

Greed

When a young man came to Christ for a judgment concerning his inheritance, Jesus saw a deeper flaw. The feigned issue was justice but greed was simmering beneath the surface and Jesus responded with a maxim of eternal import: “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).

Covetousness is frequently condemned but rarely identified, in part, because we do not have the benefit of telepathy; you cannot read my mind (a short story, to be sure) and I cannot read yours (and the people said, “Amen”). We can, however, look at “fruits” and make righteous judgments (cf. Matthew 7:16-20; John 7:24). And, this is where it gets sticky.

Jesus condemned a rich man in Luke 12 for hoarding goods for an unguaranteed tomorrow. His problem was not riches; God expects us to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10) and to do the best we can (Colossians 3:23). So, most working Christians today will be fairly successful in a culture that thinks government owes them a free ride. Planning for the future was not at issue since Jesus encouraged people to count the cost (Luke 14:28). The glitch in this rich man's “git-along” was greed. In Matthew 6, beginning in verse 19, Jesus spends words aplenty telling us that He will take care of us (6:25) and that laying up treasure on earth is a faithless slap in God's divine face (6:24). Are we to believe that God's attention to fowls and lilies depletes Him of so many heavenly resources that He cannot keep up with us (6:26)? When hearts are totally terrestrially focused (6:21), our worship is a joke (Isaiah 1:13ff) and the work of the Lord languishes for lack of funds (Haggai 1:4). Earth-centered economists hoard their money for entertainment, extra-curricular activities, and an easy street void of sacrifice; far too many give from the remains instead of the gains (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:2).

“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23). We speak volumes about what we truly love by how seriously we truth-shop. The truth about riches is that they corrode, corrupt, and eventually compost. Money cannot buy love... or happiness friends, respect, etc. Currency is a tool; it does not make a person but it can sure unmake one.

It is a commonly conceded fact that where there is no investment there is no interest. When Christians spend their priorities on temporary things, they divest themselves of any claim to an eternal inheritance. When our chief concern is “What's in it for me?” instead of embracing a sacrificial life of service, we are destined for disappointment. And, so Jesus closes this account: **“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”** (Luke 12:20-21).

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