, a reference to creation. There's a reason, I think, that when we go out into the woods, we go out into creation, it's often so refreshing to us. And part of the reason is we're immersed in a world that is completely reliant on God's provision. It's the way God kind of wants things done. We see that. And the problem for us, as human beings, is we aren't like the flowers that just have to be recipients of the way that He set the world up. We have these wills. We have hearts that have to choose to surrender, to surrender to His provision. But Jesus says, "Look at the flowers. Look how beautiful they are." Solomon worked like crazy to be the richest king in the world, but Solomon wasn't even as beautifully adorned as this lily. Look at the flowers. This is a life available, the life that Jesus offers. These aren't hard and fast rules. This is an invitation to the life that we long for, a life free from worry, a carefree life, not careless, but carefree, because we're connected

to the One who cares for us more than we could possibly care for ourselves. He cares for us more than He cares for the birds, more than He cares for the flowers. It's a carefree life, not because the storehouse is overflowing. It's a carefree life because it's based on confidence in God and who He is. In verses 29 and 30, He kind of sums all this up. He says:

> **"And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows you need these things."**

The **nations of the world** is referring to the Gentiles. It's the unbelieving world—those who haven't given their life to Jesus, those who have not been restored to the Father—they do eagerly seek these things because they live in the insecurity, the precariousness of wondering who's going to take care of me, and so they eagerly seek these things. But that's not the life that He's calling His followers to. He's saying there is a different way to live. There's a whole different quality of life available through Him. So don't worry. Don't seek after those things. So the question becomes, "Does that mean the disciples just go back to their houses and kick up their feet? They don't have to seek anything?" And the answer comes in verse 31:

> **"But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom."** (Vs. 31-32)

Seek the kingdom, rather than seeking more. Rather than being consumed with greed and wondering how you're going to secure your own future, seek the kingdom. The call then comes with an assurance that if you seek the kingdom, if His disciples seek the kingdom, they will find it. They will discover it because the Father has gladly chosen to give it. Just a remarkable statement. God gladly has chosen to give the kingdom. Seeking the kingdom is somewhat of an abstract idea, and really it's one of those things that we could spend months on and never fully unpack it. It was Jesus' favorite topic, the kingdom of God. We don't have time, of course, this morning, to go into all of it, but I do just simply want to say, to seek the kingdom essentially is to seek God, to seek Him in the things that He cares about. To seek after God means that we look for Him everywhere. Seek after Him. Look for Him everywhere.

Do you remember as a kid playing hide and seek? What'd you do if you were a seeker? You looked everywhere, scrambling to find those who were hiding. You looked in closets. You looked under couches that were too small for any human being to be, but you still looked. You're looking everywhere. You looked under beds; you looked in obvious places. You looked in not so obvious places. You just turn a house upside down in order to find those who you are seeking.

God is not hiding, but He does desire that we seek Him. Seeking Him means we look for Him everywhere. We don't believe He's just confined to this place. He's not confined to our kitchen table in the morning, where we have quiet time or some devotions. He's not confined to those places. He certainly meets us there, but He is wherever we go in our world if we seek after Him. Those places that cause us great anxiety, those places that are places of worry for us, He is there. Seek Him…seek Him, and the amazing, the astounding promise is that He will reveal Himself to us. And then He promises, as we seek Him, the other things will be added in, the things that the world worries about, the things that the unbelievers eagerly seek after. We don't have to seek those

things. We just seek Him, and He provides for our needs. He knows what we need…an astounding promise! So this is the life available through Jesus, a life of focused attention on God, and absolutely secure that He will provide for our needs for a carefree life. The rich fool sought a carefree life, but he sought it on his own terms. He believed the accumulation of more would provide him with a carefree existence. Jesus offered a different way. The passage closes with a challenging summary. In verse 33 he says:

> **"Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.** (These things last; they don't fade.) **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."** (Vs. 33-34)

Now, over time a number of people have taken those kinds of imperatives, those commands in verse 33, and they've addressed them and treated them and applied them legalistically. "Sell everything and give to charity." "Give all your money away, and we're going to live in a commune," and that kind of thing. That's happened over time, but just paying attention to the grammar will reveal that's just not what Jesus was talking about. First of all, He didn't say, "Sell all your possessions." He didn't say, "Give all your money to charity." Jesus wasn't giving a new law. He was describing a different kind of life. A life that is free to let go of possessions, free to give to charity, to those things that God cares about, things that advance God and His mission in the world. It's a life of freedom, a life that begins to be marked by generosity, a life that can let go of this insatiable need to gather because it believes, deep down, God provides all I need. Therefore, what He does supply I don't have to hold on to, because God provides.

It's a generous heart, a generous heart that is free to be generous with others, free to invest deeply in the things of God, free to let go of possessions when need arises, because others have need, and we know we have a Father that cares for us, a different life. As He closed in verse 34, He offered that statement that is just so deep and so profound and so challenging. He says, **"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."** In many ways this is a diagnostic statement. It helps us evaluate our own life. It says that where your treasure is, is going to indicate your true love. It's going to ultimately indicate to you what defines your life, what you think is most important, even where you're placing your trust. What we treasure is directly linked to our faith. Where are we placing our trust?

So in these last few minutes, I just want to get entirely practical. Jesus named two things in verse 33. He said, **"Sell your possessions**," and then He said, "**Give to charity.**" So, selling your possessions is interesting in our world, because we live in a world that seeks to accumulate more and more and more. In our world, I saw that the self-storage industry is a $40 billion dollar industry. One out of every 10 families in America has a self-storage unit. Now let me just say, if you are in the business of self-storage, just like Jesus is not addressing money and riches, I'm not addressing self-storage as a business, okay? That's not what this is about. If you use a self-storage unit, okay. Here's the question, Will we allow Jesus' teaching, His challenge to us, in the life that He offers? Will we allow it to sit long enough to expose our heart, to examine our heart? Will we allow it to ask us the question, "Have I maybe slipped into a mindset that says more and more and more is what life is all about?" Just a question. It might not be the case, but it might be the case. And if that's the case, Jesus is calling us to live a different kind of life, a life free of that kind of thinking.

He says, **"Give to charity."** Now, giving to charity is a touchy topic in the church. But Jesus says, "**Give to charity**." It doesn't say how much to give, but He describes a life that is free, that is generous, that just gives freely to charities, to things that advance the mission of God and the world that are aligned with His heart, aligned with His purposes.

Now I do want to say in this church, it has always been the practice that no one on our ministry staff has any idea what anyone gives. I don't have a clue. Bryan doesn't have a clue. Our ministry staff doesn't have a clue. So it's not about that. The only people that know are in our business office, and they are incredibly professional at keeping all that stuff private, partly for our hearts. I don't want to know, but the call for us as pastors is to consider what Jesus is saying. And He tells us really clearly that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. And He describes giving to charity as an example of what a generous heart is able to do. A totally different life that He's calling us into, a life that is so free that it doesn't worry, "Am I going to have enough stored up?" And this doesn't mean that savings accounts are bad. It doesn't mean that money is bad. None of that is bad. It doesn't mean that a retirement plan is bad. It is not bad. It's quite wise. But Jesus is talking about what consumes our hearts. Will we allow His words to sit and linger?

We titled this series in January *Re-Think*, where we're essentially saying, "Let's look again and re-thinking is part of repentance. It's considering a new thought, and then changing our course—repenting—getting in alignment with what God is calling us to." And our treasure, our money, connects to our faith. And so Jesus has this call to examine our hearts. The interesting thing about money is, of all the things that we can consume in life, I think money is one of the most dangerous. And the reason for that isn't because money is bad, but because money can easily start to present itself a lot like God. "I'll take care of you. I'll provide for your future. I'll give you happiness." It's a replacement god. And in the Bible, replacement gods are called idols, and idols can never deliver on their promises. Only God can deliver on the promises to prepare for us, to provide for us, to value us above all else. Only God can satisfy our hearts' deepest longings to live in a place of satisfied content sufficiency. And as we live there, He stirs up in us generosity, generosity to invest in the things that truly matter. So let us be people that seek the kingdom, that seek after God, the One who our hearts desire, the One who can provide for all of our needs, the One who values us more than the crows, more than the flowers, knowing that if we do, He will provide for our needs. And, if we seek Him, He will gladly give us the kingdom, and He will gladly give us Himself. Let's pray.

> *Our Father, we do stand with so much gratitude, so much gratitude for all the ways You care for us, all the ways You provide for us, ways that we see and we acknowledge. But along with the ways that we see and we acknowledge, there are thousands of ways that we don't see Your hand; we don't see your provision. So, Lord, I would ask that You would give us spiritual eyes to see Your provision, Your hand working all around us, providing for all of our needs. Lord, we are people that have hearts that so easily go astray, and we're so tempted to fall into this call for more. And so, Lord, will You help our wants to be aligned with You, that we might see what we truly need and recognize You as the provider of all of our needs. Lord, we thank You that You are faithful to do it. We pray these things in the name of Your Son. Amen.*

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WINTER 2025 // WEEK 1

Life Group Questions

January 11/12, 2025

ReThink: Stewardship // Luke 12:13-34

Introduction

Welcome to the first week of our Winter 2025 Life Groups session! This session we will spend several weeks ReThinking stewardship in our lives before diving into the book of 1st Timothy.

In these first few weeks on stewardship, it might feel challenging or a but scary to open up your financial life to others. We strongly encourage you to lean into that challenge and be open. Without authenticity about where we find ourselves, it can be almost impossible to grow and move toward where God wants to take us. We would also encourage you to respond with grace to one another and keep pointing each other to Jesus and the way of his Kingdom!

We invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Some people even use these questions to take notes during the sermon. The questions are meant to stir your thinking and prompt open discussion, and we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

For Life Groups that are meeting for the first time:

1) Go around the circle and ask everyone to answer these "F" questions.

   First Name – Introduce yourself.
   Family – Describe your family.
   Faith – What is your faith background?
   Fun – What do you like to do for fun?
   Food – What is a favorite food of yours?

2) What is a word or phrase you'd like to focus on in 2025?

For Life Groups that are reconnecting:

If you have a couple of new members in your group you might want to have everyone answer the questions above before continuing with the questions below.

1) What is something you'd like to leave behind in 2024?

2) What is a word or phrase that you'd like to focus on in 2025?

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
    a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
    b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
    c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

1) In your own words, what is the main theme of this passage or Ryan's sermon over the weekend?

2) Jesus teaches through the Parable of the Rich Fool (verses 16-21) that those who live as part of God's kingdom should defy the temptation to put their trust in wealth and worldly possessions, choosing instead to live freely in their dependence on God. **What was the rich man's mistake in the parable? In other words, why does God call him a "fool"?**

What does it mean to store up treasures for oneself? And in contrast, what does it mean to be rich in relation to God? (verse 21)

Imagine you were standing in the crowd as Jesus was speaking. **How do you think you would have responded to the story that Jesus was telling?**

3) In verses 22-32, Jesus addresses the problem of those who are constantly occupied with issues of wealth. He specifically mentions the basic needs of food, drink, and clothing as common sources of worry. **If Jesus was speaking directly to you when saying this, what might He call you out for worrying about?**

Do you find it difficult to admit your own wealth? Why or why not?

Do you find it easier to be at peace when you have an excess of money? Why or why not?

In verse 31, Jesus provides a specific method to combat the temptation to worry about finances and provision: seek God's Kingdom and trust Him to provide. **What might it look like for you to seek God's Kingdom in your daily life?**

4) Wealth/money is one of the most frequently addressed topics in the Bible, showing up often in the teaching of Jesus, including 11 parables. **Why do you think God cares so deeply about our understanding of this topic?**

The Merrian-Webster Dictionary defines the word "stewardship" as "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." **How does this word relate to our association with money?**

Open your Bible to 1 Chronicles 29:10-16, where we read about how David praised God for His sovereignty over "everything that is in the heavens and on the earth" as he gathers funds for the building of God's temple. **How does it impact your outlook on your own money and generosity to know that your wealth already belongs to God?**

What is one way that you can begin a habit of surrendering your financial dependence to God this week?

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts.

Scripture Focus: Use the following verses from this week's passage to consider the ways that God has provided for you in your life lately and include a rhythm of gratitude during your time with Him.

"And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For all these things are what the nations of the world eagerly seek; and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be provided to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, because your Father has chosen to give you the kingdom."-Luke 12:29-32

Prayer Focus: This week's passage should stir up a question in each of our hearts: Am I putting my trust in my money more than in God? This week, as you spend time with the Lord in prayer, ask Him to help you intentionally trust in Him, to show you how He wants you to steward the finances entrusted to you, and to unmask any hidden parts of your heart that seek to make worldly wealth an idol in your life.

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of "coming together" is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say "Amen" aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?