Live with a Kingdom Perspective

Luke 12:29-32

October 4, 2020

We are in, as you know, Luke Chapter 12, but that's not where I want you to turn first in your Bibles. Not yet. I want you to begin this morning a few chapters earlier, in Luke Chapter 9, Luke chapter 9, Jesus' call to Christian discipleship, which begins in Luke 9:23. Back when we studied this text, we recognized that Jesus' call to discipleship really is a radical call. It strikes our ears as rather startling and that is because Jesus comes to us, as it were, from another world, frankly. He said in John 8:23, "You are from below, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world." So he comes from another world, and when he comes to us, when he calls us to follow him, his call is startling. It's like blazing, brilliant light to those who have never even seen light. No wonder it seems stark. His call is light piercing the darkness and this is what he says in Luke 9:23, "And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take

up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever will lose his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?'"

That call, you have to admit, call to discipleship is radical. And Jesus, in those words, really does pierce to the very heart of what it means to be a human being. The denial of the self that is not natural to the fallen human being. Taking up the cross, the symbol of cruelty, and torture, and shame, and death, that's the very thing we seek to avoid. He calls us to take it up, to forfeit one's life, refusing to strive to gain the world. I mean, these are radical statements. You either trust what Jesus says here, or you do not and for those who don't trust what Jesus says, they will continue doing whatever they can to avoid death. They'll do whatever they can to turn this life into their own version of heaven because this is as close to heaven as they will ever come. But for those who are inclined by the grace of God to trust Jesus, they hear him when he calls. They are awakened by statements like that, they are awakened from their sleep. Their eyes become open to the light. They can sense, even if they don't fully understand it, they can

sense that Jesus is calling to them from another world that he knows better than they do.

In verse 26 of this same text, Luke 9, Jesus speaks about the visitation of the Son of Man in glory. He's speaking about a future event, you can tell. He speak, he speaks of the Son of Man coming in his glory and the glory of the father and of the holy angels. So evidently there is something here that tells us we're meant for greater things, to see and experience the glory that we have never beheld. According to verse 27, he is eager to reveal the kingdom of God, which he wants to share with us and so in verse 28, he starts with a sneak preview. Look at verse 28, "Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothes became dazzling white. And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem."

That brief moment, God chose to pull back the veil on his humanity to give these three disciples, Peter, James, and John, let them get a brief glimpse of the true nature of Jesus Christ.

God wanted them to see his transcendent resplendent glory and to see him in the company of two revered figures from Israel's history, Moses and Elijah, representing law and prophets. God wanted them to see all of this lest they would underestimate this Jesus. This man, who had become to them such a familiar friend, God did not want them to take him for granted. These disciples needed to know that Jesus comes to them, as if I could put it this way, as a visitor from another world, telling them things they can only know by revelation, sharing glorious things that they could never ever imagine in a thousand lifetimes, calling them to follow him into a kingdom of everlasting glory.

We can sympathize with Peter's response here. Look at verse 32, "Peter and those who were with him, they were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah' not knowing what he had said. As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud

saying, 'This is my Son, my chosen one, listen to him!'" "The voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone."

The Transfiguration, that scene comes to an end in a high point with the climax of the revelation of God's Trinitarian nature. The father confesses Jesus as his son, as his chosen one. This Jesus is the pinnacle of revelation to whom his disciples must listen. All the law, all the prophets fulfilled in this one. All the law, all the prophets interpreted by this one. He is the pinnacle of revelation to whom they must listen. And then, that's it.

The four of them, the three disciples and Jesus, they're standing together there in the dark on the mountain. The light's gone. The brilliant dazzling display of glory is gone. The glory has disappeared. They come down the mountain the next day. Life resumes. Routines of life continue. Maybe they got a shower, grabbed some food, turned right back to the demands of ministry to the crowds.

But now they know, and they can't stop thinking about it, that this Jesus, with whom they've been walking for all this time, he is not of this world. There is something else to him. His perspective is not a perspective of this world. He speaks of what he has clearly seen. He tells about what he knows, a heavenly glory that is not found on this earth and that which informs his thinking, what sets his priorities, what fuels his ambitions has nothing at all to do with this temporal life, this fallen world; has no part in this fallen world. And that is what he came to proclaim to them.

That is the mindset that I want you to take into Luke chapter 12 this morning. Go ahead and turn over to our text. Luke 12, we are looking at verse 29 and following. I want you to take that transcendent perspective into this text to see what is in Jesus' mind as he comes to us, preaches to us in this text. Remember, Jesus is here preaching, speaking to, primarily to his disciples, to those who have heeded that call to discipleship, that radical call. They've chosen to deny themselves. They've chosen to take up their crosses. They've chosen to follow him. These disciples, these are the people that in, back in chapter 12 verse 4, he calls friends. As we've seen, for Jesus, for

these friends, the environment is becoming increasingly toxic, hostile. It is eventually going to turn violent. Despite the circumstances, despite these unfavorable times, Jesus chooses to train his disciples in the midst of this. He chooses to prepare them for the future. And the future, for them, is not going to get better, it's gonna get, temporally speaking, it's going to get worse. Can we identify with this?

His commands here, it assume a foundation of trust in his disciples. When he commands their conscious, he assumes, he knows, they trust me. At least some, maybe they can, they can suffer and struggle through little faith thinking. But foundationally, they trust him. His commands are meant to instill a sense of assurance in them. "Do not fear," verse 4. "Fear not," verse 7. Twice, once in verse 11 and once in verse 12, "Do not be anxious." So to deepen their sense of confidence, to put them at even greater ease, Jesus assures them they are of far greater value than animals and plants, and God takes care of those. We learned that last week verses 22-28 if God sustains, preserves, adorns all the lesser lifeforms in his creation, won't he do the same for them? In fact, won't he go beyond the physical, won't he be, go beyond the temporal to minster to

their deepest needs because they are created in his image and they are redeemed by him? Won't he minister to their very souls? He does. God sustains them spiritually. He preserves them eternally with eternal life, and he adorns them in the very beauty of Christ's righteousness, the beauty and perfection of his very own Son. That's what we learned last week.

So armed with those, all those assurances, Jesus then presses his point even further in these verses. Look at verses 29-32, "And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Jesus is speaking there from a kingdom perspective and that is what he has come to call his disciples to; is to share this kingdom perspective. Calls them out of this world with all of its mundane, trivial concerns, and he calls them to join him in living with a kingdom perceptive. In other words, don't live

like the world lives: striving, fighting for stuff. Don't covet mundane, temporal treasures of the earth. Don't let your heart get anxious over trivial things, passing fleeing things. Live like those who have been given a kingdom, for, for goodness sake! You've been given a kingdom, an eternal kingdom. Live like it! Children of Abraham in faith, like him, we don't find any rest here on earth. We're nomads. We're pilgrims. We're wanderers just passing through. Like Abraham, we, too, in a sense live in tents. We look forward to a city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. That is kingdom thinking on behalf of Abraham.

And folks, this is my prayer for us, my prayer for Grace Church, for all faithful churches, really, during this time, living in this time, for all of us as Christians, whom God has chosen to live in such interesting times. I'm asking God to teach us to live above the mayhem. I'm asking God to help us in our thought life, in our habits, and in our actions to transcend all this turmoil, and chaos, and confusion. We need to live with a kingdom perspective. We need to live now for what mattered a thousand years ago, and we need to live now for what's going to matter a thousand years from now. What's happening right now in

our time is a blip. It will soon be gone. Instead of walking around with our stomachs in knots, bewildered and perplexed, wringing our hands, fretting and worrying about what's going to happen, we need to fix our gaze on Christ. That's it. We need to set our hearts on what Jesus has promised us, the kingdom of God, because our future in him is nothing but bright and glorious.

Unless your heart is tied to the world, you're not destined to be swept away with the world in all of the judgments that are coming. If you still have some strings attached, you need to cut them now because this ship is sinking. So don't go down with the *Titanic*. Don't rearrange the deck furniture on a sinking ship. As Christians, our, our future is bright. Our hope is certain and eternal. For all the promises of God find their, yes and Amen in Christ.

That's what Jesus is speaking of today and that's the mindset. I want you to grab that. I want you to have that. I'm praying the Holy Spirit will instill, and strengthen, and auger that in; work it into the very fabric of your soul so you do not

struggle during the times we are going through, so that you rejoice instead with great confidence. This is, this sermon is all about, this is what Jesus is teaching here, it's all about your assurance. It's all about your confidence and strength in him.

The verses here 29 to 32, they divide into two points, two verses for each point. So, first point, what not to seek, second point is, what to seek. Okay. First point, what not to seek, what not to pursue, which I'm going to state in this way, to live with a kingdom perspective, first, refuse what's mundane and trivial. That's the point. Refuse what is mundane and trivial. To live with a kingdom perspective, you want to refuse what is mundane and what is trivial. Just refuse it, turn away from it. Refuse to join the mad dash of the world, to, to, to keep on seeking what is mundane and trivial, what is common, what is passing away. Gives a command in verse 29, and you'll notice it's a two-fold command about what not to seek and then in the next verse 30, he gives two reasons why we should obey that command. Two-fold command, and then two reasons.

Let's start with the two-fold command in verse 29. He says, "And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried." That second, that's a command, "nor be worried." It's a, more literally, it's do not keep worrying. So two imperatives, two commands: Do not seek, do not be worried. Do not seek, do not be worried, they're present tense commands, both of them, which means there is this continuous, ongoing sense. So it's do not keep on seeking, do not keep on worrying. Those two issues are connected, aren't they, what you seek, what you worry about? They're connected. What you seek and what you pursue that is obviously going to be a constant preoccupation for you. It's gonna be a continuous reason for deep and abiding concern for you and Jesus forbids both, constant worrying, along with what causes it, which is the thing you are seeking. So stop doing that. Stop living that way.

When Jesus says, "Do not seek what you are to eat or what you are to drink," it might seem like he is just simply summarizing what he said in the immediately, prees, preceding verses, the immediate preceding context, in verses 22-28. It might seem like a summary statement. "Don't," don't, "seek what you are to eat, what you are to drink." But that is not the

case. It is not a repetition of that. It is not a summary of that. Don't be anxious about your life is what he said in verse 22. He says, "What you will eat, or about your body, what you will put on." So that verse and the verses that follow they are confronting anxiety. The command in verse 29, predominant here, is do not seek. So that command forbids a certain kind of ambition, not the anx, not the anxiety per se, the results from chasing it. He's getting to the heart of the matter, forbidding something that is directive of the will, something that influences what we want. And what is that something?

It takes us back to a sin he confronted earlier. Look at verse 15. He says, "Take care, and be on your guard against," what? "All covetousness." So in verse 29, when he says, "Do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink." Eating and drinking joined together like that in this context, those two actions didn't come up in verses 22 to 28, but they did come up and they were connected together, they are linked together in the parable of the covetous fool, verse 19. That's what the fool wanted for himself, isn't it? To relax and then eat and drink and then be merry. His relaxation allowed him to consume, eat and drink, and the, con, result of the, cons, consuming was

merriment. That's about as far as his limited mind could go. That's what heaven looked like to him.

Jesus wants us to take everything that we learned from verses 13-21. Remember that covetous younger brother in the crowd, "Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me," the rich fool in the parable? He wants us to take all that teaching forbidding covetousness, and he wants us to insert it here in verse 29. "Do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink." Do not seek to fulfill covetous desires, that's what he's saying.

That is the folly of the covetous fool is that he is seeking as his ultimate payoff what he is going to eat and what he is going to drink. That's his utopia. That's his heaven on earth, to kick back, relax, consume at will, indulge his appetites, feed his desires, give himself pleasure that is the good life, that's what he's after and Jesus is saying don't do that. Don't seek that. Don't make that your aim. Don't make that your goal, your ambition. Get off that train right now.

Stop the mad dash trying to get more and more of what is essentially mundane trivial stuff: food, drink. Why not? Why shouldn't I pursue that? Because he says you are made for so much more. That's what's in his mind here. And as we can see verse 29, covetousness and worry, they are linked together, aren't they? Inextricably linked. That is why following from that section, verses 13-21, all on the, on, all on the sin of covetousness, that follows with 22 to 28, all about anxiety, because anxiety follows covetousness.

A covetous heart, as we were saying, one, a heart that is detached from the worship of God, will do nothing but covet. It will do nothing but try to consume and fill empty voids, spaces, and it will never be satisfied because our hearts were made for worshiping God and God alone. You cut off that lifeline and you're dangling and consuming everything in the created world. Coveting, coveting, coveting, never, never ever fulfilling, and so you're anxious, anxious, anxious. Same thing here. That's why Jesus connects the two commands, "Do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink," and put literally here, do not keep on worrying. Again, we saw that in the parable of the rich fool. Coveting produced anxiety even in him. Saw into his

thought life there, Jesus brought us into that, so Jesus forbids it.

There's a different verb here than in verse 22. In verse 22, Jesus, when he commanded against anxiety, he commanded used the verb *merimnao*, "Do not be anxious." Here, it's *meteorizomai*, from *meteoros*. Is, it's where we get our word for meteor, *meteoros*. The word *meteoros,* it refers to something that is suspended in midair, like a meteor; suspended up, just hanging there. Greek scholar A.T. Robertson puts it this way. He says, it's to, the word, "The word means to lift up on high, to lift oneself up with false hopes, to be buoyed up." And then, then he uses a metaphor, "It's to be tossed like a ship at sea, a ship that goes up, hangs there on a wave." Picture here of anxiety, doubt, instability in the mind, lifted up, standing firmly in midair.

That metaphor of a ship at sea, I don't know if you've ever been on a ship at sea in the middle of a very violent storm, but there's a feeling of instability being caught up in a severe tempest, tossed around by a very powerful storm. This is, this

referring to a double mindedness that comes from being driven in one direction by the wind of a desire, then blown in another direction by a worry, and then pulled in yet another direction by a different desire, blown by the wind of yet another anxiety. This is about the doubting man in James 1:6, who is caught always in two minds. The one who doubts what is he like? "the wave of the sea," right, "that is driven and tossed by the wind. Let not that man expect to receive anything from God; he is a double minded man, unstable in all his ways."

Conflicting desires create worry, instability in the mind. He's carried up to the crest of the wave like a ship on the sea in the middle of the storm and once at the top, he's exposed to these confusing winds, blown left, blown right. Then he falls down into the trough of the wave, down in the very belly of the ocean. He's anxious. From that trough he's looking up at high walls of water on either side of him, feeling like he's going to be crushed.

Clinical psychologists diag, diagnose people like this as bi-polar, as manic depressive and, actually, we can see from the

Bible, this man is just suffering from competing lusts, going up, going down, going up, going down; tossed to and fro by care and anxiety. Isaiah calls them the wicked, Isaiah, 55 or, 57:20, they are like the, "The wicked are like the storm-tossed sea, for it cannot be still, and its waters churn up mire and muck." Jesus commands his disciples, that is not for you. That is not the way I want your minds to be. Don't do that. Don't live that way. Stop the mad dash, refuse to join this endless pursuit that the world pursues of mundane and trivial things. Why? Because you're made for so much more.

To this two-fold prohibition, don't seek, don't be worrying, he adds a two-fold reason, verse 30. Why, why not seek what they seek? Why not be anxious like they are? "For the nations of the world seek after these things," number one. And, "Your Father knows that you need them," number two. Two reasons. Reason number one, first reason not to seek to fulfill covetous desires, not to be preoccupied by worry, be double-minded, because that is what idolators act like. Don't be like them. The nations of the world, that is a distributive statement there, as in, all the nations of the world, each and every nation that does not know, does not worship the true and living God each one

of them is characterized by exactly this. That is why nations continue to go to war.

Human history is a history of warfare. From top to bottom, kings to peasants, old to young, men, women, every nation, everyone in it, the nations of the world don't just seek these things, they strongly seek these things. It's an intensified form of the verb here. The verb *zeteo*, it's intensified with a preposition, *epiezeteo.* It's intensified, strongly seeking. So covetousness drives their ambition, it is an idolatry that frustrates all their efforts. They seek diligently for food and drink. They seek diligently, endlessly, striving for filling themselves, finding fulfillment and nothing ultimately fulfills them.

They can intensive search and extensive search the world over for what will satisfy their covetous desires, and they are never ever ever satisfied. Why do they keep searching, never finding rest? Because they have no heavenly father. They don't have a father. They are idols that they serve, nothing but dead, rotting wood. That money you have in your pocket, colored green,

fancy printing, it's dead wood. That's all it is. It's just colored with green paint.

God says through Jeremiah, Jeremiah 2:13, "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and," second evil is "to hew out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." They don't deliver and satisfy because they *can't* deliver and satisfy. Jesus is putting it to his disciples this way. He says, you're, you're not like the nations of the world. You're not like them at all with no father in heaven to take care of their needs, no father to fulfill the deepest desires of the heart. Nations of the world are idolaters. They know nothing of God's providential kindness and care. They're foreigners to that, strangers to that. Don't mimic them. They're ignorant of fatherly love and compassion and care. They're ignorant. Don't mimic that. Don't chase what they chase. Don't seek what they seek. Don't make decisions like they do. Don't prioritize what they do. Don't involve yourself in the same pursuits. Why not?

Reason number two. Reason number two, because why not seek what they seek? Why not be, pra, preoccupied with their worries? Verse 30, because "Your Father." Your, is emphasized there. "Your Father knows that you need them." He emphasizes this in the possessive pronoun, your, your; again, calling attention to the fact that his disciples are not like the nations of the world, having no father. They, they, they have to rely on provision of lifeless idols, which means since they're lifeless idols and they're just a bunch of dead wood, they gotta rely on themselves. They gotta be their own gods. They gotta provide for themselves, provide all their own protection, all their own stuff, try to fulfill their deepest needs. What are they? Limited human beings, limited power, frail, weak. There is a time fuse on their lifespan; eventually going to end it all, so it's gonna end.

No, but you, you have a father who knows what you need. They don't, you do. Not only that, but your father has the power to deliver what you need to you. When Jesus says, "Your Father knows that you need them." He knows; this is a reference to his omniscience, isn't it? His omniscience, I mean, how can Jesus use the plural possessive pronoun there, your. Your including, I

mean it's, y'all, right? It's everyone. And when he speaks to disciples here, he is speaking to a whole bunch of people. Here, he calls them a little flock, so it's a little in number at this time, but here we are 2,000 years later, there's us. There is all of us in human history. This promise is for all of us. So when, when he says, "Your Father knows," what is he claiming for God, the Father? Omniscience. He knows everything perfectly. He knows everything intimately. He knows everything completely. He knows.

His omniscience works in perfect harmony then with his omnipotence. I mean, if so much, so much for knowing if you can't do anything about it, right? Not only does he know, he does something about it. He can do something. He has omnipotence. He, he can provide everything his children need by the wisdom of good providence. You believe that? Good. Then don't seek what they seek. Don't worry. That's what he's saying. You are provided for by a loving, all-knowing father. You're protected by a powerful father, a powerful God, so live that way. Live like you've got a father in heaven. That's the negative side. That's the prohibition. He prohibits his disciples from following the world around them. He's prohibiting

us from following the ways and the worries and the seeking and striving of the world around us. Don't seek the mundane and the trivial.

Instead, second point, to live with a kingdom perspective, seek what's glorious and eternal. To live with a kingdom perspective, here's our second point, seek what is glorious and what is eternal. Verses 31-32, "Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Two more commands, here, two more reasons. There is one command and one reason per verse, so different from the previous two verses. One command, one reason in verse 31, one command one reason in verse 32. Remember Jesus knows what we don't know. He's not of this world. He sees from a very different perspective. We understand in Jesus there are two natures, divine nature, human nature, right? So in his divine nature as the second person of the Trinity, Jesus is like the Father, omnipotent and omniscient. He knows all things. He knows that we are meant for something else. He knows what we were made to be. He knows what we were designed to enjoy. He knows the future in his, hum, or in his divine nature, he knows what awaits us.

In his human nature, as Jesus, apart from any sin, he has no weakness. He has no frailty in his thinking. He has no dimness of understanding. He knows the Scriptures. He knows the father through the Scriptures. The spirit of the living God came upon him at his baptism, informs all of his ministry, all of his power, all of his authority. He clearly sees from the Scripture, discerns what our frail eyes see so dimly. What our, what we in our minds perceive so vaguely, Jesus sees it perfectly. He knows from his study of the Scripture that he is the king of God's kingdom, that he is the one to whom all Messianic promises point. He knows what that means, he knows what's happening, he knows what the future is, and he calls his subjects to join him in seeking God's kingdom like he does. He calls them to value what he values as king of God's kingdom. He came to receive a kingdom from the father and he's calling us all to come along. He wants us to love what he loves, he wants us to prioritize what he prioritizes, so that we might join him in pursuing what he pursues. He says, seek his kingdom.

It's such a different perspective, right? From him. He, he's, you can tell he so wants us to get it. He wants us to let

go of everything here, it's not important. As the king of God's kingdom, he's calling upon us as his subjects, whom he calls friends, by the way, he's calling upon us to accept a new mission, to take up in our minds a new ambition and join him, you might say, on a crusade to seek and find treasure, to seek infinite riches, to, to seek and find eternal wealth. I mean, he's excited about this, and he wants us to be excited about it, but we will never be excited about it if we keep looking at this world. We deceive that this is all there is. He says stop that, all those mundane, trivial matters, they're gonna be; things like your food, and your drink, and your clothing, and all the rest, all those things are mundane, trivial things. They'll be taken care of just fine.

Seek his kingdom, these things will be added to you. Added to you, that's divine passive there refers to God as the one who is the one adding all these things. Food and drink to sustain our lives, strengthen us, preserve our lives, clothing to cover and adorn our bodies. He adds all these things to our labors, making our labor count for something. God provides us with the rest we need. He provides us with the enjoyment that we desire. He

provides us with the satisfaction that we crave, the fulfillment we long for, and our hearts are at rest and content.

As a young man serving in the Naval Special Warfare, I remember in my unit in Foxtrot Platoon Seal Team Eight, being amazed at how well we were supplied, how abundantly we were provided for, and especially in contrast with other units in other branches in the military, very fine men, exp, experienced competent soldiers. But because of the unit we were attached to, a Special Forces unit, we had copious quantities of bullets to shoot. Men, can I get an Amen! We had demolition to blow up. We had gear, all kinds of gear for all different environments, and we could adapt all the things that we had for the various op, oper, operating environments we were in. By contrast, we'd go out into somebody else's range, the Army's range, to go and shoot, blow stuff up, some of these units only had 100 rounds per man to shoot in a training cycle. They were expected to gain proficiency with their weapons with 100 bullets. Go, be ready for war. It was very frustrating for them.

But because of how well we were supplied, we never worried about whether or not we'd have bullets to shoot, demo to blow, batteries for our radios, gas for our engines, let alone food and water, other mundane things that sustained our lives and gave us strength and sharpened our reasoning and mental acuity. All we had to do is just keep training, keep our mind focused on the mission, stay focused on doing our jobs and performing our roles. But for us, it was all about mission completion. We were intentional. Intentional even about ignoring issues of supply, thinking about where our meals would come from. We knew those mundane matters, as important as they are, they're not our job. All those things were being attended, attended to by very competent people who were using a very reliable tried and true chain of supply. It was going to come to us.

Why were we so well supplied, such that we never had to worry about ammo, food, water, all the rest? Because those above us, those who outranked us, who were ranked far higher than we were, who had offices and desks at the Pentagon, they had a great interest in seeing us succeed. For many of them, their careers faced make or break scenarios every time we went out in the field and went on an op. Our success meant their success.

Our failure meant their failure. So we never wanted for supply. We never concerned ourselves with things we needed to accomplish the mission that we were given. We just focused on the mission itself, and we left the supply and all those other mundane trivial matters to other people; important things but left unto others.

You see the canair, comparison, right? That's what Jesus, he knows this so well. That's what he sees so clearly. That's what he wants us to see and understand, as well, that the father outranks us. Can we agree to that? He's way high up. He's infinitely high, and he has tied his glory to the success of his Son. So Jesus is never going to lack in what he needs to accomplish the father's will, is he? And what is Jesus, his mission? "I will never lose one of those whom the Father has given me, but I will raise him up on the last day." That's the mission. Is the father gonna supply?

Jesus is on the Mount of Transfiguration, as we read earlier, when he spoke with Moses and Elijah about his departure that he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem, about the

completion of his mission. I think it's a safe bet he wasn't saying to Moses and Elijah something like, hey, by the way, can you let the father know I'd like some better food, a little nicer clothing. I mean I'm about to go into Jerusalem as the king. I'd like some better, shinier clothes. You know, something that really stands, something that pops. Never concerned himself with that, did he? Such mundane, trivial things, his mind is on the mission. That is what he wants our minds to be on, as well. "Seek his kingdom, these things will be added to you." The first command accompanied by a first word of assurance, seek God's kingdom, and rest assured the supply is going to be there when you need it.

Look at verse 32, this second command and second source of assurance brings us to whole new heights, here. The command is fear not, and the rest of the verse is assurance. Fear not, there's the command, the rest of this is assurance, little flock, "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." This is such a precious expression of care, isn't it? We'll give it the proper time and attention to unpack this and understand this command there, fear not, same thing we've been looking at throughout the rest of the chapter, the same thing he

said to his friends back in verse 4. He says, "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who can kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do." And the assurance there in verse 4 is that our enemies have no power over our souls. God does; they don't. Don't worry about your body because the soul is untouched. The soul is cared for by God.

So being righty, rightly related to God as friends of God's son, his only beloved son, we're well protected. In fact, God is so meticulous in taking care of us and protecting us, he's got all of our hairs numbered, even the most insignificant parts of us are covered, protected, watched very carefully by an omniscient, all-knowing, all-powerful God. Here the command, fear not, goes beyond mere safety and protection from our enemies. Here, the assurance is that we are sheep. We are led by a good shepherd and he is taking us on a trip, on a journey to see his father. The goal at the end, the reward, just that, is to see the father, is to come into full possession of this inheritance that we have been granted, which is a glorious eternal kingdom. Quite a lot of inheritance to bequeath to a bunch of sheep, isn't it?

Two images of the believer here. One is explicitly stated that we're sheep. The other is implicit in the fact that God is our father and so that would mean then by extension that we are his children. He's father, we're his children. Both are images of a believer, right, in Scripture. We are sheep. We are children. And both of those images notice, sheep, children, what are they? Small, weak, vulnerable. With a child, you would call a child being child childish. With a sheep being a sheep, getting dirty, falling into stuff, getting eaten by predators, you'd call it a dumb sheep. These images of us as sheep and as children, I know that strikes at the heart of pride. Good. Let it confront your pride and learn to embrace these.

I, I had a difficulty with this as an unbeliever knowing these images. Sheep, children. I'd be like, I'm no sheep! I'm no child! You know the only people who say that are stupid sheep and dumb children. That's what I was, I was an unbeliever, didn't get it. It is the mark of maturity that the images of sheep and children don't offend us at all. They actually thrill our souls. We actually rejoice over this. This is our, this is our assurance right here; we realize how, when we realize how God sees us, we come to see how those images evoke from God all

of his eternal power on our behalf for our benefit. We see how those images, sheep, children, they evoke from God his compassion. They excite his attention, his care. They, they bring his protection to us, his provision to us.

Listen, we have nothing to fear. Let's make several observations here about these images, just gonna give us assurance and boldness to obey the Lord's command, fear not. I mean, after you hear this, you're like, of course, why would, why would we fear, ever, ever about anything.

First, Jesus calls his disciples. I've got three, three observations I'll make here, first one, Jesus calls his disciples his little flock, the word that word little and at the time he said this, he spoke this little flock, it could be taken literally to refer to the fact that Jesus' disciples were very few in number; not very many of them in comparison to this massive throng that they were surrounded by here, Jesus' followers are clearly outnumbered. They are vastly outgunned. So Jesus is just saying you're a little flock, point of fact. Few in comparison to the large numbers of unbelieving hostile people

around you. Your numbers are negligible. In fact, they're so small that you are utterly insignificant as what counts in this world. But that counts with God.

From passages like Revelation 7:9, we know that when God gathers his people in the end, there will be, "A great multitude that no one," can, "number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages," all of them, "standing before the throne," and from, "and before the Lamb." That's then! That's the ingathering of all of God's people there. But at any given time on the earth, the number of believers is always relatively so few compared, number of believers relatively few to comparison to unbelievers. We're always outnumbered. That's always the way it is.

Moses, as you know, stood alone often against an unbelieving nation, sometimes fearing for his life, thinking they're going to stone him and return to Egypt. Elijah, he complained before God, "I alone am left." And God had to say, Oh, no, you're not alone, but you are a number of a very small group. "There are seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed

the knee to Baal." So very few during the time of Moses, during the time of Elijah. Very few during the time of Christ.

This little flock, obvious as they stood among these massive crowds of thousands; relative numbers of believer to unbeliever don't look better in any age. The ratio is always way outnumbering us. In Luke 13:23, Jesus is asked by someone in the crowd, "'Lord, will those," who be, "who are saved be few?' Jesus answered him there, 'Strive to enter the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.'" "For many are called," Matthew 22:14, "but few are chosen." There are always the many, always the many religious, always the few who are actual believers, part of the flock.

Listen, God isn't too concerned about the math. His infinite power makes up the rest of the weight on the scale that we lack. His power makes up for low numbers at any given point in any given age. This is the lesson I wish the evangelical church could have learned long ago, many decades ago. Numbers don't matter. Quit counting! Quit boasting of numbers! Wish we had the spirit of a Jonathan who would give us courage. "For

nothing," he said, "Can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few." Remember when just he and his armor bearer went slicing through Philistines going up the hill. Two guys the Lord gave them victory. Courageous. What matters to God and what pleases him is not the quantity of souls, but the quality of the soul. God says in Isaiah 57:15, "Thus says the one who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit," to revi, "to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.'"

That's why I say, beloved, accept how Jesus describes you as lowly sheep, as small children take that badge on you proudly because God dwells in a high and holy place. He inhabits all of eternity. Oh, but he also dwells with the one who's humble, lowly, contrite. Isaiah 66:1 and 2, "Thus says the Lord: 'Heaven is my throne, the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.'"

Folks, do you tremble, find your heart trembling at God's Word? That's a good sign. All that to say, when Jesus says, little flock, it's not the size of the flock that matters to God, it's the nature and condition of the flock. Just belonging to the flock that's what counts because it marks your nature as a sheep. That's a second observation. When he calls his disciples, little flock, Jesus is referring to these believers as sheep. They're sheep; you say, no kidding what an amazing observation they're sheep. But you know, though, this is the only time in the entire, not just New Testament, but Old Testament as well, the only time in the entire Bible that you are gonna find this exact phrase, little flock, applied to Jesus' disciples, applied to God's followers. Little flock this is it. This is the only time in Scripture. And it's significant that Jesus is the one saying it and that he is saying it here.

Adjective, little, obviously refers to the relative number of Jesus' disciples in contrast to the rest of the unbelieving world. But in addition to the numerical sense, this term, little, also demonstrates affection, doesn't it? There's an affection intended here. So Jesus takes a term of affection, he

applies it to these people, and then by applying it to them, he has, in that act, he has taken personal responsibility to this little flock as their shepherd.

So follow the logic, if Jesus is referring to them as sheep, he is acknowledging them then, that they are part of God's flock. They belong to God therefore they are owned by him. They're under his special care, under his protection and that means, as Jesus knows from Scripture, that he himself is their chosen shepherd. He's been appointed by God to shepherd this flock.

I want to illustrate this by having you turn to Ezekiel, Ezekiel chapter 34. And I want you to see in Ezekiel 34 this indication of God's concern for his flock, his interest not only in the flock and its health and its safety, but he is also concerned to set a faithful shepherd over his flock, very concerned. Ezekiel 34 look at, start in chapter 34 verse 1, "The word of the Lord came to me, 'Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who

have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you've ruled them.'"

Those are the root sins of Israels' leaders, religious men, shepherds. This is their failure in leading God's flock and shepherding those people. They're self-centered. They're greedy for gain. They have no love, no compassion for the sheep, so of course, they've failed to sacrifi, or to sacrifice themselves for the sheep because they're all false shepherds. See a lot of this going on in the pastorate today, I'm ashamed to say. It's so sad to me. Keep reading. Look at the results of bad shepherding, starting in verse 5, so the sheep, they're scattered, they're scattered because there was no shepherd and, and they became food, food for all the wild beasts. "My sheep were scattered; they wandered all over the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered," look at, listen to the heart of God here, they're scattered, they're scattered,

they're scattered "over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them."

Their hearts, God's heart bleeding over this. So because the shepherds, appointed shepherds failed to care for the vulnerable and the weak, because they left them as prey, verse 7, "Therefore, you shepherds, you hear the word of the Lord," Listen up! "As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my sheep have become a prey, my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord," When he says it twice, you'd better stand by, "Thus says the Lord God, behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them."

Isn't that wicked, that a shepherd is not only fleecing the flock, but killing the fattest of the flock and taking, I think about this in today's terms, taking their money, taking their

prestige, using it all for themselves. Doesn't it make you angry? Judgment on the false shepherds. Let all false pastors, all those who are pastors and elders in name only, let them be warned. But then this blessed promise comes like a ray of light shining into dark, dark crevasses. Look at verse 11, "For thus says the Lord God, behold," I, "I, myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out.

"As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that," that, "have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

"I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. Then they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be," the

shepherds of my sheep, "be the shepherd of my sheep and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. "I will feed them in justice."

Down in verse 22, again "I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken."

Man, I just want to say, Amen, bow and close in prayer. That is so good. Read that again for yourselves later today. Micah identifies that same one shepherd Micah 5:4. He says in Micah 5:2 he will be born in Bethlehem of Judea. Micah 5:4, this one, this one appointed by God is there to "stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth."

So what did Jesus say when he came? I am the what? "good shepherd," right? John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." And man, did he do that in a way we could never anticipate. Verse 14-15, John 10 "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and they know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."

Andy Stanley, son of Charles Stanley and pastor of this massive multi-site church in Atlanta, Georgia, was answering a question posed to him from *Christianity Today*: Should we stop referring to pastors as Shepherds? Here is what he said, "Absolutely, that word needs to go away. Jesus talked about shepherds because there was no one over there in a pasture he could point to, but to bring that imagery today and say, 'Pastor, you're the shepherd of the flock.' No. I've never seen a flock. I've never spent five minutes with a shepherd. It was culturally relevant in the time of Jesus, but it's not, culturry, culturally relevant anymore." That article was posted in a section of the *Christianity Today* website called, *Leaders Insight*. He's influencing other people with that, other leaders

with that poison. Leader Insight, quote, "Get it Done Leadership." It should be called, Leadership that God Condemns, Leadership that Offends Christ.

Listen, contrary to the sentiment of the modern age, today's church leaders do not need more leadership seminars. They don't need more business acumen. They don't need to be visionaries and CEOs. They need to return to the shepherding metaphor, now more than ever. God said through Jeremiah, Jeremiah 23:4, "I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither should any be missing, declares the Lord God." They follow the pattern set, Jeremiah 23:5, by the Good Shepherd, "A righteous Branch, … the king who deals wisely, who executes justice and righteousness in the land." Who do you want as your pastor? One who is following the pattern of Andy Stanley or one following the pattern of the disciple of Jesus Christ?

The best pastors, the best shepherds, are those who know how to be faithful sheep because they know that they are sheep. They listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd. They follow that

pattern as clearly and closely as possible. They, they do what Jesus instructed Peter to do. John 21:15-17, "Feed my lambs," "Tend my sheep," "Feed my sheep." So when Jesus calls his disciples little flock, he's taking personal responsibility for this flock. He's saying, they're mine because God, Father, they're yours. And it's my joy and privilege to die for them, to save them from the greatest enemy which is sin and death, Satan, hell.

Finally, one more observation, a third one. This is all we have time for, for today. Jesus assures his believers that they're favored by God, though they're few in number, because they're lowly sheep, but they are his sheep. Finally, third, Jesus pictures disciples, his disciples as children of his Father in heaven. They're children of his father in heaven, Luke 12:32, again, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Though they're sheep, they're also children. And if children, Romans 8:17, then they are heirs. They are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, together with Christ as our king. Listen, we're heirs. We've inherited a kingdom. We're going to have more to say about that, expand on that point, that thought next week.

But I want to wrap up just by emphasizing the implications of what we're hearing from our Lord, this Good Shepherd. To live with a kingdom perspective, we need to learn to refuse what is mundane and trivial. We need to just turn our eyes away from that. Don't seek it. Don't make the things of the world your ambition. What you spend all your time and energy on. Listen, those things don't matter, ultimately. We all have to work, don't we? We all have to put food on the table, put a roof over our heads, put clothes on. We need to work hard and diligently so we can be generous to share with those in need. But rejoice to be generous with other people. Jesus said, "It's more blessed to give than receive."

So we want to do this: work hard, work as unto the Lord. But man, we do not care about the stuff here. We do not care about it. We're all watching in horror and astonishment as the world is ripping itself apart. Those in power are fighting tooth and nail for more power. Those without power are tearing down our institutions and they're trying to find someone somewhere to blame. So they can demand power, so they can demand money; at least they could get if they can't get power and money from some

people, they want them to beg and grovel at their feet, give them some respect. Look, all of this tearing down and tearing apart, this is, it's heading for a train wreck, and I think everybody sees it, but so many feel powerless to stop it. Some are even like rapacious wolves. They are seeing this as an opportunity to profit from this. It's so sad.

None of that, none of that is our end, beloved. None of it. So we're not gonna get caught up in the fight. In Christ, and because of Christ, who is not of this world, we're gonna transcend that strife. We're gonna refuse to fight for the scraps of a dead, decaying, sin cursed world. We're not gonna do it.

Instead, we're gonna seek what we can't find here. We're going to love those who are so churning in their hearts. We're gonna love them through it. We're gonna seek them. We're gonna try to find the lost sheep. We're gonna try to win them to Christ and preach the Gospel. We're gonna care. We're gonna be tender in our hearts because they don't know what they don't know. We want to rescue them from certain, certain destruction.

We've got our minds on something else, don't we? That which is glorious, that which is eternal. Paul said it best in Colossians 3:1-4, he says, since then, you little flock, you "have been raised up with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. For you have died."

You have died to all of this. "Let anyone who would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." We've already crossed that bridge. We've died that death. Our "life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, you also will appear with him in glory." To that we say, "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!" Right? Christ is our Good Shepherd. He shepherds us so wisely, so skillfully, so lovingly. He keeps us safe. He keeps us sound, protected, provided for, all in the warmth of his fold. So we are happy as a church to stay put, to go where he leads us, to obey the tender voice that calls to us.

When he says things like this, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," oh, man, our hearts are assured, aren't they? Our, our hearts are strengthened by that, encouraged. We've got steel in our spine. We've got resolve on our faces. We've gonna march forward as he calls us to march forward. We are so content, and we are, our hearts are at ease. We're grateful with our state. We're rejoicing in our station, eager to go wherever he takes us. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for this good word from the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Savior and our Lord. We love him dearly. We see what a high and holy privilege it is to be counted as a little flock. You care for the little flock under Jesus' shepherding care. You use him to provide and protect for, protect us. You use him to guide us safely. Jesus is ascended and he is at your right hand, and he deployed the Holy Spirit into each heart of each sheep, that we might be kept safe, connected to Christ, the head, joined together as a body, walking together as a flock. Father, this is your wisdom, and in your wisdom, you've rejoiced to subvert the expectations of the world. You rejoice to overturn what people expect. They expect

that the powerful will win, the rich will win, the mighty, the wise will win and you subvert all expectations by choosing us, not many wise, not many noble, not many mighty.

You love us, you set your seal upon us, giving us the Holy Spirit. You made us one flock under one Shepherd. He is the one we follow. He is the one we listen to. Help us not to be ever afraid. Help us to not worry like the world worries, to get our hearts off the things they seek. Unite our hearts to fear your name. Focus our minds on Christ and Christ alone. In his name we pray, amen.