

PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 28, The Rich Fool, Part V. Luke 12:13-21

1. 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

(Bring forth good things)

euphraino

(Enjoy all aspects of the good life)

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.”
5. 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."

6. The same kind of picture is painted by Browning in his poem "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church." History and literature give ample examples of the truth of what the voice of God announces to this stupid wealthy man. What is his response? We are not told. This p is also open-ended. Also, a p at times has aspects of a riddle becomes evident. Where does this man's mind turn? What is the content of his next dialogue with himself? It is, I have rejected the living community of family and friends around me! Or, I am mistaken; wealth does not bring genuine security! Or, why did I not help others, when I could? Or is the reader/listener expected to overhear the discussion of Psalm 49:10? "The fool/stupid and the mindless alike must perish and leave their wealth to others." If this is the case, Psalm 49 discusses the rich man's inability to ransom himself with his wealth which he leaves behind. Is this the direction the listener's mind is to go? Is this p a commentary on Luke 9:23-24? The p does not give up its secrets. The rich man's silence leaves each reader/listener to answer out of his own soul. The passage concludes with a second wisdom saying which now needs to be examined.

7. SECOND WISDOM SAYING

*"So is he who treasures up for himself,
And is not gathering riches for God."*

There are two active verbs that have been understood for many years according to translations; "treasuring up and gathering riches." The scholar Bengel points out that "for himself" may not be the best translation but a better one is into God, "and is not gathering riches into God." He observes, "nothing can be added or diminished from the perfection of God (whether a man seeks His glory or not in the laying out his wealth)" He is rich toward God who uses and enjoys his riches in the way that God would have him. (This fits

beautifully into our view of Biblical stewardship as management of one's entire being more 'than just giving money to the church').

8. Bengel correctly points out the differences. The difficulty is that Bengel, like others, are obliged to turn the active participles, "is enriching" into passive "is rich," as he has said above. The two active participles are precisely parallel. Perhaps the words "for himself and for God," on the original language are not parallel as God needs nothing; indeed, "The cattle on a thousand hills are His," see Psalm 50:10. Yet the parallelism is there. Some translations vary, "is enriching" in the present and some "is rich" in the passive. Ibn al-Assal has "is rich" in the text and "is enriching" in the margin. When we ask of the Oriental versions, Enriching with what? The answer is again ambiguous. We have "with God" or "in the way of God," or in the "things that are for God," or finally "with God," or "in the way of God." The first can only mean "seeking to become rich in the reality of God Himself." The second and third are expansions of the first. The Greek has *eis thon* (literally into God). The preposition (*eis*, "into") is on occasion used for the dative of advantage and translated "for." (Bauer).
9. A clear case from this comes from Luke 9:13, where the disciples are worried about feeding the 5K, when they were to go and "buy food 'for' all the people. The 'eis' denotes reference to a person or thing. Luke 14:35 has the same sort of thing as salt is referred to as fit 'neither for (*eis*) the land nor for (*eis*) the dunghill. With the use of the word (*eis*) in the text before and after our text there is really no reason to not understand our text in the same fashion---for. Furthermore, we translate gathering riches "for" God. We need not to be understood as trying to add the perfection of God. All through Scripture God receives the gifts of the believers. So here the rich fool is characterized as one who is spending his energies trying to enrich himself rather than laboring in the service of God so as to offer gifts to God. Ibn al Tayyib hints at this understanding of the text. "He (Jesus) intends from the picture someone who stores up worldly treasure and does not achieve riches in spiritual things." He does not indicate "divine things" as gifts from God, but he does have two active verbs, "stores up," and "achieve riches." In each case, this is an action that a believer must engage.