

## **Hoarders Anonymous: Anxiety and Trust**

**Luke 12:22-34**

**Dr. Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri**

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AUDIO - <http://fbcjc.buzzsprout.com/7678/130699>

We begin this morning with a poem entitled "Middle-Class Blues" by Dennis O'Driscoll

"He has everything./A beautiful young wife./A comfortable home./A secure job.../A fair-haired daughter learning to walk./What he is afraid of most and what keeps him tossing some nights.../are the stories that begin:/He had everything./A beautiful young wife./A comfortable home./ A secure job./Then one day." Anxiety. The oppressive feeling that all that I have might be taken. There is a relationship between having and worrying. The more we have, the more we worry. So this morning we're going to not only explore hoarding/having. We will not only explore anxiety. But we will explore how those two are related.

It's interesting that last week's sermon from Luke 12:13-21 was more focused on extravagant hoarding (the farmer-fool who kept building bigger barns), yet in this morning's text Jesus warns us that we can even be anxious over bare necessities (food and clothing, v. 23). Let's face it. Possessions can be toxic. They can bring us anxiety. And here's the kicker: they never seem to quite satisfy. The ancient prophets were always trying to get Israel to see that "stuff" wasn't going to fix the hole in their souls. Listen to the prophet Haggai during a time when the people of God were groping for things. "Take a good, hard look at your life. Think it over. You have spent a lot of money, but you haven't much to show for it. You keep filling your plates, but you never get filled up. You keep drinking and drinking and drinking, but you're always thirsty. You put on layer after layer of clothes, but you can't get warm [Haggai 1:6, The Message].

So if we are struggling with anxiety about all our stuff (or lack of it), we need to ask if our values line up with God's. As the text says, we are to strive for God's kingdom, not for the world's stuff. How do we figure out what we value? A. W. Tozer, a great preacher and writer, once listed what he called the Rules of Self-Discovery. 1. What we want most. 2. What we think about most. 3. How we use our money. 4. What we do with our leisure time. 5. The company we enjoy. 6. Whom and what we admire. 7. What we laugh at.

Tonight, many of us will be watching a particular football game. I want you to step back and notice the commercials with a critical eye. Note how they appeal to your values. But notice even more. They not only appeal to your values. They attempt to define your values, to tell you what is important. Jesus is saying that this is the kind of stuff we need to figure out.

So let's drill down a bit more on this word "worry" or "anxiety." Jesus says in v. 22, "...do not worry about your life..." And the word is repeated in vv. 25, 26 and 29. The word for worry or being anxious means to be distracted, pulled in two, allowing self to be tugged in opposite directions. It is the word picture of a ship being tossed by waves, every which way. Theologians and preachers

have noted that each decade has its unique challenges: guilt, doubt and discouragement [Ernest Campbell, *Looked In A Room With Open Doors*, p. 55]. But maybe we should add one: the decade of distraction.

Jesus uses humor to make his point. In v. 25, he asks if worrying can add one cubit to our height. A cubit was about 18 inches, the length from the tip of your longest finger to your bent elbow. Can you just see someone walking in on you when you are worrying? Your friend asks, "What are you doing?" You reply, "Shh...quiet, I'm growing taller. This worrying is like a performance enhancing steroid. Wow. Look at me grow."

Among our bad habits (and I include myself) is the "Yes, but..." habit. It's a beautiful day. Yes, but winter is coming. God is really blessing our church, people coming to Christ and large estate gifts. Yes, but we are running a financial deficit. Thank God for your friends at school. Yes, but I'm not the most popular. Thank God you have a job. Yes, but it is a real drag. Thank God for your health. Yes, but I have this mole that I'm worried about.

OK, I joke about it. But I have to confess to you. I am a worrier. Worry is my default mode. When things are not going well, I worry. and when everything is going well, I worry that it won't last. Sick, isn't it? Worry can become an addiction. You know, on the farm, if we saw a small rut in the pasture that we didn't want to grow, or wash out, by rain water, we would fill it. If we didn't, it would turn from a trickle to a deep ravine. Anxiety starts as a small trickle but can grow into a deep river into which we dump all our thoughts.

So in contrast to our distractions of anxiety, Jesus has a proposal. Trust God! Read vv. 31-32. God is so good. And God wills so much good to our lives. This God created us in His image, created us for eternity, rescues us in Christ, indwells us by His Spirit and never, ever leaves us. Why can't we trust this God? But Jesus has a second part to this proposal to get rid of our anxiety. Besides trusting God, be generous. Read vv. 33-34. Be generous. Giving away appropriate amounts of our stuff liberates us from the stuff and from our anxiety about the stuff.

Of course, the key to this whole thing is v. 31. Instead of striving and scrambling for more things, strive and scramble--exert your best energies--for God and God's values. And all these other things will fall into place. C.S. Lewis once wrote that we can't get second-rate things by putting them first. We can only get second-rate things by putting first things first [quoted in *How Much Is Enough?* by Arthur Simon, p. 84]. It's amazing. When we put God first, so many other things take care of themselves. Let's get healed of our hoarding. Let's trust God. Let's share. Let's put God first.