

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Luke 12:22-40

Year C - Proper 14, Text: Luke 12:22-34 (35-40)
Year C - Proper 14, Text: Luke 12:32-40

Throughout his Gospel, Luke devotes considerable attention to the danger of seeking riches and to the spiritual value of showing compassion to the poor.

For example, in Luke 12:13–21, Jesus tells His disciples the Parable of the Rich Fool, in which He shares insights about the attitude His followers are to adopt toward material goods. When planning his future, the rich fool gave no thought to the will of God. His focus was on what he might do to ensure a non-stop, self-indulgent way of life for himself.

Verses 12:22–28: In these verses, Jesus continues this same theme, except in this case, he is not addressing the selfish desires of those who have more than they need, he is addressing those who do not think they have enough to meet their needs. We human being often confuse what we want with what we need. Or we simply operate out of a mindset of scarcity, worrying for the day when we might not have what we think we need. Jesus tells us that this is not a matter of resources, but an issue of trust (or lack thereof). As we look to creation itself, we see that God provides what is needed, even for the birds and the grass, and we are certainly more important to him than these.

Verses 12:29-31: These verses show us that in addressing our anxiety, he does not condemn the acquisition and use of basic materials goods such as food and clothing. He acknowledges that His followers need these things (verse 30). But he wants us to first and foremost trust in him, which is precisely what it means to seek his Kingdom.

Verse 12:32: What Jesus does condemn is worrisome anxiety, the lie of the devil that says His Father does not care about people on earth. Again, God's focus is on supplying people's needs — not their greeds.

Of course, poverty is never to be sought for its own sake. But those who experience it can develop a humble dependence on Jesus, who will certainly give His kingdom to His “little flock” — i.e. His struggling,

opposed, and small group of disciples. If God has granted His people membership in His Kingdom, He will also provide them with what they need for their life's journey within that Kingdom.

Verses 12:33–34: After warning His disciples about anxiety over material goods in verses 22–32, the focus returns to the need to share material goods through the giving of alms. It is through us that God meets the needs of those around us. When Jesus' followers are set free from anxiety for the self, it allows us to share with, and care for, the needy. We can trust God enough to “live simply so that others might simply live.”

Verses 12:35–40: Here Jesus speaks of exercising stewardship of what belongs to God by using the image of a servant who is prepared to serve. In these verses, Jesus underscores the following points:

- The day is coming when the risen and ascended Jesus will return (better, reappear). After all, when Jesus ascended, He did not withdraw His physical presence; He transformed it. He remains with and around us, although invisibly.
- Although Jesus will certainly reappear on that Last Day, He does not tell His disciples on what day He will do so.
- Jesus' brothers and sisters must not allow themselves to be distracted by concerns about when this will be. Rather, they are to see their present life as an opportunity to render service to others. They are to seek to live now (in this life) as they will then (in the life to come).
- We are to focus on living responsibly and compassionately, bearing in mind that He himself (our Master) is coming.

Note: In 12:35, the term “dressed for action” in the NRSV is rendered “loins girt” in some other translations. It refers to a traveler who tucks his garments around his waist so that he might walk freely to the Eternal Promised Land. “Lamps lit” suggests night-

time. “Those who are waiting for their master to return” refers to Jesus’ brothers and sisters waiting for His reappearing. Those who wait for Him in sincere faith will experience the surprise of being invited to share in a meal that He will serve them.

Verse 12:37: The phrase, “he will come and serve them” refers to a role reversal and underscores God’s absolute grace and goodness. The servants who are faithful prior to Jesus’ reappearing on the Last Day of history will share in God’s eternal heavenly banquet. They will experience the wonder of having Jesus serve them to all eternity. (Note Luke’s presentation of Jesus as servant in 22:24–27 and as Suffering Servant in 23:6–25.)

Verse 12:38: Because Jesus may reappear at any moment, God’s people are to be ready to welcome Him at every step along the way throughout life.

Verses 12:39–40: Luke records two parables in which only one point is made. In them, the metaphor changes from a returning master to a house owner. The owner is not returning from a journey but is at home. A thief breaks into the house — something that the owner was not expecting to happen. Had he known about the thief and his plans, he would have made sure that the robbery did not take place. However, he was caught off guard.

The message is that God’s people are to be on guard against their own concern for self. We are to be constantly ready to welcome the Lord’s reappearing at any moment — which may include the present opportunities we are given to share and to serve. These too are “appearances” of our Lord. We should be ready to encounter them every hour of every day.

The truth is, we live in a troubled world and cannot be sure that the so-called good old days will ever return. They may never return. But then, were they all that “good” according to God’s standards? Jesus does not encourage His brothers and sisters to focus on achieving their dreams in relation to acquiring wealth and enjoying the so-called good life. Rather, He calls His brothers and sisters to follow Him in servant discipleship. After all, God owns all things, and we merely use and manage what belongs to Him. On the Last Day of history, Jesus will not ask how much wealth we amassed. He will commend us only for having devoted life to serving Him in all His distressing disguises (Matthew 25:31–46).