

# Luke 12:27-34

Joyful Generosity #3, October 8, 2017

Theme: Where Your Treasure Is

INJ The text contains a well known phrase: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." It doesn't seem hard to understand. Put your heart in the right place, and then your treasure will follow. If your heart is with God, naturally your treasure will follow. Simple.

Except, I want you to look at that phrase again. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What follows what? According to Jesus, your treasure doesn't follow your heart – your heart follows your treasure. Listen again: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Jesus is not telling us, "Put your heart in the right place, and everything else will follow." Jesus is telling us to look at where we put our money, because that's how we can tell what's in our hearts. We can say what we want about what we think is important, but where we spend our money is a clear indication of where our hearts really are.

There's a simple way to say that. "Follow the money!" You have heard that expression in the context of politics or crime or the influences of life. People can say or pretend many things, but money shows you the truth. "Follow the money!" One pastor made a striking application. How can you determine if a married man is having an inappropriate relationship with another woman? He said, "Ask him, 'Have you given her any gifts?'" Why? Because your heart follows the money. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

God's truth conflicts with the way we often talk. We like to think that we have control over our hearts. When we mess up, we say things like, "Well, at least my heart was in the right place." Every person in the whole world thinks they have their heart in the right place – but they don't always. We don't really control our hearts, because they wander all over the place! God knows that. We do have a much tighter control on our treasure. Controlling our treasure is one way to manage our hearts. Wherever we think our hearts might be, they are where our treasure is.

So where is your treasure? You don't want me to ask you that question. I don't want me to ask me that question, either. Why? That's proof right there of how closely tied our treasure is to our hearts! We love money and we love things and we love the things we do with money. And we like to think that our money is separate from our relationship with God. "Don't talk about money at church!" Except Jesus tells us that the opposite

is true. My use of God's money tells a lot about my relationship with God. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

So where is your treasure? We all must buy the things of life. If you picked up toilet paper at Meijer yesterday, I'm not going to accuse you of making toilet paper your heart's home. That's not what God is talking about. It's not wrong to spend money. But if someone from the outside looked at your life: your time and your money, your energy and your activity. What would they think that you care most about? Would they guess sports? Alcohol? Camping? Clothes? Hunting? Motorcycles? If what Jesus says really is true — "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." — then where is your heart?

This is hard to think about, isn't it? Jesus wants us to recognize that the way we use our earthly treasures has a direct impact on our hearts — on our faith! It's not a good sign if we don't bat an eye at spending money on tickets, vacations, or restaurants, but our faces cringe when it comes to giving something to God. To Jesus this is one area that is very critical. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." If your treasure is with Jesus, then your heart will be there too. If your treasure isn't with Jesus, then don't fool yourself. Your heart isn't with Jesus either.

Here's what's amazing: God is very clear about where his treasure is. It's with you! To our worried hearts torn in too many different directions, Jesus says, "Do not be afraid, little flock, because your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom." That's shocking to hear! "Your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom." The Almighty God has given you everything valuable and powerful! Picture an enormous chest of treasures — love, grace, forgiveness, the kingdom of heaven — God has given them to you through Jesus your Savior. God has given you his treasure, and where God's treasure is, there his heart is also. God's heart is with you! Your joy comes from his gift of forgiveness and heaven!

Daniel from our first lesson understood. His treasure was in heaven. Daniel was a believer in God who rose to power in ancient Persia. Then the king decreed that anyone who prayed to anyone other than the king himself would be thrown to the lions. Daniel had a lot to lose: his position, his life ... Did he worry? No, he prayed! His treasure wasn't his position or his life. His treasure was his Savior-God. Daniel kept praying, even when he got thrown to the lions. That night we're told that the king with all his power and might was tossing and turning in bed, while Daniel was at peace. "Do not be afraid, little flock, because your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom." Daniel's treasure was in heaven. He was Joyful!

The apostle Paul got it, in our second lesson. His treasure was in

heaven. Paul didn't just have a lot to lose. He actually lost everything. When God gave him Christian faith, Paul went from being one of the most highly respected Pharisees to being an outlaw. He lost everything, but with no regrets. He said, "Whatever things were a profit for me, these things I have come to consider a loss because of Christ." Do you think he was cringing or smiling as he said that? "But even more than that, I consider everything to be a loss because of what is worth far more: knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake, I have lost all things." Do you know where Paul was when he wrote those words? In jail! Paul's treasure was in heaven. He was Joyful!

Martin Luther got it. We are observing the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his life's activity, and we can conclude that his treasure was in heaven. He struggled early on when his father wanted him to pursue financial security. Luther looked for his treasure in money. He didn't find what he was looking for. Then, after almost being killed in a thunderstorm, he decided to become a monk. Father was mad! Luther looked for his treasure in his obedience and effort. He didn't find it there. Then, by God's grace, something amazing happened. Martin looked for his treasure in Jesus and his Word, and he found peace and joy. "Do not be afraid, little flock, because your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom."

Joyful Generosity comes down to one word: give. "Your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom." God's peace and forgiveness — his kingdom — is free. That's what "give" means. There's no struggling. No earning. No worrying. It doesn't depend on you. Grace is God's gift! Our sinful hearts always want to rely on the things we do. "I went to church." "I didn't drink or dance or smoke!" "I tried hard and sacrificed much." Yet this is the truth: "your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom."

Martin Luther found peace in the fact that all of God's gifts are free. I hope you have the same joy. Five phrases help us understand and explain what it means to be a joyful Lutheran: Grace alone. Faith alone. Scripture alone. Christ alone. To God alone be the glory.

- Grace alone. "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8-9) God loves you, not because of you, but because of him. That is his Grace alone.
- Faith alone. "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all and over all who believe." (Romans 3:22) Jesus saves by connecting us to himself by faith. Faith alone.
- Scripture alone. "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." (Romans

1:16) God's Word is true and powerful. Scripture alone.

- Christ alone. "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me." (John 14:6) Jesus is the only Way. Christ alone.
- To God alone be the glory. "So whether you eat or drink or do anything else, do everything to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31) To God alone be the glory!

These five phrases help us describe where our heart is: with Jesus. They help us express our Joyful Generosity, too, so that we don't grab attention for ourselves in the process. Our treasure is with Jesus, too! Our Christian faith, our Lutheran confession, our membership in St. Luke's makes a statement about God's gift to us. Grace alone. Faith alone. Scripture alone. Christ alone. To God alone be the glory. God our dear Father has given us his kingdom by grace through faith in Christ, and our treasure is in heaven with Jesus. "Do not be afraid, little flock, because your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom."

When you believe in your heart what Jesus says, he also explains what it looks like in your life: "Do not constantly chase after what you will eat or what you will drink. Do not be worried about it. To be sure, the nations of the world chase after all of these things, but your Father knows that you need them. Instead, continue to seek the kingdom of God, and these things will be added to you." Do you know how to combat worry? Trust God's promise: "Your Father knows." Your treasure is in heaven! Whatever it is that you need on earth, your Father knows! If God has already given you heaven, will he forget to care for you here? Never! Jesus doesn't want you to live worried and anxious. He gives you peace. He gives you joy.

Jesus motivates your Joyful Generosity. "Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not become old, a treasure in the heavens that will not fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Here's a truth about life: The more your focus is on your stuff, the more worry you have. Why not give away what you're going to leave behind anyway? Joyful Generosity lives in people whose treasure is in heaven because "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Every worry and every doubt and every disappointment that we have is a sign that we have made what is worthless into false treasure. Look to Jesus, your risen Savior. Listen to him announce your forgiveness. Your heart is with Jesus. He is your treasure. "Your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom." That is Joyful Generosity. SDG Amen.