

Title: Kingdom Economics
Text: Luke 12.32-34
Theme: How generosity makes you wealthy
Series: Luke
Prop Stmtnt: The economics of the kingdom reflect the character of our King

Patrick Dacey shared the story of how he wanted a guitar for his 8th birthday. His father had played guitar but Patrick's grandfather could not afford for Patrick's dad to have a decent guitar and Patrick's dad wanted his boy to have a good guitar. Patrick's dad had an idea. "Let's get lucky," he said. I hopped into his old Wagoneer, and we drove to the auction house on Main Street, where they were selling off instruments that day. "So, what kind of guitar do you want?" he asked me. "A wooden one," I said. "It's called acoustic, you sure you don't want electric?" "Mom said wood ones make less noise." Inside the big echoing room, about 60 people sat in rows and a man stood at the podium holding a ukulele. "We got one-twenty of this here fine piece of craftsmanship do I hear one-thirty? Someone shouted, "One-thirty." Sold for one-thirty! Next up," the auctioneer said, "a classic Gibson with custom sunburst finish, no dents, no scratches and the most magnificent sound you've ever heard. This is why you started playing. This baby goes for over a grand in the stores. The bid's open!" My father's eyes grew wide. "I can't believe it," he said. "That's the guitar Grandpa told me was too expensive." He looked in his wallet, then at me. "Pat," he said. "You want a guitar?" "Yes." "You want the greatest guitar ever?" "Yes," I said growing excited with his excitement. "OK. Find a seat up there and shout out, sixty." "Sixty?" "And if someone says Sixty-five, you say, "Seventy." "Seventy?" "Yes, go, go." I pushed up to the front. "Forty!" someone called out. "Come on," the auctioneer said. "Fifty!" another bidder yelled. "Fifty? Are you kidding? The auctioneer said. Then in my timid voice, I said, "Sixty." "What?" the auctioneer growled. With the pressure on, I shouted "Sixty!" "Sixty from the little guy," the auctioneer said with a chuckle. "Sixty-five!" someone yelled. "Hey, who's bidding against a kid?" someone called out. "You shouldn't outbid a child! It was my father. "Seventy!" I shouted. The auctioneer answered, "Seventy! Let's go a hundred!" "Let the kid have it!" my father called out. Some of the spectators followed his lead. "Yeah, give it to the kid!" The auctioneer grew nervous. "This thing here has been played by some of the finest musicians of our time," he said. "Seventy dollars would be an insult to this guitar, to those musicians! Now, do I hear seventy-five?" "Give the guitar to the kid!" my father yelled. He turned and left the hall. The auctioneer tapped his gavel, and there was an eruption of applause.... We put the case in the back seat and gingerly opened it up. "It's not wooden," I said. "This is the greatest guitar ever," my father said, rubbing his hand down the neck. "But it's not wooden." I repeated. "I want a wooden one." "Look, this is your guitar for your birthday. There's no other one." I started to cry.¹

Patrick got a treasure that day and had no idea what it was worth, in fact, he cried because it wasn't what he wanted in the moment. Beloved, this is so much like us. We have an incredible Father who owns it all and is carrying out his plan to share it all with us. In four brief statements,

¹ Smithsonian (magazine) Nov 2006, O. 112.

Christ once again up-ends the entire value system of our world and replaces it with an economic system that is 100% foolproof.

Read Text:

Many years ago, a guy in our church was teaching macro-economics at Wayne State, and since I nerd out on those kinds of things, I sat in on one of his lectures. Students came late, left early, slept, and were clearly not into it. I was fascinated. Economic theories are frameworks that economists use to understand how people make decisions about production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. If the government prints money, what will happen? If the government raises or lowers interest rates, what will happen? If the government enforces rent controls, tariffs, or price controls, what will happen? You can research known economic theories such as: supply and demand, classical, Keynesian, Marxism, Market socialism, Laissez-faire and study the pros and cons. But Jesus sets forth an economic system that is effective, rewarding and, in fact, satisfying. But like everything else, it sounds upside down.

In this section (13-31) Jesus has been talking about anxiety, which of course is related to our view of the future and money. He points out that being anxious is a waste of time and a result of failing to trust God. Life is more than food and clothes and besides, (v.31) your Father knows that you need food and clothes. He will take care of you. Believe that. Instead of pouring your attention into heaping up mounds of money and guarding it, figure out what it looks like to prioritize the kingdom of God. Then Jesus, in v.32 gives a summary statement on kingdom economics. I think v.32 is a one sentence summary of the Bible. How are we called to make decisions about things, distribution and consumption of goods and services? Here is a framework that is amazing! However, you will not believe it and you will not follow it, unless you really embrace what God says about himself.

1. **Consider our God** (32)

Here is another beautiful and powerful example of why good doctrine is our friend. Jesus is calling us to do some radical things, but when you understand the reason and purpose, it makes beautiful sense. Who is our God? He is...

A. Father

In both verses 31 and 32, Jesus talks about God as “your Father.” He even teaches us to pray to him and say, “Father.” God is Father and he does all things in relationship to us in a perfect fatherly way. He loves, nurtures, delights in, cares for, provides for and is generous to. You get this. Your kid takes swimming lessons and masters some skills and is advanced to the next level. They’re happy and you are thrilled. They advance a rank in karate, master a piece on the piano, score a goal in soccer, get an “A” on a test, on and on it goes. What is going on in you? You love and delight in the success of your child and you want to do everything you can to encourage it. Where does that parenting instinct come from? Your Father.

B. Shepherd

Jesus calls us “little flock.” Our Father is also our shepherd and he knows that we are inclined to be fearful and vulnerable. What a tender and personal statement! “Fear not, little flock.” This is so reassuring. As our Shepherd, He leads us where we need to go even if we don’t want to go. He knows when we are missing and comes after us when we are lost. He feeds us. He protects us from evil and the evil one.

C. Good and pleased

Our God is good and pleased. God’s plan is to give you the kingdom. Why on earth would he do that? Because it is his good pleasure to do that. His generosity in giving is tied to his good pleasure. I think this is really important to grasp. God does not use you. God is incapable of using you or abusing you. People who abuse others are needy, insecure and threatened. Therefore, they try to get from you, or steal, demand or take from you what they think they have to have to be significant. “You will respect me!” “You will do what I say.” But God is not a needy God. He already has it all. He does not need your respect. There’s a sense in which it really doesn’t matter if you respect him or not. Your failure to respect God does not diminish God in the least. He is absolutely satisfied and content in being God. He is good and pleased. He is not touchy. He is not delicate. He is not moody. He is not unpredictable or volatile. He does not play games with you. He is good and pleased. And it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

D. Generous

God has it all and made you in order to share what he has with you. He delights in your delight. He is pleased with your pleasure. He loves it when you believe that he loves you, when you trust that he will take care of you, when you enjoy him. He did not have to make you, but he did. He did not have to make you as a child who knows him as Father. He could have made you as part of the creation that only knows him as Creator. But you, he made to be a child and more. He made you to be a member of his kingdom, not just as a citizen but as part of the ownership. He determined that his kingdom is to be shared with you so that you can find delight in the creation like he does.

E. Sovereign

This would not be possible if he were not the ultimate Ruler. God is Sovereign over all. The kingdom is his to do with what he wants. The kingdom of God refers to all that God made to rule over. How does he exercise his rule? This is a good question. As the Sovereign Authority, God can do whatever wants to do. So, what does God want to do? He wants to give you the kingdom! And why would he do that? Why is it is good pleasure to do that? Why would he design you, fashion you, create you, plan you, elect you, birth you, name you, correct you, reveal his Word to you, come for you, die for you, rise again for you, ascend for you, regenerate you, forgive you, justify you, adopt you, baptize you, seal you, indwell you, discipline you, keep

you, sanctify you, provide for you, and hold you forever? Why? Because our God loves to display the excellencies of his mercies by being generous to those who believe on him. The Kingdom of God is built on the character, values and priorities of God. Therefore, the citizens and administrators of his kingdom live under and infused with the character, values and priorities of God. What do you believe God to be like? When you think of God do you believe in him the way Jesus does? Does this sound like your theology? Your view of God drives your attitude and actions.

2. **Consider your response.** (32-33)

Kingdom economics come from the king who is Father, Shepherd, good and pleased, generous and sovereign. Your security in God and your inheritance with Christ emboldens you to do what appears to others to be risky. But it really isn't. So, what should we expect his economic system to be like?

A. **Be confident and content.**

Have you ever saved money for an event, a purchase, or an emergency? When the time comes to make the payment, you can do so without angst. You were prepared for it. Romans 8.17 tells us that as a follower of Christ we are fellow-heirs with Christ. Listen to the verse. Paul is explaining some of the results and benefits of being a follower of Christ. Such as, we receive the Spirit of God who is the Spirit of adoption. The Spirit enables us to say, "Abba! Father!" Calling God, our Father and using a personal term of endearment is not presumptuous, but is right. In fact, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs (you are in the will) and fellow heirs with Christ (you inherit what he inherits and he gets it all), provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."

Here is another example of how the life of a believer is "already, but not yet." Already are we followers of Christ. Already are we in the will. Already are we guaranteed an inheritance. But not yet, do we experience it. In fact, right now is not glory, but is actually suffering. Just as suffering comes now, glory comes later. Do not be surprised by suffering now. God tells us that it goes with being in the family. However, (now you are ready for v.18), "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." What is the glory? It is inheriting the kingdom and ruling and reigning in the kingdom of God under and alongside of Christ. We get it all and we cannot lose that – ever. Therefore, be confident and content.

B. **Be bold**

The command to "fear not" means, do not be a coward. You will probably face persecution and you will be tempted to be timid and not identify yourself as a follower of Christ because of either the personal rejection or the economic impact. But, willingness to suffer for Christ is part of our job description. And it is okay. We can be bold because we have the kingdom. Gorgius

was being threatened with death if he did not denounce Christ. He replied, "Have you anything more worth than the kingdom of heaven?"

C. Be Generous

"Sell your possessions and give to the needy." Is Jesus telling us to sell everything that we own and give it away? What is going on in this context? How does this connect with other passages? And, does that interpretation make sense? In this context, Jesus has just told us the story of the rich man who had so much, that his abundance was his confidence. He did not need God because he had so much stuff. He saw all of his goods as being for his benefit. Do all believers sell everything they own and give it to the needy? In the early church, there were many people who sold things that they really did not need in order to help others, but if everyone sold everything, or gave away everything for the needy, then they would become the needy themselves. Jesus is not commanding you to become needy. The context is addressing how our anxiety and fear of the future often motivates us to hoard or hang on to stuff that ends up owning us instead of us owning it. Listen, you have the kingdom. You are going to be taken care of forever. This frees you to be generous. This frees you to live with an open hand. Hold stuff loosely so that it does not hold you. When Jesus commands us to be generous (sell your possessions and give to the needy) he is challenging us to look like our Father and of course, our older brother. Live generously. Be prepared to give to the needy. The ultimate needy are those who need the gospel.

A word of caution here. Some people choose to be needy are unwilling to make good decisions to change that. Paul addressed that when he said that if a man will not work, then he does not eat. We are not to be generous to the lazy, sinful or manipulators. I often pass an intersection where the same people beg day after day. I do not know their stories. However, one Friday night, Cathi and I were on a bike ride with about 900 other people in Detroit. We were on Michigan avenue not far from the old Tiger Stadium when I saw this same girl coming out of an establishment with some friends. Instead of looking dirty, downtrodden and sad with her ragged clothes, she was quite the opposite. Did I feel guilty for not giving her money? No! This is honestly one of the benefits of a local church that is involved in the lives of people. We know the stories and we know when there are legitimate needs and when there are people who simply refuse to take responsibility for their actions. I want to be a generous brother in Christ. I want you to be generous and we should be a generous church. I am not asking you to be generous in your financial support of the church so that we can hoard and become self-reliant. No. We need to be generous so that as a church we are generous to legitimate needs in planting churches, supporting missionaries who understand the mission and helping people who legitimately need help. When we do that, we will provide for ourselves investment funds that pay eternal dividends.

D. Be Wise

Jesus is the ultimate financial planner. Here is a full-proof investment that will never fail to give you an eternal return. Here is a portfolio that is rock-solid because every investment you make

in the kingdom of God, goes into the safe-deposit box under the throne of Jesus. Compare that to Eike.

Eike Batista was Brazil's richest man with a net worth of over \$34 billion. Local media called him "King Midas" because it seemed that everything he touched turned to gold. He was heavily invested in oil, energy and logistics. His money helped Rio de Janeiro win the bid to host the Olympics in 2016. Oil prices can be finnick and when the market dipped and when the new fields he borrowed money to explore did not pan out, his empire began to crumble. Within 3 tumultuous years, Eike lost it all. He was not only over \$1 billion in debt, but was found guilty of bribery and sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Do any of these commands look like your life? Are you marked by contentment, boldness, generosity, and wisdom? These commands, these actions are set forth by Christ as necessary and logical responses to living as a citizen of the kingdom of God. This is what following Jesus looks like. And to really press that truth into our hearts, Jesus lays it out in v.34.

3. **Consider what you really value.** (34)

You are loyal to what you value most. What you value most is what you think defines you, defends you and saves you. This is why money is such a tell-tell barometer. It is like prayer. If you do not pray, it is because you do not have a relationship with God. Do not kid yourself. If you do not pray, you are not a genuine believer. Money is like that. If you are stingy with your money, you really don't know God. God is not stingy. God is generous. Can someone claim to be the child of a generous God and not be generous? Where your treasure is, is where your heart is. If your heart has been changed by the gospel, and you understand the eternal value of the kingdom of God, then your generosity of heart, finances, time, and concern will reflect that. I want you to hear me clearly. If you are stingy with your money and you do not support the church, I am not challenging you to start giving. I am challenging you to get saved, because you need to be honest with God and yourself. Your real Savior is not Jesus, it is what you are trying to hold on to. Self-righteousness and self-effort make lousy saviors. I pray you will take this to heart.