

## Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.  
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.



## Luke 12:13-21

*While Jesus does not ALWAYS attack wealth, this parable is reflective a consistent theme of his teachings: Possessions distract us from true wealth; from what is rich in the eyes of God.*



**Year C**

**Pentecost 11**

**August 4, 2013**

*Sunday Between July 31 and August 6 Inclusive*

*Proper 13, Ordinary Time 18*

Read the passage at the bottom of this post: [Luke 12:13-21, The Message](#) or [Luke 12:13-21, The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click here, [Luke 12:13-21](#), for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

Sermon by the [Rev. Dr. George Hermanson](#), "to be added."

Well for some reason, the creators of the Lectionary have skipped over most of Chapter 11 - going from last week's, [Luke 11:1-13](#), lesson about prayer and hospitality to this text.

So we could be blithely traveling along with Jesus through August without being aware that back in Chapter 11, Jesus had so insulted the religious authorities (Luke 11:45) that:

*When he went outside, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile toward him and to cross-examine him about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.*

Luke 11:53-54

I believe it is crucial to know this so that we don't read this and the other teachings that follow as being similar in tone and context as Luke 11:1, "Lord, teach us to pray." We are now in the midst of serious conflict and challenge.

**Verse 13.** But let's assume that the "someone" in the crowd is not an agent of the authorities and is making an honest request of Jesus to arbitrate a dispute between brothers.

**Verse 14.** Anyone in any leadership position should note that Jesus refuses to engage in "mission creep." That is, Jesus does **NOT** do what is requested because it is not part of his mission. Healing? Teaching? Proclaiming? All are OK. Acting as an arbitrator? No.

**Verse 15.** At the time of Jesus, the brother requesting the division of the inheritance would be seen as greedy - the brother would be trying acquire for his own personal possession a share of the family inheritance.

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Reducing the family's inheritance for personal gain is greedy, and "was **always** considered stealing." (Malina and Rohrbaugh, page 277, see footnote below. Emphasis is original.) Thus, Jesus comment is a logical response to the brother's request.

**Verses 16 to 21.** Malina and Rohrbaugh (Page 278, see footnote below.) helpfully comment on the parable:

*An honorable man would be interested in what was rightfully his, meaning what he already had. He would not want "more." Anyone with a surplus would normally feel shame unless he gave liberally to ... the community. By keeping everything to himself and refusing to act (generously), the rich man in the parable reveals himself as a dishonorable fool.*

While Jesus does not **ALWAYS** attack wealth, this parable reflects a consistent theme of his teachings: Possessions possess us. Care for possessions makes it more difficult to truly care for what God cares for. Possessions distract us from the fullness of life. Possessions distract us from true wealth; from what is rich in the eyes of God.

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Note: Historical background information is primarily from Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels (see link below), pages 277-278.

\* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina, Richard Rohrbaugh, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.

### Luke 12:13-21 (NRSV)

<sup>13</sup> Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."  
<sup>14</sup> But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" <sup>15</sup> And 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." <sup>16</sup> Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. <sup>17</sup> And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' <sup>20</sup> 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?' <sup>21</sup> So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

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### Luke 12:13-21 (The Message)

<sup>13</sup> Someone out of the crowd said, "Teacher, order my brother to give me a fair share of the family inheritance."

<sup>14</sup> He replied, "Mister, what makes you think it's any of my business to be a judge or mediator for you?"

<sup>15</sup> Speaking to the people, he went on, "Take care! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot."

<sup>16</sup> Then he told them this story: "The farm of a certain rich man produced a terrific crop. <sup>17</sup> He talked to himself: 'What can I do? My barn isn't big enough for this harvest.' <sup>18</sup> Then he said, 'Here's what I'll do: I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll gather in all my grain and goods, <sup>19</sup> and I'll say to myself, Self, you've done well! You've got it made and can now retire. Take it easy and have the time of your life!'

<sup>20</sup> "Just then God showed up and said, 'Fool! Tonight you die. And your barnful of goods—who gets it?'

<sup>21</sup> "That's what happens when you fill your barn with Self and not with God."

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