

**CONVERSATION GUIDE**

1. Take 5-10 minutes to discuss last week's sermon.
2. Compare the conventional definition of *being rich* with Jesus' concept of *being rich*.

This study on Luke 12:13-34 is divided into two sections. In verses 13-21, Jesus tells the Parable of the Rich Fool, which describes a rich man who determines he must tear down his barns to build larger ones to house his abundant crops and possessions. In verses 22-34, Jesus expands on the lesson from the parable, instructing his followers not to worry about their lives and offering an unconventional antidote to fear and anxiety.

**READ Luke 12:13-34.****DISCUSS and REFLECT****Luke 12:13-21**

When Jesus was speaking to a crowd of followers, a man asked Jesus to help him get part of the family inheritance. In response, Jesus tells the Parable of the Rich Fool, describing a man who has had great success and now possesses an abundance of grain and goods. Perplexed about where to store all this stuff, he makes a plan: he must tear his existing barns down and build larger barns in their place. Afterward, the man thinks, he will pat himself on the back and celebrate.

God responds by calling him a fool, asking him what will happen to all his possessions, should he die tonight? Verse 21 summarizes the problem with the man – he has hoarded “treasure for himself,” as opposed to being “rich toward God.”

- Consider the problems of the man in the crowd (12:13) and the man in the parable (12:17). How are they similar? What do they tell us about these two men, and human nature in general?
- At the end, Jesus broadens the application of the parable, using the term *treasure*. Contrast the concept of *material possessions* and the idea of *treasure*.

**Luke 12:22-34**

Jesus unwraps the implications of the parable here. He tells his followers not to be anxious – that being anxious doesn't benefit them in any way. Jesus says the Lord will provide for them. In fact, He will do more than just provide – he offers His people the

Kingdom. And it gives Him great joy to give them the kingdom, should they open their hearts, minds and lives to receive it.

I've always struggled with this passage – the instruction to not worry seems overly simplistic in this difficult world we live in, full of both joy and hardship. How is it possible to not worry? What cure is Jesus offering me for my anxiety? The old adages “let go and let God” and “Jesus take the wheel” come to mind. I think Jesus in this passage is inviting us into more.

Somewhat abruptly in verse 33, Jesus pivots from the *don't be anxious/the Lord will provide/the Lord offers us the Kingdom* train of thought. He tells his disciples to sell their possessions and give to the poor. Right after describing God as the great philanthropist, the abundant giver of the Kingdom, Jesus invites us to give as well. Why does he do this?

Just like the rich fool in the parable, we tend to anxiously cling to our life's treasures, material and beyond. Perhaps Jesus is advising us to relinquish our hold on our material possessions because doing so helps us loosen our grip on the rest of our lives. In other words, could giving to the poor be a conduit to a deeper way of offering our selves and our lives? As we give, we free up more space for God to work, for the Kingdom.

So how do we not worry about providing for ourselves? How do we avoid being anxious about the precious things in our lives we hold dear? It's an unusual answer that Jesus gives in verses 33-34: Loosen your clutch on your treasures. Open your hands and your heart, so that you might receive the abundant life God takes great joy in giving.

- Read Luke 9:24-25. How do the concepts in the Luke 9 verses relate to the concepts in Luke 12:13-34?

**APPLY**

1. What are the treasures (possessions, ideas, standards, goals, certain people) in your life that you hold really tightly to? What would it look like to loosen your grip on any of these?
2. Have you ever had the experience of giving something away or letting go of something that resulted in increased freedom or openness in your spiritual life? What was that like for you?

3. How does Luke 12:22-34 shed light on the concept highlighted at the end of the parable – being *rich toward God*?

**MEMORIZE**

Luke 12:32-34

This week, sit with God for a few minutes each day and physically open your hands on your lap. Talk honestly with him about your deepest fears.

*For this study, the writer referenced the Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible and Dr. Roger Owens' sermon preached in Duke University Chapel on August 11, 2013.*