

Making a Home II: Treasury of the Heart

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Luke 12: 22-34

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Luke 12: 34

Last week I spoke to you about how to make a spiritual home, sharing with you three little points I think are crucial to the project of building a life in the spirit:

First, a spiritual home is built in community, not off on your own. We build it together, everybody doing what you can. If we do it right, this church or any church grows as a place of spiritual community, spiritual communion, spiritual connection.

Second, we saw that a spiritual home is built in relationship with a challenging God, a God who knows us like nobody else, and who loves us like nobody's business.

Third, a spiritual home is built not as some stand-alone structure, built for its own purpose; we build our spiritual home as an integral part of God's larger purpose: transforming the world. We build this spiritual home to help make a world where real peace has a chance and real justice is taken seriously. We're building this spiritual home to participate in the kingdom of God.

All of this flows from Jesus' plea early in Luke 12 for us to be “rich toward God.”

But Jesus goes on, and we need to go on also.

Because there is more to it. There's more to this project, more to this task of making a spiritual home.

Jesus keeps talking there in chapter 12. The words we read last week, his parable of the rich fool and his comment about being rich toward God, are addressed to a crowd, a big crowd, a crowd of thousands of people.

Now, he's talking to his disciples.

Now, he's talking to the family.

Now, he's talking to us.

He has two things to say, do not worry, and don't be afraid. And he says these things, I think, because he knows there is something that forever gets in the way of the effort and the desire to make a spiritual home. Worry. Worry, anxiety, fear, stress. How much of our time and our energy gets swallowed up in worry!

Do not worry

What are we worried about? What do we worry about? What do you worry about?

What are some of our favorite things to worry about?

Work

Money

Health

Safety

Death

The list probably goes on forever.

The rich fool we read about last week was worried about having too much—too much grain, too much stuff—and he had no place to put all his grain and all his stuff.

That's probably not the worry most on our minds, most of us. Not that we don't have too much stuff, we do.

But most of us worry about running out.

Running out of money. Running out of time.

Jesus says, don't worry about your life, about having enough to eat.

Jesus says, don't worry about your body, having the right things to wear.

The world is full of those things.

God knows you need those things.

And anyway, says Jesus, just what exactly is worrying going to do? If I sit down and worry enough, can I add an hour to the length of my life?

What Jesus didn't know, or maybe he did, is that worry and stress and anxiety shorten life, they don't lengthen it.

What Jesus didn't know, or maybe he did, is that worry and stress and anxiety contribute to all sorts of diseases: cancer and heart disease.

What Jesus didn't know, or maybe he did, is that worry and stress and anxiety feed the inclinations we all have towards different sorts of addictions: alcohol, drugs, food, sex, take your pick, and we do. And these addictions also contribute to the shortening of our lives.

So now I've got us worried about worrying. That's not really the point. That's not what Jesus wants. And he knows us, he knows we're going to worry.

But how do we keep worry from strangling us spiritually, and therefore strangling us physically as well?

How do we keep worry from being a dominant force in our lives?

How do we keep worry and stress and anxiety from tearing apart the spiritual home we are building together?

The key, according to Jesus is to keep worry in its place.

He tells us 3 things about that:

First, watch what you worry about.

Second, trust God with your future.

Third worry about the things God worries about.

OK, watch what you worry about.

Jesus thinks we worry too much about our possessions, what we have and what we don't have. That was a big problem in the time and cultural context in which Jesus lived; it's a bigger problem for us.

I was thinking the other day about the little verb, to have. We use it so much! In our culture, it's a favorite word. We speak in the language of possession.

Sure we have an ipod, or we don't. We have an apartment or we don't. We have money, we have a shirt, we have whatever. We speak of our possessions and we worry about our possessions, and then we're surprised when we start feeling like our possessions are possessing us!

But we also use it when we talk about relationships.

I have a family, I have a big family, I have a small family. That's kind of strange. What we mean is that we belong to a family, we're part of a family. But that's not what we say.

We say, I have a boyfriend or girlfriend or partner or husband or wife or whatever, when what we mean to say is that we're in a relationship with somebody. But we use that language of possession. No wonder we worry!

We speak about having time, having enough time, not having enough time, when how in the world could we ever have time, possess time?

I can't add an hour to the length of my life!

We even speak about having faith. That's a strange one. That's ok, I have faith.

I wish I had faith.

I wish I had your faith.

As though even faith were another possession.

When what we mean is that we are in relationship with God. What we mean is that we are discovering what it means to trust God with our lives.

No wonder we worry.

So Jesus tells us to watch what we worry about.

Second, Jesus tells us to trust God with our future.
Put a few things in God's hands, because they are there, anyway.

That's not so easy to do. But it gets easier as we get to know God better.

It's hard to trust anybody we don't know!
Why do we think it would be easy to trust God, if we haven't bothered to get to know God!?

How do you get to know God? Same way you get to know anybody. You spend time with them. Spend time with God.

We can get to know God through prayer.

That's just another word for conversation. And sometimes the best conversations are silent ones.

We can get to know God through fasting.

Fasting is something we have trouble with, most of us. That's because we think it's about food. For most of us, if we bother with it at all, fasting is about not eating food. And so the experience is a lot like not thinking of an elephant. Or, if that expression is tired, not thinking of a zebra. Could you please right now Not think about a zebra? That's what fasting's like for us sometimes.

When in reality, fasting is about filling up your mind and your soul with things of the spirit, getting so full, there's no room to think about food anyway.

We should talk more about that sometime...

We can get to know God by learning about God. That's obvious. How do we learn about God? We, for one, I've go this whole book about God, and if you need a copy, come see me and I'll get you one. I'd rather you didn't make off with the copy there in your pew, but if you're desperate, feel free to borrow it for the week.

We can get to know God through doing the things God does.

It's like being in a relationship with somebody who likes football, say, or golf. I've never been in one of those, thank God. But say you were. You'd probably find yourself spending some time watching football. You'd probably want to try your hand at golf.

Same thing. If you want to deepen your relationship with God, try taking up a few of God's hobbies? What are God's hobbies? The Bible's full of them. Doing justice. Doing compassion in unlikely places. Pursuing peace even when it's not in your interest. Feeding hungry people. Visiting people who are imprisoned in various ways. God has a lot of hobbies. Choose one. You and God will love what it does your relationship.

And as we get to know God better, we'll find it becomes easier to trust God with our future, says Jesus.

Which leads us to the last lesson Jesus has for us:

Worry about the things God worries about.

Watch what you worry about.

Trust God with your future.

And now finally, worry about the things God worries about.

The Greek verb for “worry” could be better translated “strive after.” The point is not that we shouldn't worry about anything. The point is not that we should strive after anything. The point is that we should make God's goals the things we worry about. We can make God's goals the things we strive after.

Jesus tells his friends that day:

“Instead, strive for God's kingdom, and these other things will be given to you as well.”

Oh, but how do we do that and when do we do that and where do we do that and...

You can hear the look on the disciples faces reflected in the next words Jesus speaks: Do not be afraid, little flock, it is God's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Worry about what God worries about, and the way God worries about it is to give it away.

The only thing we need to worry about, and we don't even need to worry about that, because if we are open to it, it will be given to us.

Through all of these words run Jesus open invitation to forsake worry for the life he offers: a life lived in the spirit, a life lived in connection with God, a life lived in the community of God's people, a life lived in the middle of the kingdom, this kingdom of God that is always coming and always here.

Jesus invites each of us and all of us to that kind of life.

To sell what we have and give it away.

To make our investment in the things of God.

And where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Steal away...