

CONNECTING HEART AND WALLET

Luke 12:13-21

Dr. Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri

November 3, 2019

WATCH/LISTEN: <https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/faithful-giving-connecting-heart-and-wallet/>

Is there a connection between our hearts and our wallets? I think so. Jesus thought so, too. He was asked to settle an inheritance squabble and declined. But then he warned about greed. You'll note that this parable begins with a warning (v. 15). Be sure to have your filter up. Be constantly guarding, perpetually watching, for the ways greed seeps into our hearts, without us even realizing it. Possessions do not equal life. We say we know that, but we use phrases like, "How much money is he worth?" [I'm indebted to Malcomb Tolbert for this insight, *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9, p. 107].

Jesus tells the parable. A farmer had a bumper crop. His first mistake is that he does not consult with God about his overflow. He consults with himself (v. 17). Notice that our church is asking you to pray about your special gift today on budget catch-up Sunday, and to begin praying about your commitment in 2020. The next mistake is that the rich man gets an "I" infection. In this brief story, he uses the personal pronouns "I" or "my" eleven times.

But the mood of the story changes suddenly: "But God..." (v. 20). Until now, the rich man has been in control. But no more. Malcomb Tolbert wrote, "His neighbors called him smart; God called him a fool" [*Broadman*, p. 108]. He forgot something. He had a great deal of things and money but he didn't have lots of time. A pastor was once trying to get the young people in the congregation to take seriously how brief life is. He said, "One of these days you will die. They will bury you and go back to the church and eat potato salad!"

Here's another angle on this parable. Dr. David May was with us a few years ago, teaching from Luke's Gospel. He reminded us of the literal translation of v. 20: "they are requiring from you this night your soul." Who are the "they"? Perhaps the "they" are our possessions. They suck the life out of our souls. The more we have, the more energy we spend protecting it. Worry and anxiety are so corrosive and exhausting. This seems to be at least one valid interpretation of the parable because the verses which immediately follow it (vv. 22-34) are about worry, anxiety and obsessing about clothes and the impression we make on others.

Bill Leslie once stated that the Bible asks three questions about our money. 1) How did we get it? Legally or by exploitation. 2) What are we doing with it? Indulging in luxury or helping the needy. 3) What is it doing to us?

Verse 21 offers a summary. So it is for those who store up for themselves and are not rich toward God. Sitting Bull was the most famous of all North American Indians. At first, he was a formidable foe of the white man and later, he joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. After spending lots of time around "civilized" people, he could never understand why white people

were so unmindful of the poor. He said, "The white man knows how to make everything, but he does not know how to [share] it" [*Crazy Horse and Custer*, by Stephen Ambrose, p. 351].

At its deepest level, this parable invites the question: What's it all for? What we attach our lives to matters. Our evangelism should be inviting empty, secular people, successful people by the world's standard's, to something deeper, something more.

In the end, what the rich fool lacked was an imagination to see what God could do with his money. Do we have the imagination to see that what we give gets transformed by the Holy Spirit? How God uses our gifts to impact children...youth...the homeless of our community...the needs in our community through Mission JC...precious lives in Kenya...and our gifts make it possible for people to come into a life-transforming relationship with Christ. When we have imagination, we can see something besides bigger barns. We can see what love can do.