

“The Soul of Money: Aligning Money and Soul”
Luke 12:13-21 & Matthew 6:21

I invite you today to imagine the following scenario given by Robin Vicki and Joe Domingez in their book, *Your Money or Your Life*, “Imagine your boat capsized and you swim to an island in a piranha-infested part of the Amazon River. You think you’re done for but then you notice that you have your wallet and it’s stocked with money. Saved! You later see two men in a canoe...paddle by and you raise a fistful of dollars, yelling, ‘Help! Help!’ But they don’t recognize your money.”

Money only has power when we use it for exchange. It is not something that is inherently worthy. It is something we use and assign meaning to. This gives us the potential for a lot of freedom to put money in its proper place. Our time, our lives, our inherit worth, our energy, our values, our souls, and our purpose are the things that should inform our money. Unfortunately, we are trained from an early age to believe the opposite. We let money inform and dominate our values and thus we become willing to abuse ourselves and others for the sake of money.

And this issue is not new to humanity. It just has become more intense in our time. But even at the time of Jesus our relationship with money needed to be put in its proper context and place.

Today’s parable from Jesus came as a response to a conflict between two brothers over possessions. The conflict between the brothers is an example of how our unhealthy relationship with money could bring so much pain into our world. A man came to Jesus asking for help to get more wealth. He wanted Jesus to convince his brother to divide the inheritance with him. He was seeking something that was against the way people of that time practiced economics. In ancient Israel the oldest son was to receive a double portion of the inheritance, which in Greek, **Kleronomia**, meant specifically, “**real estate**,” or land. This way the land which was given freely to the people of Israel would stay divided equally according to families and tribes. The man’s request of Jesus was an indicator of greed because what he wanted was his share of the land so that he could take it away and separate himself from the rest of the family. Normally what families did was keep the land and work it together instead of dividing it up into small pieces that would not be able to support a whole family. What the brother was looking to do was going directly against the way the people of Israel were called by God to share the land. That was why Jesus refused to be an arbitrator between the brothers. He also challenged the man about his understanding of material possessions. Let’s listen to Luke 12:13-21

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.’ ¹⁴But he said to him, ‘Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?’ ¹⁵And he said to them, ‘Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.’ ¹⁶Then he told them a parable: ‘The land of a rich man produced abundantly. ¹⁷And he thought to himself, “What should I do, for I have no place to

store my crops?" ¹⁸ Then he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." ²⁰ But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" ²¹ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.'

The parable which Jesus told did not condemn wealth or good crops. It did not condemn good financial planning with the man wanting to build a bigger barn for more storage. The parable did not imply that the man was going to go to hell for all of this. What the parable hits hard on is the foolishness of greed and selfishness. The farmer in the parable talks to himself and the whole conversation is focused on his own interests: "What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops? I will do this." The whole time the farmer is focused on number 1, himself. This is what provokes God to call the man foolish.

The greed and selfishness of the man are some of the strongest traps we fall into as human beings. Part of the struggle for us is falling for the "wisdom" of the world around us. We think that people are happy because they are rich or accomplished. We envy what they have and want to be like them. But Jesus cuts through all of our false wisdom to show us what truly makes us happy and not just us individually but also as a society. The parable reminds us of our own mortality as a way to wake us up from the illusions of the world about money and what makes us happy.

Here is a video from Vicki Robin about a way to put money in its proper place, the place where our soul belongs:

https://youtu.be/T_tDthUWsVM

I invite you to turn to a neighbor and share with them about a time when you felt that you are enough or that you have enough. Or you may share about a time when you helped someone else feel that they are enough or that they have enough.

We will end with Jesus' words from Matthew 6:21 to remind us of the importance of investing our energy in the places where our souls belong:

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Amen.