

Luke 12:22 - 34 Jesus says; "Relax"

22 And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. 23 "For life is more than food, and the body than clothing. 24 "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; and they have no storeroom nor barn; and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! 25 "And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span? 26 "If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why are you anxious about other matters? 27 "Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. 28 "But if God so arrays the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you, O men of little faith! 29 "And do not seek what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and do not keep worrying. 30 "For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. 31 "But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you. 32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. 33 "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. 34 "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

This study together marks an important milestone, at least to me. This date marks the completion of 6 years of faithful verse by verse exposition of the word of God together and the beginning of the 7th, if the Lord tarries and it pleases Him to allow that.

And also, only the Lord could have planned for this text to fall on this occasion in our ongoing journey together. We are in the midst of a challenging time for us as a corporate body of believers.

Our governing authorities have ordered us to cease and desist meeting together in order to preserve the safety of ourselves and others who surround us in this community.

That's something brand new to me in my lifetime. Suddenly, with this particular crisis, the government is in the business of risk assessment and can order me to do things, or not do things, for my own good.

That all sounds benevolent and swell. The government loves me and has a wonderful plan for my life. or not. But even if it's not so wonderful, I have marching orders in this book that I cling to. Peter and Paul both told me in plain terms to obey the ruling authorities.

And then Peter and Paul and all the rest of the apostles and the church that belongs to Jesus because of their proclaiming the gospel, they promptly disobeyed their own rule about being subject to authorities.

We can build a theology based on their implementation of the inspired words they penned. God breathed words that claim authority over the governing authorities. We must obey the rulers, until the rulers tell us we can or cannot worship God. And when the ruling authority crossed over into territory where there was a conflict with God's clear mandate, we obey our first master, and simply take our lumps from the rulers.

How did that work out for them? I urge you to log onto Abe's books dot com or ebay and order a copy of Fox's Book of Martyrs. You will find your answer. Century after century of christians who belong to Jesus who were slaughtered wholesale, burned at the stake, pulled into pieces, tortured and whatever else the devil could think up for his minions to do to them.

We already covered that, in chapter 12 of Luke, didn't we. Oh, you don't remember, because we weren't meeting together when we covered it? Let me remind you. Jesus is pretty clear.

Lk. 12:4 *“And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 “But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!*

What do you think. When Jesus said that, did the crowd look at Him sort of askewed and say, nobody's killing anybody. What're you talking about. Are you unhinged. Who's killing anybody? Do you see anybody killing anybody?

Weeks later these same folks would nail Him onto a cross and kill Him. And Satan is in the murder business. Satan would kill every christian . . . if he could. He can't.

Our rulers ordered us to not meet together. For our own good. And for the good of everyone else in our locale, who we would come into contact with.

And I have to give the christians pretty high marks. We have scrambled to put together alternative ways to attempt to worship, locked down in our domiciles. Our first reflex was to attempt to follow Peter and Paul's clear teaching and find alternatives to meeting together, for a time. Temporarily.

This will just last a few weeks while father government figures out how to proceed. We can do this. We have technology available. Even in Tonopah! The baptists can hear their preacher in their home on facebook real time. We could set up something similar, I'm sure.

But, no matter how we circumvent the order to not assemble, it comes into direct conflict with the higher authoritative command in Hebrews 10:23 - 25 where there can be no argument about what the author under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said and meant.

*23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to **stimulate one another** to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.*

Christians are to assemble, then, and now. But, but, but . . . father governor says we are in danger if we do that. Perhaps, but let's take a little biblical view

of danger assessment. Risk assessment.

I'm not a Covid denier. I'm not a lunatic knuckle dragging right wing religious wacko. I'm not delusional. The virus is killing people. Lots of people. What do we do about that? What can we do?

My initial reaction was, what if we came out the other end of this thing and some of our more fragile members were missing. What if we lost Carl, or Patrick, or Margie, or Donna. The fact is, almost every one of us is in that category somewhere. Most of us would be defined by father government as increased risk.

So, then, with our passage this morning, and we're going to look at some others also we want to answer if possible some questions that are on everybody's minds. Maybe just one. We'll see as we progress.

That question is; **Do christians assess and react to risk in exactly the same way as the rest of the secular godless world does?**

In my email, calling us back to worshipful assembly, I approached that question initially. And I got quite a reaction. Some of you got angry. Some worried we might split over this question.

The split idea was laughable. How do 12 people have a church split. Now disintegration and dissolving into nothing, that might be possible. I've often wished (in my mind) for a heart beat monitor that would give me a graph of the heartpulse of this body. Did we deadline? No, I'm not worried about church splits, and deadlining is not up to me. I didn't give the church life and I never heard of preaching the word of God causing church death.

Do christians assess risk like the rest of the world does?

In the email I made the statement that our culture has become effeminate in risk assessment.

I span two worlds. My grandparents and my parents were the generation that has been called the greatest generation. They survived the depression of the 1930's and they purchased, or re-purchased the liberty we have today, during WWII . . . whatever fraction of it is left.

They did not accomplish that with the effeminate risk barriers that we are encumbered with today. As a Sandia employee I could not go over 4 feet off the ground without safety harnesses. With a 5 foot lanyard I might add.

In the email I shared just a snippet of the biblical view of manliness. Joab and Abishai warring on two fronts against the Ammonites and the Arameans.

IN 2 Samuel 10 when the Ammonites and the Arameans had arrayed themselves against Israel, Joab and his brother, Abishai agreed to lead armies in two directions against the two fronts. Joab says to Abishai, if the Arameans are too strong for me, you come help me, and if the Ammonites are too strong for you, I will come help you. And then he says these words to Abishai;

2Sam 10:12 *Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good.*

David comes to mind too. King David, before he was king, just a teenager. 1 Samuel 17: when he goes down to the war front against the philistines;

31 *When the words which David spoke were heard, they told them to Saul, and he sent for him. 32 And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." 33 Then Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth." 34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, 35 I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him. 36 "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God." 37 And*

David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and may the LORD be with you." 38 Then Saul clothed David with his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and he clothed him with armor. 39 And David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. So David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." And David took them off. 40 And he took his stick in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in his pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine.

We could do a cultural assessment of this story, a cultural critique. There's so much wrong here. What 21st century dad sends his teenage son, alone, into the wilderness to take care of sheep? He's just a kid.

Next, they had more sheep than the BLM allows! Next, there are lions and bears about and the only protection for poor David is the sheep are tastier than he is!

His dad sends him down to the war front to see how his brothers are doing? Really? We don't send teenagers to the battle front. Or do we?

But the one I like best. The only risk assessment in the whole story. Saul is like, you go kid. But at least put my armor on. Saul's OK with sending a 15 or 16 year old out to do battle with a gigantic assailant. But, here, take my armor since I'm too chicken to go. We don't say chicken, we say sensible.

Saul did the risk assessment and said, not me. Crazy boy, OK. Put my armor on. And David is so encumbered with the armor he can barely walk. I laughed about that often as I looked over my shoulder to see if anyone was coming before I climbed up some tower to make some camera work.

David says, nope. Keep this stuff, I'm going to accomplish this the same way I killed the bear and the lion, the Lord is going to do it. And he picked up some stones and walked right into the fiercest battle perhaps on record. At

least the worst odds, ever, as far as this world.

David did his own risk assessment too. You may not have caught it. How many stones did he pick up from the brook. 5. How many philistines? One giant. David's risk assessment, after that one goes down there might be more before they run. He picks up enough stones for 4 more just like him.

Do christians assess and react to risk in exactly the same way as the rest of the secular godless world does?

Apparently not. There's actually a theology within the words of Joab to Abishai. David's too. Let's consider it.

Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good.

We can mine a whole theology just out of those words. God designed men to be courageous. He made us by design as those who take more risk than the women and children that by design we are to care for and protect.

Men take risks. Next in those words. The driving reason is for the glory of God. *for our people, and for the cities of our God:* We take risks in order to bring glory upon our God. We walk into harms way for God's glory.

And the final thing we can mine from those words; God is sovereign over every threat. From the tiniest virus we cannot see, to an army of 200,000,000 in Revelation 9. Joab says, here's my threat assessment; *and the LORD do that which seemeth him good.*

Failure is an option. Death is an option. But it's God who causes the result. Let Him DO that which seemeth good to Him. We're going to charge into harms way, for the glory of your name, you do whatever it is that pleases you.

Psalm 115:3 says; *But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.*

Did you get that? That's pretty clear. It doesn't take a college degree to understand those words. God is in heaven. He is sovereign over everything. Everything!

R. C. Sproul has an infamous quote. I've used it before. He said; *"If there is one maverick molecule in all the universe, then God is not sovereign. And if God is not sovereign, He is not God."* -R.C Sproul.

God has Covid-19 under control. That's a shocking statement to our culture so I want to repeat it again. God has Covid-19, under control.

In my email calling us back together I stated, rather boldly *"And, as an added bonus, I will address the question of exactly how many lives have been spared by our governments orders to crash our economy into hopeless dis-array. I have that number. I'll share it with you on Sunday next."*

Are you ready? I said I have that number, and I do. Ready? Here it is. Zero. Not one. And therein lies a huge problem. Arrogance. Boasting is the word our translators chose. Our godless rulers boast about their ability to make any difference in this calamity. They are powerless to save a single life.

We're getting pretty familiar with James chapter 4 just lately.
13 *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."* 14 *Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.* 15 *Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that."* 16 *But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.*

Any time we ignore the fact that a sovereign God is in heaven and controls all things, and make bold statements about what we will or will not do, with no regard to Sovereign God; That is pride. Boasting. Arrogance. Evil.

But our government has solved that problem. God is dismissed. The sky God is dead to us. And so father government puts out orders. All of that is

between them and God, until they order christians not to meet.

Our government boasting about how many lives they will affect and save is a direct affront to God almighty who is in charge of every breath that any of us is graced to breathe. The governing authorities are arrogant in their entire approach. God is dead, we're in charge of this. Do as we say. Or else.

We have no clue what God is doing with this virus. None at all. Pestilence is described in the book of Revelation which combined with murder, will wipe out 1/2 of the billions that live on this planet. That's what happens when God speaks, and it is so.

I don't think this is that. But for all we know, this might be a birth pang. What I do know is God is in control and God will effect every illness, ever life spared, every death, the economy of the arrogant nation, and anything else He desires to accomplish with Covid-19. We have no idea.

What is the correct approach then? How do we stay in God's good grace?

We acknowledge that He is sovereign King. We praise His name for every single effect that comes from this disaster. Amos 6:3b *If calamity comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it?* We acknowledge the sovereign King and praise Him for the calamity.

If that's not the God you signed up for, then perhaps you're in the wrong church. This is the God of the Bible.

Isaiah 14:24

The LORD of Hosts has sworn: "As I have planned, so will it be; as I have purposed, so will it stand. It isn't arrogant when He says it. It IS arrogant when governments say that.

Isaiah 45:7

I form light and create darkness; I bring prosperity and create calamity. I, the LORD, do all these things.

Did Jesus have anything to say about this topic? That was the introduction, now let's quickly look at what Jesus says about the Sovereignty of God over every living and for that matter, non living thing. Every molecule. Every atomic sub-particle.

I'll boil it down for you and put it into our vernacular. Ready?

Jesus says; If you belong to me; relax. Relax! I've got this. If you don't belong to me; Fear. That's exactly right. He already said that back in vs. 5. Fear God who will cast body and soul into hell.

That's my summation, in case I drop dead before the next 5 minutes or so. Relax people. God owns this calamity. He has it under control.

Does that mean we have some hedge of protection around us and we're immune to the virus? Oh heavens no. We may all die horrible deaths in the next 2 months. But not one hair will perish without our Sovereign God being in full control. Not one of us will die one second sooner than God has planned. It's already written in His book. Relax.

22 And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on.

anxious. The word is merimnate. And the verb tense is very telling. That word in that sentence is a verb, present imperative active. In other words by your anxiety you're trying to accomplish whatever it is you're worried about.

I'm going to make food happen by my anxiety. I'm going to make clothes happen by my anxiety. We're back in the drivers seat, like the guy in James who is arrogant. I have to make this happen. It's up to me. I've gotta do it.

Jesus says, relax. Do not be anxious.

Ever hear the term worry wart. My favorite comic strip artist, J. R. Williams who did the "out our way" syndicated comics in the 1920's - '60's had this little character that he named worry wart. He didn't worry about anything, and he caused mayhem most of the time. No extra charge, and that little bit was worth the price of admission all by itself.

Jesus says, I've got this. Don't be a worry wart.

23 *“For life is more than food, and the body than clothing.*

His lead in line, in vs. 22 was; *For this reason . . .* What reason Jesus? Well He just finished the story about the guy who was barn building with his big plan for retirement. Arrogant proud baby boomer with a plan. Gonna fix this so I can take my ease.

God says, umm, no you won't. And Jesus finished that lesson with; 21 *“So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

That's the reason behind what Jesus says next. The idea of being rich toward God. Being not of this world, but a citizen of the Kingdom. So, Jesus is giving some guidance about how to be rich toward God. Sovereign King God, who owns you and loves you and has a plan for every step you take. He plans good for you. If you belong to Him, if you're a member of His family, a dweller in His kingdom, relax.

23 *“For life is more than food, and the body than clothing.* The life, the zoa that Jesus is talking about is a relationship with a loving master who owns everything in the world. A daily walk with God who is Lord of everything, including you.

24 *“Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; and they have no storeroom nor barn; and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!*

I used to tell my mom, stop feeding the birds. God feeds the birds. He doesn't

need any help from you. And it's making your neighbors angry. Nutty old woman. Bird poop everywhere. Pecking a hole in her roof.

God's up in heaven going, let's see, I've got to feed all the birds in Tonopah, oh, except for those 20 pigeons. Pat's got them.

It turns out, Israel is like a crossroads for birds. There are more birds in Israel than anywhere else. On earth. You can look it up. Amazing, all the birds. And God has a plan. During the tribulation, when the armies are slaughtered and the dead arrogant people are piled up with no one to bury them, God orders the birds to eat them, and guess what all those arrogant people are turned into. Dung. Bird poop.

God is not only sovereign, He has a sense of humor about it all. Show all those arrogant proud important warriors how important they really are. Turn them into fertilizer. No wonder the grass is up to your eyeballs in the millenium. Good fertilizer from all the arrogant important people who were going to show God a thing or two.

Relax. You're more important than birds.

25And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?

There's the bomb. Again, anxious, worried. Present active imperative. Gonna make this happen. I'm going to cause my life to be 3 minutes longer. I can do this. I've got a list of things I can and can't do in order to preserve my life against this virus.

25And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?

Folks, this is a rhetorical question. The answer is in the question. You can't. You can't. A cubit is 18 inches. You, with all your worry and all your plans and barns and retirement accounts and face masks, you can't make the path that God has sovereignly designed for you to trod, 18" futher than His design.

With notable exceptions. King Hezekiah for instance. The prophet shows up and tells him he's going to die. And Hezekiah weeps before the Lord and asks for more time, and the prophet didn't even get off of the estate before God turned him around and told him, go tell the king, I'm giving him 15 more years.

But again, God was sovereign over every increased second of life that He gave to Hezekiah.

We can't add a cubit with worry. But prayer might be a good idea. I've been praying for all my babies to be safe from this plague. God has been nothing but good to us. Jesus says; Relax, I've got this. The worry wart thing is counter productive.

Oh, and by the way, that verse was also my information source for the number of lives that have been spared by all of our governments arrogant blustering causes. Zero. Not one cubit added to any life because of this or any government. Sorry to break that to you. God is sovereign over life. All life, always.

26 "If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why are you anxious about other matters?"

Clothing you and feeding you is a very little thing to God. He doesn't break a sweat. He's got you and the birds covered without breaking a sweat. Even the 20 that mom used to feed. When He took her home, He made sure they were fed the next day.

Sustaining all life is a very little thing to God. We can't change one cubit of it, but to Him, it's itty bitty. So the argument is lesser to greater. If you can't control the little things, like your food and clothing, why are you arrogantly attempting the big ones, like sustaining life, why are you worried about the bigger things. You can't do it. Relax, Jesus has this.

Now then, my message this morning about the words of Jesus is very christian

centric. If you don't belong to Him; Panic. **Panic**. Anxious isn't a strong enough word, if you don't belong to the Father. Panic is more sensible.

If you are outside the benevolent care of a loving God, in this incredibly dangerous environment, this fallen hostile world, you should not just fear, you should be panicked. Terror that you cannot even see surrounds you. Hell awaits, when this little strand of life granted to you for just a moment, passes.

5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"

Risk assessment is pretty black and white. If Jesus owns you, relax. If Jesus does not own you, panic is logical.

I think we'll pick up vs 27 - 34 next week, if it pleases our God and He grants us breath until then.

The underlying message in Jesus words to the multitude is sovereignty. God is sovereign over everything. He controls life, breath, heart beats, death, calamity, peace, ease, effort, eternity.

The question isn't whether we can assess risk and control our environment. The question is who owns you in this unsafe environment.

Since the fall in the garden, when sin and death entered the equation, this world, this environment we live in, is desperately unsafe. This world is trying to kill you. Everything from germs to earthquakes, fires to tidal waves, viruses to murderous evil men, gravity to poisons.

It's totally unsafe here. Wildly unsafe. Our culture is panicked about a virus. Panicked about climate change. The more science reveals, the more panicked our world becomes.

God rules over all of it. Satan usurped the authority to reign here when he introduced and caused sin and death. Jesus is the rightful owner and has a

plan to judge and remove all of the sin and evil and dangers and harms.

The real question to consider in all of this is; Who do you belong to. Do you belong to Sovereign King God who controls everything, including the rampant evil and danger. Who promises not a hair from any head that He owns will perish unless He gives the order.

I have nothing but understanding and compassion for the world's current panic. Like ants trying to raise the damn walls around the den when a tidal wave is 100 feet away.

Governments with all of their bluster and boast and busy intervention are no match for the God who owns the calamity. He laughs at their arrogant interventions. He has His purpose set for His glory, and the raging of nations is like nothing to Him.

So the real question is, who do you belong to. Because if you belong to Him, His message to you, via the mouth of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ is: Relax.

If you do not belong to Him, His message to you is: Panic. There is a war, and He *will* win. Panic if you are not with Him. If you have not given yourself to Him as Lord, terror is reasonable.