

Luke Study 4 - Trust and Worry

12:1-34

Introduction

Jesus is travelling to Jerusalem. He is on a mission: to save people from sins (9:51-56). He has called people to follow him (9:57-10:24) and explained what following him will mean: loving your neighbour (10:25-37) and loving God (10:38-11:13). He has shown what the kingdom of God that he brings looks like: freedom from evil (11:14-23) and a new ability to listen to God and obey him (11:24-28). So, people should listen to him (11:29-36), and woe to anyone who stops people from listening to him! (11:37-54) That's where we're up to so far.

But naturally, all of this is worrying for people. Following Jesus sounds hard: will they be OK? Jesus is in trouble with the authorities: will they get in trouble too?

So Jesus turns now to address these questions and sooth people's worries. Will following him bring risks? Absolutely. But they need not worry, because God is with them.

We come in on the scene just as Jesus is about to teach thousands of people.

Read Luke 12:1-12

1. What are the disciples afraid of? (vv.4, 8, 11)
2. What might this tempt them to do? (v.1)
3. To help them avoid this temptation, Jesus gives them a series of both warnings and encouragements. What are the:
 - a. warnings?
 - b. encouragements?
4. How can we be afraid - and hence tempted - in similar ways?
5. Pick one of Jesus' warnings or encouragements that especially struck you as being helpful. What do you find helpful about it?

The disciples are afraid of publicly identifying themselves with Jesus and the trouble this might get them into: being tried and possibly executed. This fear, in turn, may tempt them to hypocrisy: siding with Jesus privately but disowning him publicly, in order to stay safe. Jesus warns them against this approach: everything they do will be disclosed anyway, and if they disown Jesus God will send them to hell. But Jesus also encourages them: God loves them, will stick by them if they stick by him, and will help them in their troubles. So, they are not to worry - and sin as a result of their worry, by disowning Jesus - but both to fear and trust God in the right way.

Jesus is about to keep teaching his disciples about worry, before a man calls out from the crowd.

Read Luke 12:13-21

6. What problem does the man have? (v.13)
7. What deeper problem may the man have, that Jesus warns everyone about? (v.15)
8. Jesus then tells a parable. How does it drive his point home?
9. What warnings are there here for us?

A man has a problem: his brother won't give him some money. But he may have a deeper problem, too: thinking that money is everything and is the key to a satisfying life. So, Jesus warns everyone that life is about more than money and money can't guarantee anything: you could be rich and still die tonight. Although not explicitly a story about worry, it still speaks to our anxieties about getting the most out of life. Jesus is clear: you won't get the most out of life by amassing riches for yourself, but by being rich towards God, i.e. basing your life around him.

From somebody in the crowd worrying about getting the most out of life, Jesus now turns back to his disciples and their worries about just surviving.

Read Luke 12:22-34

10. What are the disciples worried about?
11. Jesus gives a number of reasons not to worry about these things. What are they?
12. Rather than worry, what are the disciples to do? Why?
13. How can our worries stop making us generous?

The disciples are worried about the bare necessities in life: will they have enough food to eat and clothes to wear? Jesus tells them not to worry: life is more than these things; God will care for you; and worry is pointless. He then tells them what they should do: seek the kingdom of God and give money to the poor, as only those no longer worried about money can.