

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

RRR. Handling Covetousness

(Luke 12:13-34)

I. Introduction

- A. Covetousness is a form of idolatry (Colossians 3:5b), and it not only abounded in Jesus' day, but it is dominant in our era where the temptation abounds to make money one's source of sufficiency in place of God.
- B. Jesus addressed this issue in Luke 12:13-34, and we view the passage for insight, application and edification:

II. Handling Covetousness, Luke 12:13-34.

- A. When a man in the crowd that flocked around Jesus asked Him to tell his brother to divide the inheritance with him (Luke 12:13), Christ refused to act as a judge since He lacked the legal authority to interfere in matters of inheritance, Luke 12:14 (Aldred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1912, vol. 2, p. 243, cited in J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 314).
- B. Besides, "the Jewish law of inheritance was so clearly defined, and . . . so just, that if this person had had any just or good cause, there could have been no need for appealing to Jesus." (Ibid.) Thus, Jesus told the crowd to avoid covetousness, implying that the man who had asked the question was covetous, and that he meant to use Jesus' influence to get what legally did not belong to him according to clear and just Jewish inheritance laws!
- C. That teaching showed it is foolish to make wealth more valuable than God and His righteousness, v. 15-21:
 - 1. In Jesus' day, the Pharisees believed and taught "that the pursuit of material riches was the highest good because wealth was the evidence of divine approval." (Pentecost, Ibid.)
 - 2. However, that view easily led to idolatrous covetousness where people exchanged their reliance on God for wealth to meet their livelihood needs. Christ thus warned His listeners to beware of such covetousness, for one's life did not consist of the abundance of material possessions or wealth that he had, Luke 12:15.
 - 3. Jesus illustrated this truth by giving a parable about a rich man in Luke 12:16-21:
 - a. He taught that a wealthy farmer enjoyed great bounty in his harvest, so he planned to take down his current barns and build larger ones to store all his produce, Luke 12:16-18.
 - b. The farmer then thought that he would tell himself to take it easy, to eat, drink, and be merry and live the rest of his life in ease off of his great collection of farm produce, Luke 12:19.
 - c. However, the Lord told the man that he was a fool, for God would require his soul that night when his earthly life ended, that then all of his collected wealth would go to someone else, Luke 12:20.
 - d. Jesus concluded that this is the case of one who collects much wealth in this life but is not spiritually rich toward God, Luke 12:21. God is far more important than wealth, for we must deal with God forever!
- D. Christ then taught that doing God's will above wealth leads to livelihood security anyway, Luke 12:22-34:
 - 1. Turning to His disciples (Luke 12:22a), Jesus told them that they were not to be concerned about meeting their living needs, for their lives were more important than food and their bodies than clothes, v. 22-23.
 - 2. In addition, God feeds the ceremonially unclean ravens who neither sow, reap nor store collected food in barns, and Jesus' disciples were far more valuable to God than ravens, Luke 12:24.
 - 3. Besides, no human being by worrying can add a single hour to his physical life, so worrying about meeting one's livelihood needs is an illogical exercise, Luke 12:25-26 NIV.
 - 4. Also, wildflowers do not labor or spin, but even very wealthy king Solomon was not dressed like such flowers, Luke 12:27. If God then so clothes the grass of the field that is short-lived and is of so little value that it is cast into the fire after its short lifespan, He will much more clothe His disciples, Luke 12:28.
 - 5. Thus, Christ's disciples were not to worry about their daily livelihood needs like the pagan world did, for God knows they need these things, Luke 12:29-30 NIV. Rather, they were to seek the kingdom of God in their lives and the Lord would supply what they needed for their livelihoods, Luke 12:31.
 - 6. Indeed, they were to use what material wealth they had for furthering God's interests, for if their treasure was with God in heaven versus money on the earth, that is where their devotion would be, Luke 12:32-34.

Lesson: *Since coveting replaces reliance on God with wealth to meet one's livelihood needs, a foolish move that leaves one vulnerable to God's punishment, we must keep God more important than wealth to be blessed. Besides, if we seek God's will as our priority in life, He will supply all the material provisions we need for this life.*

Application: *May we not commit covetous idolatry by exchanging the Lord for wealth as our source of livelihood but seek God and His will in our lives and see Him provide for our every livelihood need.*