

# Christian Fashion Statement

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[ 0 : 00 ] This morning we are in Luke chapter 12 and we're going to look at verses 22 down to 59 at the end of the chapter.

There's a lot in this and as we go through it, please keep your Bible open to follow what we're saying and also there are the sermon outline notes which could be helpful to you as well.

So we're on page 1045 of the church Bibles. For those of you who are visiting today, if it's your first time with us just to fill you in, in the background, we're doing a series of sermons just now going through the whole of this book, Luke's Gospel, and we're just reaching chapter 12 just now where Jesus in a series of statements is addressing the question, what is life all about? What's it all about? Why are we here?

He has just been speaking to people who are very materially driven, people who would say we are living in a material world and I am a material girl or boy. He has been dealing with people who are irreligious, people who don't fear God and people who are here on the planet to make more money and to get more possessions and to build bigger barns to put all of their stuff in and in response to them he says, watch out, be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. Life is not just about how many material things you have, so be careful of all kinds of greed because it will stop you from fearing God who one day you'll have to give account to for what we have done in our lives.

[ 1 : 48 ] So he starts off engaging with the rich, the people who want a glitzy kind of life and who think that's what life is all about, to get, to get and to get.

But then in the section that we're looking at this morning, he's still asking that same question, what is life all about? And first of all, he looks at it in relation to clothes and to food.

And he gives this principle, which is our first point, do not worry about clothes or food. Verse 22, then Jesus said to his disciples, therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or about your body, what you will wear.

Life is more than food and the body more than clothes. Jesus picks out two of the things that caused and that still do cause people major worry in life.

In fact, he picks out two things that are essentials, food and clothing. You basically need these two things to survive. Without food, you will starve and die.

[ 2 : 54 ] And depending on where you live, clothing is pretty basic for survival as well. In order to keep you warm. So these are basic necessities and he takes those things, fundamental things that we need.

And he spells out a principle that God and trusting dependence on God is an even more basic necessity and even more fundamental need.

He doesn't pick out these things, food and clothing, because he's some kind of naive, ascetic, telling you, you know, dress and rags and eats a meager, joyless diet.

What he's trying to convey is, however much you need these basic things, food and clothing, you need God more, so much more. These are necessities of life, but God is the most basic necessity to true life, to life in all of its fullness.

And that is why just now he's picking out food and clothing, because they're essential, but God is more essential still. And he uses two illustrations to convey this.

[ 4 : 05 ] He picks out Ravens and Lilies. Verse 24, consider the Ravens. They do not soar, they have no storeroom or barn, yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable are you than birds?

In our day and age, and particularly in our culture in the Western world, we have made food this kind of cool accessory to have.

It's not something that has mastery over us, we have mastery over food, and it is a kind of fun, cool thing, something that we control, that we are the masters of.

For example, the film *Oceans 11* is a really important film in our culture, modern culture, because it really sets the kind of standard for this is what cool is, because it takes all the coolest actors together and makes a huge film with them all in it.

And in that film, the Brad Pitt character in almost every scene is eating. You'll notice that if you watch the film, in every scene he's eating a burger or sandwich or something like that, and when they were shooting the film, they saw him eating and thought, that looks so cool, the way he eats, that they made eating into this kind of cool accessory.

[ 5 : 21 ] Strange but true, eating in our culture is glamourised, provided that we do it the right way, of course, when you walk down Prince of Street with your Starbucks cup in your hand. This is a statement that I am the master of food, and it's not the master of me, although we make eating look like a cool hobby, that we are the masters of.

It's actually something that we are entirely dependent on, something that controls us, we need to eat or we will die. We are not the masters of food, basic fact, and our lives are structured around food when we will next eat.

And the way that that would work itself out in Jesus' day was even more obvious, because they didn't live in the age of the supermarket, where there are huge companies that make all of your food for you.

You have to ground your own sweets and make your own bread, all that kind of stuff, and you get all these different sections of society, your hyper religious people spending ages agonising over their food being religiously correct, kosher.

You have your Romans with their attitude to food, kind of like us, very gluttonous approach to food, and you have the normal materially poor people with this daily struggle just to make sure that they actually had food to eat.

[ 6 : 42 ] For the average person in his day, getting food on the table was a major ongoing source of work. No microwave meals, food goes off quickly in the heat, everything has to be prepared, basically from scratch, making sure that you and your family had food to eat was a huge part of your life, particularly for the women in the community as well.

They're a delegated job, but Jesus tells them this huge part of your life, do not worry about it. Do not think that there's no greater power who cares for you, who will help you meet this basic need.

He points them to the ravens and he says, look at them, they're birds, incidentally unclean animals in the Jewish religious law, and they're not even the nicest or the best birds in their culture, and he points out that they have none of the capabilities that we have in terms of harvesting, storing food, and yet they don't go hungry, God feeds them.

They're unclean and they're birds, and you are humans, you're the image of God. How much more will God care for you than for them? That's what he's saying, don't worry, you have this basic need for food that takes up all of your time, and yet you need God at an even more basic level.

He's getting at this that we worry about our core needs being met when we forget that the need at the core of every other need in our lives is God himself.

[ 8 : 18 ] When we know that at the core we have Him and that we are cared for by Him, how could we doubt that at the end of the day there'll be bread on the table?

Who of you by worrying, Jesus words, can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? He then goes on to speak about clothes and how we worry about them, and again, clothing was essential. In Jesus' day, by day you needed to protect yourself from the sun, from dust storms, from all of those things.

By night when the temperature drops, again, you need clothing to keep warm. And also in Jesus' day, style and fashion and being socially self-aware, there were big issues, particularly in the richer section of his society.

But to that he says, consider how the lilies grow, they don't labour or spin, yet I tell you, not even Solomon and all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith?

The point is that God sovereignly makes plants beautiful, plants with a short, short life. How much more will he care for our basic needs? And how little do we need to be given over to worry about those needs if we have God as the core need.

[ 9 : 48 ] And he reinforces his point here in verse 29, and do not set your heart on these things, on what you will eat or drink. Do not worry about it. And the reason he gives is because that's what non-Christians do.

He's saying that in how we handle our most basic needs, don't act as though we're not Christians. Don't deal with our basic needs in the way that those who don't know God deal with them.

Don't set your heart on those things. Set your heart on what's even more important, what's even more fundamental. Set your heart on God's kingdom.

That's what Jesus says. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Why should we set our hearts on the kingdom of God, rather than on secondary things like worry over our basic needs?

[ 10 : 55 ] The reason is a gospel promise that God has given us the kingdom, the kingdom of God. Jesus, he's saying here that we have this tendency to worry about the basic things in life.

Will there be food on the table? Am I wearing the right clothes? And this is what he's pointing us to, that if you don't know God, fine.

It would be legitimate in one sense for you to have a fundamentally worrying disposition about your basic needs.

After all, you've got no sovereign provider that you're trusting in and that you're relying on in order to meet your needs. And you're ultimately responsible, and you know that you're limited, and that you're imperfect, and that you don't have infinite resources.

So start worrying, because you don't know if you can meet your needs. But he says you are not like that. You are Christians, and your Father knows your needs, which aren't necessarily, by the way, the same as our wants.

[ 12 : 03 ] And also, your Father has already given you His kingdom. His kingdom, not a loaf of bread, but a kingdom. Not just a shirt on your back, but a kingdom.

And if he hasn't grumbled over giving you something so huge as his kingdom, how will he grumble over making sure that there's bread on the table that you have clothes to wear?

So don't worry. Don't set your heart on meeting your own needs. Set your heart on God himself. So that's the big principle that he's giving. Our first point. Our second point is the application of that.

How to set your heart on the kingdom. And there are two ways that Jesus gives to do that. First one is to serve your neighbour.

Verse 33, Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out. A treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

[ 13 : 06 ] You know, what's great here is that, and how challenging Jesus is, that he pushes us out of our self-reliant comfort zones.

And he forces us to make God himself our comfort zone. Remember the people that he's speaking to here. Most of them are not rich. They're poor people.

And in one sense, it's quite a legitimate worry for them. Will there be food on the table? Will we have enough to give our children shoes and clothes to wear?

And he takes those people whose main worry is, I do not have enough to get by. And rather than dealing with them by saying, well, it's okay, don't worry. You don't have very much. But trust in me and I'll give you a bit more.

I'll top it up and I'll make sure that you have enough. He doesn't say that. He takes these people who don't have much and who are worried about it, and he tells them, you know, take what you've got and sell it.

[ 14 : 04 ] And give to the poor. Do you see the, when you, if you put yourself in their shoes here, you think, what, where did that come from?

Why is he telling us that? He's teaching us to make God himself our comfort zone. He's teaching us that we can't talk God-reliance without living God-reliance.

Set your heart on the kingdom by living on kingdom resources. Serve your neighbor. Think sacrificially. Make your giving sacrificial.

Don't just give within your own comfort zone. Give sacrificially because doing that forces us to give in faith the rest on God as the provider.

So that's the first area of how to set your heart on the kingdom, to serve your neighbor, but also to serve your God. Verses 35 to 37. Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning.

[15:09] Like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet so that when he comes and knocks, they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes.

So Jesus tells them these words. And at this point, what we expect probably to come next is that the master comes back and finds people who have been serving him, and he says, Well done, good servants.

You have served me faithfully, and here is a bonus to your wages. I'm very appreciative. Carry on serving faithfully. But look at what comes next.

I tell you the truth. Okay, so this is saying, Jesus is certain of what he is saying here. He will dress himself to serve.

That's the master that's returning. He will dress himself to serve. He will have them recline at the table, and will come and wait on them.

[16:13] This is speaking about the master will have his servants recline at the table, and the master will come and serve his servants. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.

Set your heart on the kingdom by serving God, and what we have here is that if we give ourselves to God, God will give himself to us.

It sounds like an almost unbelievable promise, but thankfully we have Jesus, well, it's Jesus who's saying it, and he says, I tell you the truth. I'm certain about this.

Jesus is stunning, and we have to read it. I had to read this a few times to make sure, is this what he's saying? That God will serve his servants. Did he really say that?

That God will have us recline at his table, and God will serve us with the best that God has. And this is where this passage gets awesome. This is stunning.

[17:19] I want to try and explain the significance of this. We believe, because the Bible teaches it, that the reason for life is to glorify God, and to enjoy God forever.

And what's implied in that is that God himself, because of his glory, is the greatest, he himself is the greatest, most enrapturing, most wonderful, enriching, beautiful thing that there is.

And because of that, God himself is the greatest joy that we can ever experience or know. The greatest enjoyment that you'll ever know, the biggest fulfillment, will be when you glorify God in heaven fully, with no sin or anything in the way.

Don't you see this here? That the best that God has to offer is himself. He has nothing better that he could give you than himself.

And all that he is, in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and being infinite and eternal and perfect in glory and power and wisdom, the best thing God gives us is himself.

[18:30] And for those who serve God faithfully, because they want God himself, they'll get what they want, because God will come and serve us up with himself.

He'll show us his glory, his wonder, his power, his might, his perfection. He'll share himself with you, and that is where you will find what you were made for.

And what Jesus starts to build up is that we should carry on serving God in faithfulness because of this, because of the promise that God will have us recline at his table, and he will...

It's like he'll unfold his majesty for us to see it. Verses 38-48, it will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.

But understand this, if the owner of the house had broken... Sorry, I had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

[19:37] Our third, our final point, is the parable that Jesus tells to highlight the need for us to serve God faithfully. Verses 41-48, how do we go on serving God faithfully?

Peter asked, Lord, are you telling this parable to us or to everyone? The Lord answered, Who then is the faithful and wise manager whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?

It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. By telling you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his positions. Now there are three characters here in this parable that Jesus tells.

The manager, the master and the servants. The manager puts his... The master...

The manager is God the Father. He appoints Jesus as the faithful and wise, as the manager. The Father...

[ 20 : 39 ] One second, men are very young there. The manager is God the Father. He appoints Jesus to be faithful and wise under him and to give the servants their providence, their food and their soul.

We are the servants. For those of us who respond to Jesus as Lord, as God's appointed faithful and wise manager, it will be good for us when Jesus returns and finds us serving faithfully because Jesus will put us in charge of everything that is his.

Verse 45, But suppose the servant says to himself, My master is taking a long time in coming. And he then begins to beat the men's servants and made servants and to eat and drink and get drunk. This is someone who starts acting as though his master is not really his master at all. He starts getting drunk rather than acting responsibly. He starts manipulating and bullying those under him, beating the other servants.

The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him. And at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

[ 21 : 56 ] That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and those things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows.

Knowing what the gospel is, the question for us is, how do we respond with our lives? I want to suggest three things. How do we live out in terms of how we respond to this?

Jesus teaching. Three different responses in the Bible that you find. Firstly, not like the Thessalonians. There is a letter in the New Testament, 2 Thessalonians, where you have Christians in Thessalonica and they are very nervous and feverish and insecure in the way that they have responded to the gospel.

Wondering, what is Jesus doing? Has he already come? Has he left us behind? Who knows? And they are nervous, jittery in the way that they are living for him.

Also not like the Laodicians in Revelation 2. They are people who have become utterly indifferent to the gospel, having believed it. They are lukewarm. Christ's sacrificial death does not provoke them to warm spiritual and practical gratitude and also did not even provoke them to strong reaction against it.

[ 23 : 11 ] They were just lukewarm and God hated it. The third group though, the good example of the Smyrniots from the church in Smyrna, this is in Revelation 2, they were faithful, having responded to the gospel even though it made life difficult, faithful to the point of death and then receiving the crown of life.

He reinforces this point here in verse 48, that with great privilege comes tremendous responsibility. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded.

And from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. Now to draw this together into a conclusion, Jesus here is asking us to be radically committed to himself because of the gospel.

He has a divine message, a divisive divine message, which he speaks about in verses 49 to 53 with how he demands something absolute from us.

He says that he is God and that we should worship him as God, that we should fundamentally reorient the whole of our lives to accommodate that fact.

[ 24 : 26 ] It's such an absolute claim that it will invariably prove divisive, simply because you cannot accept that Jesus is Lord in half measures.

It's all or it's nothing. He's not for me, he's against me. So he demands that we're radically committed to him, simply because we can't have any other kind of commitment to him.

Then he tells us, don't ignore that truth, don't ignore this, don't pretend that you've heard it but not understood it, because this is clear in verses 54 to 57 when he speaks to the crowd about, you know how to interpret the signs of the weather and you act accordingly.

Why don't you judge for yourself what's right? He's making really stark claims about himself, that he is God and the flesh, come to us. He's not an ordinary religious teacher.

And what he is demanding is that we make himself the centre of our universe, that we make the meaning of our lives to glorify him and that we derive our greatest joy from him.

[ 25 : 31 ] And those are claims that we cannot ignore and brush aside and pretend that we didn't hear it properly, that we haven't understood it. We can interpret the weather well enough and we follow up in the way that we act.

But he says that if we hear his claims and just ignore it and brush it aside, we are hypocrites. Do not ignore the truth.

And because of not ignoring the truth, Jesus tells us, his last thing here is to get reconciled to him. As you are going with your adversary to the magistrates, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way or he may drag you off to the judge and the judge turn you over to the officer and the officer throw you into prison.

I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. He ends what he's saying with really strong words. Jesus is saying, we're adversaries.

We're disputing and God is the judge. The court case is, is Jesus the only way to God? Is he the only way to be saved? Is he the one to be worshiped?

[ 26 : 41 ] Is he the way, the truth and the life? And he's saying, if you're saying, no, he's not. And we're going to God as the magistrate knowing plainly that we're wrong because we're ignoring the truth.

Look at what he says. The judge will turn you over to the officer and the officer throw you in prison. I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

He says, try hard to be reconciled along the way before it ever gets to that stage as to who was right before God, Jesus or us.

Let's respond to God's word and prayer. Lord our Father, thank you for the Gospel. Thank you for its clarity, for how it frees us from worry because we trust in you.

Lord, we pray that you would help us to recognize the absolute nature of what Jesus tells us and acknowledge all that's at stake.

[ 27 : 40 ] Please help us to not reconciled to you through Him. And Lord, we pray that through that, that you would assure us of our need for you more than our need for anything else, that you are our most basic need.

That we depend on you, that in you we live and move and have our being. So Lord, please help us to glorify you in what we set our hearts on.

Help us to set our hearts on your kingdom because you have already given it to us. And help us, we pray, to serve you and to serve our neighbours. Knowing that one day you will serve us with yourself and that you will show us your glory and your greatness.

Amen.