

Victory of the Lamb – November 12, 2017
Generosity – The Treasure Principle – Luke 12:22-34 – Pastor Bill Limmer

Did you worry about anything this past week? Do you know what is the number one catastrophic event that Americans worry about? There are certainly many to choose from. Many Americans are deathly afraid of a major terrorist attack like the attack on concert goers in Las Vegas or the worshippers in Texas or truck on the bike path in New York. Others live in constant fear of natural disasters such as earthquakes, fires and hurricanes. Still others are incredibly concerned that World War III will erupt due to rising tensions in North Korea. But according to a survey I saw this past week, the number one catastrophic event that Americans worry about is “economic collapse”. While the stock market may be up, our country’s debt is over 20 trillion dollars and rise over \$7,000 not per month, week, day, hour but per second. While Congress is working on a tax cut plan, it will not please or be beneficial to everyone. One of our cultural predispositions in America is to want to be rich. And you know what, I want you to be rich, just a smart rich and not dumb rich. You see we Americans typically don’t do rich well. Here is a litmus test of people living rich lives poorly: You get an upgrade. You have something that works but you want something that is newer and does basically the same thing. Who would do that? You have a phone that works perfectly fine but there is another one that basically does the exact same thing but it has a higher number on it so you pay to get a phone to replace the phone that you have that is perfectly fine. Who would do that? You are rich if you have ever driven to a car dealership left the car you drove there, gave the dealership some money and drove off in another car that does basically the same thing the other car did. Who would do that? Are you serious? You are rich if you have a kitchen and you decide to rip the countertop and the cupboards out, take the oven out that works and the refrigerator that works, and put in another countertop, cupboards, oven and refrigerator. Who would do that?

Today we are going to set off on a three week, four message series on Generosity. Most all of us get a little uncomfortable when the topic of money comes up. Jesus, however, was not at all uncomfortable with the topic. That is because he knew that money really wasn’t the issue. The issue was the heart.

Let’s go on a treasure hunt and take a closer look at what Jesus said about generosity so that we can better understand God’s heart and what his overwhelming generosity looks like and means for our daily lives. Luke 12:22 **Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!** Jesus minimizes the ultimate significance of material possessions, and no doubt not a few of his hearers find themselves wondering like you and me: “But what about all the necessities? It’s all well to turn your back on wealth when you’re rich, but I have a wife and children, and I can barely provide them with clothing, food and shelter. Satan tempts you and me to worry whether or not God will be faithful to meet our need. When we depend on ourselves to take care of us, we put ourselves in the position of playing God and since we are not God we are burdened to the max with worry and anxiety. With these words Jesus makes an argument from the lesser to the greater. Since God cares for and takes care of scavenger birds, he most certainly will take care of us.

²⁵ **Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life^[a]? ²⁶ Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?²⁷ “Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ²⁸ If that is how**

God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! Fear and worry set in when we are concerned about the length of our or someone's else life. It is good for us to eat right and exercise, go to doctors, take medicine but ultimately it is God who determines the length of our lives. In hopefully what will not be a prophecy of my own life, there are plenty of people who are in good shape, who die while they are out on runs. Again, Jesus presents an argument from the lesser to the greater. Check out the brilliance of the flowers, will not God clothe you and take care of you in his tender, artistic, yet powerful hands

²⁹ **And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it.** ³⁰ **For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them.** God is all knowing. Jesus says God knows exactly what we need to sustain our existence and what is needed to conform us to the image of Christ. God is not in the dark, he is not needing a clue as to what we need physically, mentally, emotionally nor spiritually. What you and I are going to eat later today, God knew about that and has been planning on that forever, literally. Here is what Jesus knows, everything is God's. And God is generous and so worrying about earthy things is as ridiculous as worrying about being thirsty with filled water bottles all around you.

Jesus came for the viewpoint that everything we are and have comes from God. Friends you would have reason to worry if God were a tight fisted God, if God gave to you on the basis of merit, God were not concerned about you, if God didn't love and value you, if God didn't love to bless you, if God were in the dark about what you needed, if God weren't the first and most generous giver. But since God is extravagant in giving, since God loves you and is concerned for you, since God loves to bless, since God knows everything, and since God is the first and most generous giver you need not worry about earthly things.

Jesus says, ³¹ **But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.** ³² **“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.** ³³ **Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.** ³⁴ **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.** Here we have the main point of what Jesus is teaching us. Rather than being preoccupied with our temporal circumstances, concentrate our efforts on seeking God's Kingdom and his righteousness. Instead of seeking out the latest deals and steals, we can put our effort into being more Christ like so that when the world sees us they see a mini version of Christ. Jesus tells us sell your possession and give to the poor not to buy more. God sees that people have a need and he is tapping us on the shoulder to go and proceed to meet that need. One opportunity that I will offer you this morning is our Operation Jesus Cares ministry where we team up with Christ/St Peter on the southside and distribute Christmas gifts and an invitation to meet Jesus at the Christ St Peter Christmas worship services. In the wild adventures of Ben and Bill we are coming up with a chapter that we believe will be a wonderful opportunity for you to be creative and meet the needs of others. We will reveal this at our Thanksgiving Eve service so be sure to come and bring your friends. It will be impactful and make a difference!

I have to share one last thing. When I began talking about worry this morning I know that some of you were worried and your worry was something like this: Am I forgiven? I have sinned and turned my back on God, I have a past and I am so ashamed. Is there really any hope? You are worried that God's grace is not enough. You would have reason to worry if your eternal life was based on your merit, if you had to reach a level of righteousness on your own, if you had to pay for even just some of your sins, if God gave

you what you deserved, but I have great news for you. God says, in Ephesians 1:7 **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.** God gave his Son who took away all your sins, even the ones you knew better, even the ones you did ignorance, even the ones you did but don't know, even the ones that the world considers really bad, Our sin debt that we could not pay has been paid. Our sins debt that could not be paid with silver or gold or Benjamins has been paid in full by the holy and precious blood of Christ. since Jesus has clothed you with his righteousness, Jesus resurrection assure you of your resurrection, since nothing can separate you from the love of Christ, you can rest and not worry in Christ who sets you free. God has everything in his hands, including you, to hold you, to forgive you, to strengthen you to lead with grace and mercy. And that is The Treasure Principle. Every good and perfect gift is given to you by the generous grace of God and every sin you have is taken away by the generous mercy of God. Everybodys soul is priceless, and God meets all of our needs in Christ Jesus, The Treasure Principle!