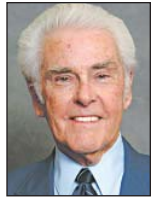


Transformed in my possessions

We are physical beings, and we live in a physical world. It's natural, then, that we fill our lives with physical objects. We



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seek to possess things, but those things have a way of possessing us. How does this happen to us, according to Jesus?

Since Jesus taught us many things in parables, what kind of person would he be describing as a contrast to the person who needs to be transformed in his or her possessions? Let us draw from a parable in Luke 12:13-21 which is called The Rich Fool.

This parable is only found in Luke, as Jesus was in the midst of teaching his disciples. We find that he spoke of God's care of sparrows, and arguing from that his care of them. In the midst of this teaching a man interrupted him. Jesus said to the man and to the crowd, "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness; for man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." That is the theme, life. It was to illustrate life, and its application to the case before him, and to his disciples, and to the multitudes listening that he uttered this parable.

Jesus was illustrating the meaning of life and what it really is, to people who were largely thinking of life in terms of the material, and the earthly. His audience was thinking in terms of things and to what extent our lives are conditioned by things.

No, said Jesus, that is not life. A man's life does not consist, nor is it held together by things. Life is not made whole and complete by things, even though there may be an abundance.

"Then comes the dramatic part of the story that breaks in like a clap of thunder. 'But God said to him.' I like the Old Version because it is exactly what it means. 'Thou fool,' in spite of your wealth, and your diligence and success and sagacity; because you think you can be satisfied with goods! 'This night shall thy soul be required of thee'" (G. Campbell Morgan, *Parables and Metaphors of our Lord*, "The Rich Fool," pp. 187-191).

Invest in eternal treasures (Matthew 6:19-21). Obviously we will not carry into heaven the actual possessions we have bought on earth, since they are part of our earthly existence, but the attitudes and behaviors which we have practiced in life into heaven. A. M. Hunter defines "treasures in heaven," as living as God approves, purely, helpfully, lovingly; and it includes all "those little nameless unremembered acts of kindness and love" which "are the best portion of a good man's life" (*A Pattern for Life*, p. 76).

Keep a clear focus (Matthew 6:22-23). I can identify readily with Jesus' attention to the eye since I must visit my ophthalmologist regularly if I am going to be able to use them properly. In Jesus' ministry, he dealt with many children as well as adults with blindness as their medical concern.

Bible Studies for Life

June 19, 2016

Scripture: Matthew 6:19-24

The Parable of the Eye seems pretty clear but interpreters have given readers a lot of trouble. I think that A. B. Bruce has done a good job of interpretation in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*. Let me quote a few lines from his work. "Physically the qualities on which vision depends are health and disease. The healthy eye gives light for all bodily functions, walking, working, etc; the diseased eye more or less fails to this service....The eye is the lamp of the body: when it is healthy we are to do our daily work, when diseased we are in darkness." In that darkness it is hard to make the right choices so we are dependent on God's help in our choices.

Stay totally committed to God (Matthew 6:24). This verse was particularly applicable to the economic situation in Jesus' day. Workers often did not have any choice of whom they would serve since many of them were slaves who had been assigned to a master. Their responsibility was to do the job that had been assigned to them. They did not have a choice in faith. Jesus encourages them to stay committed to the faith that could strengthen them in their responses to their masters. It remains true that in Jesus' guidance they can choose how to serve God through their hard work.

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