The Journey to Jerusalem

(3) A life rich towards God  Luke 12:13-21; Psalm 127


Jesus often warned of the dangers of money – how the love of it gets in the way of love for God (Mt.5:24) and the deceitfulness of it can choke the effectiveness of God’s word in our lives (Mt.5:24). This parable vividly illustrates the folly of valuing material things more than we value being “rich towards God” (21) – rich in things but poor in soul.

Materialism tells us that what we have is more important than who we are. This results in “all kinds of greed/covetousness” (15; Ex.20:17) and self-indulgence (count “I/me” in v.17-19). But not to satisfaction (18) or lasting security (20). Hence the foolishness of living for temporal rather than eternal riches. So laying up treasure in heaven is a much wiser investment (Mt.6:19-21; 1 Tim.6:17-19). We do that by being far more interested in receiving God’s “well done” (Mt.25:23) than in acquiring material things simply to use for our own benefit and enjoyment. That’s not only wiser eternally, but even in this life is the way of true contentment and security (Phil.4:12; Mt.4:4; Heb.13:5).

2. Unless the Lord builds the house (Psalm 127)

This Psalm has the same message as the parable above. It singles out three of our most universal preoccupations – building, security, raising a family – and makes us ask what they amount to, and to whom we owe them. The two parts are also connected by the Hebrew word-play on house which also has the sense of family (e.g. 2 Sam.7:5,11).

“In vain” is repeated three times (v.1-2), to emphasise that any activity is useless unless the Lord is blessing it. Toil and overwork achieve nothing of themselves. It is not simply that our projects will fail – there is at least bread to show for them – but that they lead nowhere without God (ESV “the bread of anxious toil”; NLT “anxiously working for food to eat” cf. Mt.6:25-34). “This is not condemnation of industry. What is condemned is worry on the one hand and feverish, self-confident activity on the other. Both are symptoms of unbelief.” (Stott).

Discussion 1 – The deceitfulness of wealth

Why do people give so much importance to possessions? Why does Jesus say that wealth is deceitful (Mark 4:19)?

We can’t take our wealth with us. So why do people seem to think that having money will enable them to buy eternal life? In contrast to that, how can we use worldly wealth to lay up treasure in heaven?

Discussion 2 – Unless the Lord builds the house

Look at 1 Cor.3:9. Do you think of yourself as a co-worker with God? What are you and God currently building together?

“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you” (St.Augustine). How can we find a resting place in God, so that we are driven neither by restless ambition nor restless anxiety?

Reflection:

What has particularly struck you out of today’s study and discussion?

How might that help you to be a better follower of Jesus?

Throughout this coming week, reflect further on these thoughts and continue the journey through Luke’s Gospel with these daily readings:

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If you have internet access, you can read a daily short blog with comment on these verses [www.skeltonbrotton.wixsite.com/christians](http://www.skeltonbrotton.wixsite.com/christians)