

PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 29, The Rich Fool, Part VI. Luke 12:13-21

1. SECOND WISDOM SAYING

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

2. Bengel correctly points out the differences. The difficulty is that Bengel, like others, I 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.
3. The fourth is the translation we propose, as we have noted the Greek has the translation literally “into God.” (eis) The preposition “into” can be translated to “for.” (Bauer). A clear case of this is Luke 9:13, where the disciples are worried about feeding the 5K and suggest to go and “buy food ‘for’ the people. The (eis) into is used to refer to a person or thing. In Luke 14:35, eis is what the salt is referred to as fit neither (eis-for) the land nor (for-eis) the dunghill. With these uses of (eis) in Luke, before and after our text, we have no reason grammatical reason for not understanding this p. and text in the same fashion. Furthermore, when we translate “Gathering rich for God,” we need not be understood as adding to the perfection of

God. All through the Bible God receives the gifts of believers as He has empowered them. Here the rich fool is characterized as one who is spending his energy trying to enrich himself, rather than laboring in the service of God as to offer gifts to him. Ibn al-Tayyib reflects this in the text: "Jesus intends from this picture someone who stores up worldly treasure and does not achieve riches in divine things." Ibn al-Tayyib does not indicate that "divine things" are gifts for God, but he does have two actives for the verbs, "stores up" and "achieve riches." Thus in each case the text is talking about action that a believer must engage.

4. Understood in this fashion, we have a perfect compliment to Luke 12:33/Matthew 6:20, where the treasure in heaven is clearly "for yourselves." When standing alone such a text can lead to another worldly egocentricity, a way to take it with you. Put the money in your bank on the other side and you'll be able to keep it yourself! This text seems to be a corrective for that understanding. The "treasure in heaven," is "for yourselves," (Luke 12:33). But in some profound sense it is also a gift to God, it is "for God," (Luke 12:21). The General principal at the end of this p. significantly compliments the general principal at the beginning of the p. The surplus (1st general principal) are to be spent in offering gifts to God (the 2nd general principal). The gifts to God are to be returned to Him. Furthermore, the energy directed toward enriching oneself with material things is misdirected. Such energy final destroys the self that exerts it. Rather the believer is directed to spend their gifts enriching God.
5. Finally, what is the response of the brothers in the crowd? Again, there silence. The rich man is silent in the p. and so is the audience listening to its telling. Thus the listener/reader is pressed to finalize the tension of this text on two levels; that of the rich man and that of the petitioner. What is he pressed to conclude? We suggest the following: The petitioner from the crowd is pressed to affirm, "the real problem is not the division of inheritance, but a will to serve self that rather than to serve God." (by serving others, including a brother).
6. The Theological motifs that inform the p in it setting include the following;
 - a. A naked cry for justice unqualified by any self-criticism, is not heeded by Jesus.

- b. In case of a broken personal relationship Jesus refuses to answer a cry for justice when the answer contributes to a finalizing of brokenness of that relationship, he did not come as a divider.
 - c. Jesus' p. always reflects a profound concern of justice for the poor. For him, justice is for needs not just simply earnings. (Matthew 10:1-16). This self-centered cry for justice are symptoms of an illness as Jesus understands. Jesus refuses to answer the cry, but rather addresses himself to the healing of the sickness that produced the cry.
 - d. Material possessions are gifts from God. God does not grant unearned surpluses of material things. Each life is on loan. The rich man in the p. assumed to own both ("my goods and my soul.") The p. presents him as mistaken in both places.'
 - e. The person who thinks security and the good life are to found in material things is stupid.
 - f. The abundant life is to be found in "treasuring up for God," rather than for self.
 - g. Jesus talks of the rich man who will, "fade away in the midst of his life-style." (1:11) Jesus gives a p. picture of precisely this same phenomenon. This fool's wealth destroyed his capacity to maintain any abiding human relationships. He has no one to whom share his soul, and worst of all, he doesn't know he has a problem!
7. In the concern to discover the payoff of this p., it is important to reflect again on the p. answer to the petitioner's demand. The voice from the crowd demands justice for the division of the inheritance, probably in the form of property. Jesus' answer is to ask for a new perspective on the problem itself. He doesn't investigate those who are right and wrong and then throw in his weight on the side of justice (however correct this action would be). Jesus introduces a new/theological perspective from which to view the problem and then Jesus leaves the problem unanswered. As we have indicated the cry for justice over land is The ME most pressing problem. What answers can Christians give according to this p.? The author finishes by telling a story of two brothers in various conditions after their father died and left them an inheritance. Each brother was more concerned for the other, they accidentally met at the marker and established Jerusalem.