

The Readings for Sunday, August 11, 2019:

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20

Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23 (23)

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Luke 12:32-40

I've heard many a minister preach on this text, and others like it. Almost all of them rush to assure us listeners that Jesus doesn't really mean that we should sell all of our possessions and trust fully in God to provide for us. Yet as I read the Gospels, I see that Jesus gives us these instructions again and again. Why are we so quick to dismiss these instructions? What if Jesus really meant what he said? What if it's not some kind of code, but something we're meant to take literally?

Again and again Jesus warns us not to trust in earthly treasure. He's clear: earthly treasure will always, ALWAYS, fail us. That's not the message the world wants us to hear. The world wants us to rush and hurry, to buy more stuff, to build more barns for our stuff, to accumulate and hoard and lie awake at night worrying that we won't have enough. The world wants us to pay attention to our bank accounts. Jesus wants us to be on the lookout for God.

One of the often repeated messages in the teaching of Jesus is that God will provide for us everything we need. Why is it so hard for us to believe?

I spend plenty of time trying to help God in this mission of providing. Although I give money away, I still have a variety of savings and investment accounts. What would happen if I decided that I would trust that God will provide for me in retirement? How could I change lives if I gave that money away to people who have nothing?

Jesus is very clear that money and the pursuit of money can seduce us away from God's mission for us. Once, when I was stuck in an airport in Kentucky, I saw a book in the bookstore with this title: *God Wants You to Be Rich*. Really? In what Gospel would that be? I scanned the book, hoping that the author would cleverly remind us that God wants us to be rich in love, not rich in money and stuff. Alas, no. The author assured the reader that God's deepest desire for us is for us to accumulate money.

I don't know what Bible that writer was using. Read the Gospels again. Read the New Testament again. So much of the New Testament can be summed up thus: Stay awake and alert, focused on what's important; what's important is to love each other, the way God loves us; don't get too attached to things that don't matter – they keep you from loving your fellow sheep.

Again and again, Jesus tells us that we can't serve two masters. We must choose. Take a hard look at your life and the way you spend your time. What have you chosen? Do you spend more time in prayer or more time sorting through your financial investments? Do you read your Bible more than you read the business section of the paper? Do you look for ways to welcome the poor and the outcast? The Bible tells us that we'll find God there.

Where is your heart these days? What do you spend your waking hours thinking about, your sleeping hours dreaming about? How is God trying to get your attention?