

LIVING PLANTED: SESSION TWO

Christian Duty

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, You have given Your planted people Your life. Help us to understand that the daily work that You have given to us is important and holy work. Let not the sinful desires of our hearts take us from this good work. Forgive us when we have failed to value such work. Amen.

Introduction

Read aloud Luke 12:16–20:

“And he told them a parable, saying, ‘The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’” But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?””

1. What causes one to act as the rich man in the parable does? Are we encouraged or discouraged to have similar attitudes in our day by the world?

The rich man wants to have wealth that will ensure him an easy and pleasure-filled life. This is encouraged in our world by both sides of the political spectrum and for all ages. We are told that to pursue such a life is in fact the American dream. We must ask whether it is the Christian dream. After all, as the parable reminds us, whatever we build can, of course, be removed from us — or us from it — at any moment.

Read aloud Mark 4:18–19:

“And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.”

Read aloud Galatians 5:16–17:

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”

2. What does the Bible say about following the desires of our hearts? Why?

Our world loves phrases like “follow your heart” or “live your dream.” We are encouraged to chase after whatever our heart desires. The Bible warns against following the heart so impulsively because the desires that live there naturally apart from Christ are not in line with the things that God. The specific nature of these desires changes from age to age and person to person. Some seek wealth, others pleasure and still others fame or reputation. All of these desires, however, tend to choke out the desire to do the things the Word gives us to do each day in the places where we already live. Dreams often make duty seem unimportant or boring. But it is not so. The things we do daily are the most important.

Read aloud 1 John 2:17:

“And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

3. What does this Word of the Lord suggest we ought to focus our attention on as the people of God: our own dreams or our Christian duty?

We are to be concerned with and animated first and foremost by doing the things our various callings give us to do and that the will of God reveals as good. All other things at the very

least can be fleeting. Most dreams are. But believing in the One whom God has sent and forming our love towards others in the shape of God's commandments is key to our life. That work endures, and it blesses the lives of the people God has given us to serve.

Read aloud Luke 6:45:

"The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

4. Is the heart irredeemable? Is it only the storehouse of evil for everyone? How do we make sure our desires are in fact in line with the will of God?

Dreams or desires that are good and God-pleasing can flow from our heart, but only as the Spirit works them in us through His Word as we meditate upon it. In fact, Jesus says in Luke 12:34 that our hearts will be where our treasure is.

Read aloud 1 John 3:23–24:

"And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us."

5. Do the things we are called to do in these verses seem like the dreams that most of our world is focused on or do they describe the more ordinary way of life that God has given us to live?

We are called to a life that follows both the first three commandments (that call us to love God and believe in His Son) and the last seven commandments (that call us to love one another as neighbors). While this life may seem too ordinary to get excited about, it is the life that best serves our neighbors and gives us proper purpose.

Read aloud Ephesians 4:1–3:

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

6. What does it mean to walk in a manner worthy of our callings?

Our duty is to allow the fruits of the Spirit to grow in the places where God has already planted us in life. We need not spend all our time thinking about doing something others will think extraordinary, but can get to work letting the Spirit do His work right where we live.

Our next lesson will talk about the roles God has given to each of us and begin spurring us to think more specifically about the duties we have been given in those roles.

CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, You form in us godly desires through Your Word and in Your Church. Help us to find purpose in the work You give to us as we seek to love our neighbors as You have commanded. We pray this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.