

# PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 27, The Rich Fool, Part IV. Luke 12:13-21

1. According to Paul, the Christian should work for two reasons. The first is that he will not be a burden on others (II Thess. 2:7-12. The second is “so that he may be able to give to those in need.” (Eph. 4:28). To explore all of this for a Christian in a capitalistic society would go well beyond the intent and scope of this study. (Luther’s thoughts) We would only observe in passing that this p, with its presuppositions, speaks clearly to crucial questions of our own day. Furthermore, the man is ‘dialoguing with himself.’
2. One of the striking features of a ME is his gregarious nature. Life is lived in tightly knit communities. The leading men of the village still “sit at the gate” and spend literally years talking to one another. The slightest transaction is worthy of hours of discussion. The present writer has engaged with the notables in such discussion and knows that often there seems to be a subtle pressure not to introduce the information that will settle the question under discussion. The reasoning seems to be—we have a wonderful discussion going, do not close it! In any case, the elder in his community makes up his mind in community.
3. He decides what to do after hours of discussion with his friends. He does his thinking in a crowd. The text does not read, “he said to himself, as we have with the unjust steward (16:3) and the unjust judge (18:4).” Rather this man dialogues with himself. He obviously has no one else with whom to talk. He trusts on one and has no friends or cronies with whom he can exchange ideas. When he needs a dialogue he can talk only to himself. Thus we begin to get Jesus’ picture the kind of prison wealth can build. He has the money to buy a vacuum and live in it. Life in this vacuum creates its own realities and, from this warped perspective here is his solution.
4. **STANZA THREE—PLAN (PRESENT):**  
*And he said, “I will do this;” I will pull down my barns and build larger barns; and I will store all my grain and my goods. PLAN (PRESENT)*  
Plummer has not the chiasmus in this line;

*“I will tear down of me the barns and greater ones I will build up!”* The language of “tear down and build up,” is classical prophetic language that refers to the call/ministry of the prophet. (Jer. 1:10). It speaks of courageous acts in the name of God that call for suffering in their fulfillment. Here this noble language is sadly cheapened by this self-indulgent rich man who is determined and alone will consume God’s gifts.

5. These gifts (for him, surplus wealth) have suddenly become ‘my grain and my goods.’ The list of ‘my crops, my barns, my goods and finally my soul,’ has often been noted. It was in the barn that the tithes and offerings were set aside. The priests/Levites came to the barns to collect them. (Safari) Our rich man has other things in mind as we see from his concluding words.

#### **6. STANZA FOUR—PLAN (FUTURE)**

7. *“and I will say to my soul, “Soul!*

*You have ample goods laid up for many years.*

*Relax, eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.”*

This is not a sad, but a pitiful speech. The wealthy, self-confident man has arrived, he made it. All he has longed for is realized. He needs an audience for his arrival speech. Who is available? Family? Friends? Servants and their families? Village elders? Fellow landowners? Who will ‘rejoice with me?’ The father in the p of The Prodigal Son, has a community at any time to join him in the festival of joy. (Luke 15:22-24). The shepherd and the woman call in their friends and neighbors to rejoice over the found sheep and coin. (15:6,9). The gregarious ME always has a community around him. But this man? He can only address himself. His only audience is his own ‘nesh.’

8. To claim that he is talking to his body, when it needs to be his soul is a misunderstanding of the text. The word soul, (psuche) in Greek translation of the Hebrew word for soul, nefesh, means the whole person. Nefesh reappears in the Syriac version of this text and the cognate Arabic word nafs is used almost exclusively in the Arabic translations. Thus the point is not that he is addressing his body as opposed to the soul. The issue is his mentality. He thinks that the total needs of the total person can be met by material surpluses well preserved for the owner’s exclusive use.
9. The word ‘enjoy yourself,’ is a colorful word. Again the translator has managed to add a wordplay to the text by a careful selection of vocabulary. The rare word used in this passage for ‘to bring forth plenty,’ is (euphoreo). The Greeks added the letters eu to the beginning of words to intensify them.

Some good becomes very good by this addition. Thus (Angelleo) is to bring news: euanglelleo is to bring good news and in the NT it becomes the word, Gospel. Phoreo means to bear fruit; so euphoreo means to bear fruit in abundance. Then here in verse 19, the word we have translated, 'enjoy yourself,' is euphraino. The noun form of this same word is euphron, which is the state of self-enjoyment. The root of these two words is phron, which comes into English in our word diaphragm. The phron is the diaphragm, Bertran observes, the diaphragm was "early regarded as the seat of intellectual and spiritual activity. The diaphragm determines the nature and strength of the breath and human activity and hence also the human spirit and its emotions." So anyone with euphron possessed an added measure of the good life and all that it holds. This euphron is often used for purely secular joy, and sometime for the joy of the festive meal. (Bultman). But at the same time it could also cover "the facts and processes of the intellectual or spiritual life." (Bultman) Thus the rich man has this formula;

euphoreo	euphraino
<i>(Bring forth good things)</i>	<i>(Enjoy all aspects of the good life)</i>

10. It is not by accident that the speech nefesh/psuche (the whole person) ends with a vision of euphron. We would suggest that this above is a deliberate play on words. In this tidy equation comes the thundering voice of God.

**11. STANZA FIVE--GOODS LEFT:**

*"But God said to him, "Fool! (aphron)  
 This night your soul is required of you,  
 And what you have prepared, whose will these things be?"*

The NT has four words for fool." These are;

Anoetos---mindless

Asophos—w/o wisdom

Moros—fool (the English word for moron).

Aphron—fool/stupid.

Plummer states that the last two as "much stronger" than the first two. Luke uses the first in 6:11 and 24:25, and certainly knew all four. In this text he has chosen aphron. The 'a' prefix negates the word as in the English moral for this is amoral. The rich man here thinks that in his euphoreo (many things) will produce euphron (the good life) is in reality aphron (w/o mind, spirit and emotions). His formula for the good life is sheer stupidity.

12. The verb “is required,” in the Greek is a word that commonly refers to a loan. His soul was on loan and now the owner God wants the loan returned. At the beginning of the p. we noted that his goods were a gift. Now it is clear that his life is not his own. The p assumes a time lapse between stanza four and five. The voice of God thunders at him (presumably) after he has “prepared,” his maximum security storage bins. Thus after his arrival, he is confronted with the stark reality of the world he has created with his wealth. As Manson succinctly observes: “the sting of words lies, however, not in the announcement that that man must die, but in the following question, which shows clearly the real poverty of his life. He is lonely and friendless in the midst of his wealth.”
13. The listener reader already knows this. Now it takes the voice of God Himself to penetrate the rich mans’ self-created isolation and confront him with a chilling vision of himself. There is no accusing question; “What have you done for others?” Or, “Why have you failed to help those in need?” Or why are there no family/friends to be recipients of your wealth?” He has an impenetrable armor for such an attack. Rather, God thunders: Look what you have done for yourself! You plan alone, build alone, indulge alone and now you will die alone! The story does not tell us that the rich fool does not have any family. Everyone has some family—even Howard Hughes! Rather, the fool does not know who will win the power struggle after he dies. He does not know who will finally gain control over all of his carefully secured wealth. Muir give an account of the last days of the fabulous Harun al-Rashid, the most illustrious and wealthy caliphate of history; *“Traveling in the mountains into Persia. Harun calls his physician aside and alone under the shelter of a tree, unfolding a silken kerchief that girded his loins, discloses the fatal disease he labored under. “But have a care,” he said, “that thou keep it a secret; for my sons” (and he named them all their guardians)” are watching the hour of my decease, as thou mayest see by the shuffling steed they will now mount on me, adding thus to my infirmity.” There is something touching in these plaintive words of the great monarch, now alone in the world, and bereft of the support even of those who were bound to rally around him in his hour of weakness.”*