

Luke 12:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

Analysis

Sell that ye have, and give alms (πωλήσατε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ὑμῶν καὶ δότε ἐλεημοσύνην, pōlēsate ta hyparchonta hymōn kai dote eleēmosynēn)—Jesus commands radical generosity as evidence of kingdom priority. The verb pōleō (πωλέω, sell) is aorist imperative, demanding decisive action. Eleēmosynē (ἐλεημοσύνη, alms) means compassionate giving to the poor, from eleos (mercy). This isn't asceticism for its own sake but redistribution motivated by eternal values.

Provide yourselves bags which wax not old (ποιήσατε ἑαυτοῖς βαλλάντια μὴ παλαιούμενα, poiēsate heautois ballantia mē palaioumena)—The paradox: divesting earthly wealth creates heavenly wealth. The term ballantion (βαλλάντιον) means moneybag or purse; palaioō (παλαιόω) means to grow old, wear out. Earthly containers decay, but **a treasure in the heavens that faileth not** (thēsauron anekleiptonēn tois ouranois, θησαυρὸν ἀνέκλειπτον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) is imperishable. No thief approaches (kleptēs ouk engizei, κλέπτης οὐκ ἔγγιζει), no moth corrupts (sēs ou diaphtheirei, σὴς οὐ διαφθείρει)—divine security surpassing any earthly investment.

Historical Context

This teaching follows immediately after the parable of the rich fool (12:16-21) and precedes the command to seek God's kingdom first (12:31). First-century Palestine

used cloth for wealth storage (vulnerable to moths) and buried treasure in fields or stored grain in barns (vulnerable to thieves, rust, and rot). Jesus' audience lived under Roman taxation and economic uncertainty, making wealth accumulation seem essential for security. Yet Jesus contradicts conventional wisdom: earthly security is illusory, heavenly treasure is permanent.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' command to sell possessions and give alms challenge contemporary materialism and wealth accumulation?
2. What does the contrast between decaying earthly bags and imperishable heavenly treasure reveal about true security?
3. In what practical ways can believers today transfer wealth from earth to heaven through generosity?

Interlinear Text

Πωλήσατε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ὑμῶν καὶ δότε ἐλεημοσύνην·

Sell G3588 **have** G5224 **that ye** G5216 **and** G2532 **give** G1325 **alms** G1654
G4453

ποιήσατε ἐαυτοῖς βαλάντια μὴ παλαιούμενα θησαυρὸν

provide **yourselves** **bags** **not** **old** **a treasure**
G4160 G1438 G905 G3361 G3822 G2344

ἀνέκλειπτον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ὅπου κλέπτης οὐκ

that faileth not **in** **the heavens** **where** **thief** **no**
G413 G1722 G3588 G3772 G3699 G2812 G3756

ἐγγίζει οὐδὲ σὴς διαφθείρει·

approacheth **neither** **moth** **corrupteth**
G1448 G3761 G4597 G1311

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 19:21 (Parallel theme): Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

Acts 2:45 (Parallel theme): And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

Luke 18:22 (Parallel theme): Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

Luke 16:9 (Parallel theme): And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

Luke 12:21 (Parallel theme): So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Haggai 1:6 (Parallel theme): Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there

is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

John 12:6 (Parallel theme): This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

2 Corinthians 8:2 (Parallel theme): How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

Luke 11:41 (Parallel theme): But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

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