



CAPITOL COMMISSION

The False Path of Materialism (Luke 12:13-21)

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Jesus, ministry was one of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. He also entrusted this message to the twelve, then to the seventy-two who carried on this work to the towns and villages he would soon visit. Luke's account reveals that large crowds gathered to hear his message and to be healed wherever he went. As time passes and Jesus approaches Jerusalem what becomes noticeable is a regression in the crowds' level of interest. While Jesus was a draw wherever he went, the people had gone from being fascinated, to simply curious, to being openly hostile to his ministry. Many had become satisfied with the Pharisees assessment of Jesus. While his words and actions carried the weight of authority, he was like no leader they had ever witnessed. Even John the Baptist questioned Jesus as he reflected upon his own dire situation, and the expectations he had placed upon Jesus' ministry. The Pharisees, along with the crowds concluded he must be in league with the Devil. It was the only way to explain away the miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit done through Jesus in their midst. Yet, at the same time, there was still a band of disciples that were listening and learning from their teacher.

What was this message of the kingdom that he and his followers taught? Put simply, it was the present accessibility of God's reign and rule in human life - first in Jesus' life, and then, in the lives of all who seek to follow him. This is what it meant when they preached, "Repent for the kingdom of God has come near you." Jesus was calling people to change their thinking because eternal living is found in him. As his disciples looked at Jesus, life, and listened to what he taught, they realized God's life was found in Jesus life, and not only that, it was available to them also. Jesus was giving them knowledge of eternal life, a life in which God's will is done on earth just as it is carried out in heaven. They found this in Jesus' life, and he expected this to be a present reality in the lives of his followers as seen in the Lord's Prayer. Then the gospel is more than securing one's eternal salvation; it is joining in God's life here and now. Jesus is calling all who would come to him to understand that eternal living begins now, it is a life that is transformed into the image of their teacher and Lord.

There are dangers and false paths that will keep us from participating in this divine life. If we want to be disciples of Jesus, - those who learn from their teacher how one lives in the kingdom of the heavens here and now - then we must heed the warnings he presents to those who follow him. The first is avoiding the leaven of the Pharisees

which is hypocrisy. False religion or hypocrisy is the focus on an outward form of religion with no concern for the condition of one's heart. The second is found in the following account when Jesus instructs his disciples and says, "Be on your guard against all covetousness." So the two false paths that keep us from life in God's reign and rule are hypocrisy and greed. These are not two randomly selected sins from a long list of others, but they represent two realms. These dominions are the material and the immaterial, or the physical and the spiritual. The path of the materialist is as equally effective in keeping us in a disconnected relationship from the life of God as is hypocrisy. A life built around self and the empty pursuit of finding satisfaction and contentment in what we possess in this life is simple idolatry. It is the worship of the created rather than the Creator, and this pursuit has led many to pierce themselves with many sorrows.

Luke 12:13-21 – (13) Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." (14) But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" (15) And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (16) And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, (17) and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' (18) 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. (19) And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" (20) But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' (21) So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

THE REAL RICH FOOL

Someone in the crowd said to him. – What is fascinating in the Scriptures are transitions between various accounts. In the previous section we find Jesus speaking of the loftiest of spiritual matters. In addressing the leavening influence of the Pharisees he speaks of the Trinity and makes reference to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He begins by giving a grand discourse about the need to fear God, this reverence transforms the heart and allows one to enter into a relationship with the Father who truly values them. He then speaks of the imperative nature of acknowledging the Son in all we do. By doing all in Jesus'

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS (SESSION WEEKS) AT 8:00AM, ROOM 100 RYAN BUILDING
STAFF, LOBBYISTS & LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS (NON-SESSION WEEKS) AT 1:00PM, ROOM 322 MAIN CAPITOL

Pennsylvania

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name an individual will find himself acknowledged before the very throne of God by the Son. Jesus concludes by speaking of the revelation of the Spirit and our need to understand his work and not speak against it. From this, one develops a trust that the Spirit will teach us what needs to be said in our moments of need. Jesus is communicating deep spiritual truths that are at the foundation of all reality and life. In the midst of this setting some guy blurts out, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Here is a true materialist. He has no interest in the spiritual, his only interest is for Jesus to get on his subject. This man is so blind in his hardened heart to spiritual matters he is not even embarrassed. All that matters is the physical. He wants what is his and he wants it now.

Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” – Jesus responds in an unsympathetic manner to the command given by this individual. The term “man” is one of distance, it is the title used for a stranger. In today’s vernacular it would be like saying, “Mister, I don’t know you. I don’t know your situation. I have no relationship with you.” Who made me the judge over you?” While Jesus is unwilling to settle the matter of the inheritance between this man and his brother, he is perfectly willing to engage the condition of this man’s heart. Jesus is using a living and breathing example to teach on the very real dangers of allowing one’s life to be consumed strictly with the material. This is a life that seeks to secure one’s own future apart from any consideration of one’s Creator.

THE STORY OF THE RICH FOOL

The land of a rich man produced plentifully – This story is very straight forward. Jesus presents a rich man that was blessed with an abundant harvest and yielded a return well beyond his expectations. He finds himself in the situation of having nowhere to store his crops. Being a wise businessman, he decides that he will not build additional storage facilities to house his crops because this would use valuable land that produces in abundance. He comes to the decision that he will simply tear down his current barns and build even larger barns on the same pad. These new barns will allow him to store not only his harvest, but take note of this, his goods as well. One can imagine that the man who desired a resolution to his inheritance dilemma from Jesus, when hearing this story, desired to be this man. What is presented by Jesus is not the inherent evil of money or wealth, but the litany of choices the wealthy have in managing their resources. This is what we see from this parable. Here is a man who

had more than he needed, and so, he begins to consider, “What shall I do?” This leads to a tremendous amount of freedom to do as he pleases with the wealth entrusted to him. This is the culture in which we live. Many people will spend a lifetime considering their stuff. What is the next thing they will buy? Where will they buy it? What is the best model to get? Can they get it cheaper somewhere else? What will they do with the old stuff once they get the new stuff? The pursuit of material goods can be a never ending endeavor, and like drinking salt water, this pursuit will never satisfy the cravings of the human heart. The issue is not our possessions, but the attitude one has toward the material things of this life. The things that we possess in this life are only available to us for use in this life, they hold no lasting or eternal value for us.

And he thought to himself – As this man begins considering his current situation we find a dialogue he has with himself. In a few short verses one finds six I's and four my's...I...I...I...my...my...my. And here you get an insight into this man’s thinking. There is no thought of sharing with the hard-working people who brought the harvest in. Wouldn’t there be an imaginary village with some widows and orphans in need? What of the poor or even the local synagogue? And isn’t there the work of God and wouldn’t he be up for consideration for some of this stuff? It is a life that has been turned inward, a condition of the heart in which all God’s blessings are spent only for one’s self and not seen as a means to bless others.

WHAT WAS FORGOTTEN?

Fool! This night your soul is required of you – Here is a successful, productive, and resourceful businessman. A person, who from a material perspective, had it all together. And yet, there was something missing, a flaw in his calculations that resulted in this vulnerability. It was an aspect of reality that escaped his notice and left him open to God’s critical assessment in the management of his affairs. In spite of everything God judged him a fool, a mindless individual that did not consider all the factors regarding the totality of his being. Life is not simply material. The problem with this man is he forgot three things: he forgot God, he forgot others and he forgot his own mortality. These are critical omissions for those whose desire is to live in God’s reign and rule, for covetousness is able to exist in the hearts of both the rich and the poor alike. It is only when the follower of Jesus addresses the corrupting effects of materialism that he is able to use what God has richly provided in partnership with him and his purposes.