

## “Purses That Never Wear Out”

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Luke 12:22-34

After the installation service a couple of weeks ago, I got to thinking about another installation service that I had attended. I attended it because it was for me. The person who spoke at the installation service will remain nameless, but I will never forget what he said. Not so much because it was so good, but because of what he talked about. It was at Woodward and the person who spoke at that installation service talked about sailing a sailboat. Now think about that out in western Oklahoma. There's not a sailboat in that entire part of the state. It just didn't fit for the listeners.

This morning I think what I'm going to say to you will fit. I'm going to speak with you about worrying. I take it from time to time you all worry about some things, don't you? We could make a list of the things we worry about. Sometimes our lives are guided more by fear than by faith. The sad thing is worry and fear suck the joy out of life, and you know that the antidote to both of them is faith. Remember the old saying, “Fear knocked at the door, faith answered and no one was there.” Faith is the antidote to fear and worry.

Jesus said that the greatest cause of our worry and fear is concern about our material possessions. I have a test for the men who are present today. I know you women will know the answers, so just you men think about this. I'm going to say some words to you and you can think about what comes to mind. The first word is “coach.” At this time of the year that's easy, isn't it? Whether you're a fan of the Cowboys, the Sooners, or the Golden Hurricane, we all have football on our minds, don't we guys? Thursday night will be here soon.

The second word, however, is a combination word: “Dooney & Bourke.” Dooney and Bourke are not new linebackers for the Indianapolis Colts. The women all know about this, but some of you men might not be so sure.

The third word is “Louis Vuitton.” Louis Vuitton is not that Formula 1 driver who's in NASCAR now.

All of these names are the names of –women? **Purses!** Guys,

you need to know about this. These are *expensive* purses—\$400, \$500, \$600. I'm ashamed to admit this, but the first car I bought cost \$400. Now think about that. Women are carrying around purses that cost more than that car I bought. That's just unbelievable to me.

The greatest cause of concern, Jesus said, is purses that wear out. Bruce Larson calls it "the tyranny of things," and we can all be affected by it. The poor are affected by it because they *can't* have these things; and the wealthy are affected by it because they *must* have these things. The tyranny of things. Jesus' solution was, "Sell what you have and give alms to the poor." Here's something I'll share with you for the next time someone starts beating you over the head with a Bible. Biblical literalists don't take this passage of scripture literally.

I have never known someone who interrupts the Bible literally who gave away all they had. That's not what Jesus really meant, they said, and suddenly the Bible is not so literal. I think a part of what Jesus meant was this: Don't live a style of life that enables your possessions to have such a hold on you that you are exhausted. Rhodes Thompson is a close friend of mine. He was a professor at the seminary after I graduated. Rhodes Thompson shared this with me and I want to share it with you now. If you will, hold out your hands. Bob, this is a stewardship thought, so listen closely. Now, make a fist and clench your fists as tightly as you can until it almost hurts, then reach around and hug yourself and squeeze as tightly as you can and don't let go. Keep your fists clenched. Is that really comfortable? Now relax. Doesn't that feel better?

We are called to be open to receive the gifts that God gives with us. I'm not asking, Bob, for anyone to increase their pledge with us right now. There's nothing wrong with that. I will share this with you. In almost 40 years of doing this, I've never had anyone come to me and say, "I'm giving too much to the church and I'm concerned that I'm giving too much to the church." No one has ever said that to me. What I am asking you to do is this. Be a more giving person in *all* of your relationships: in your marriage, in your family, in your friendships. This is another way of saying, "Be what God created you to be." We are created in God's image—in the image of a God who gives and gives and gives again to us.

When you are able to do this, I will make this promise; when you can get to the point where you control your possessions instead of your possessions controlling you, you will know an incredible freedom that allows you to open yourself to receive more of God's blessings. You will know God's good pleasure in your life and God's good pleasure will become your good pleasure.

A man by the name of Kenneth Carter has written the words that I am about to share with you. I hope you hear them. Carter says,

*Our security is finally not in the stock market, which goes up and down; or in the government, which rises and falls; or in the corporation, which splits and merges and restructures. Instead, we would do well to learn from the ravens—they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet God feeds them. Their patterns of behavior teach us that life is a gift, a gift to be shared, a gift to be treasured.*

*Our true security lies in the grasp of a fundamental truth: the reign of God is near, closer than we realize. The culture, and our misplaced allegiance to it, has led us down the path of anxiety about the present and the future, about our possessions and wealth. The gospel as gift and demand is clear: God will provide for us, and through us God will provide for others.*

You will not find any version of the Bible that says this, but I want to share this version of the Bible with you. Jesus said, "Consider the crows." That's what he was really talking about. We don't know anything about ravens in this part of the country, but nearly all of us have seen a bunch of crows by the side of the road eating an Armadillo casserole, haven't we? This scripture is a favorite of mine because of something that happened to me one time. I'm a member of the PGA—not the Professional Golf Association—something that's known as the Pastors' Golf Association. It's something that the Regional office does three or four times a year. We have a tournament. One year Jace and I were playing in a tournament down in Oklahoma City. We were playing at Lincoln Park. After nine holes we went in and got a sandwich, came back out and teed off on number 10 (it was a short hole, a par 3). We both lucked out and got on the green, so we drove our cart up there, parked our cart

beside the green and while we were on the green we heard a commotion and looked over to the cart where I had left my hamburger on a paper plate. Here was a crow eating my hamburger! God will provide.

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, your heart will follow." I don't think that's how it's supposed to be. It's true. Where our money is, that's what we care about, don't we? For Christians, it should be reversed. Our money should go to where our heart is, and where do we say our heart is? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your strength, your mind, your soul. The purse that never wears out is a heart of faith that loves the way God loves. The Good News of the Gospel is that God has already shared it with us. It is not something that is going to happen some day, it is something that has already happened. It is God's good pleasure to share it with us and it is our pleasure to share it with others.

Might God give us the faith to be open to all that God shares, to love God with all of our hearts and to love all of God's children. May it be so. Amen.