

“Living Throats and the Image of God”

Luke 12:13-21

Scott B. Martin – August 5, 2007

Jesus is preaching and teaching away about the hypocritical Pharisees and how we are worth more than many sparrows to God, when suddenly someone in the crowd interrupts Jesus, saying, **“Teacher, tell my brother to divide with me the property our father left us.”**

Basically Jesus is being asked to play the role of Judge Judy here. Dreadful show, it turns all its watchers into voyeurs for justice. It gives all a chance to root for people to get what we think they have coming to them. I happened to be channel surfing one day and ran across it a week or two ago. I couldn't help but watch, a mother was suing her grown son for breaking her snowmobile. He said he didn't break it. Judge Judy basically through the case out of court saying a mother shouldn't be suing her son over material things like a snowmobile. Jesus does the same thing here, saying, **“Who said I should judge or decide between you and your brother?”**

Jesus being the masterful teacher that he is doesn't leave it there though. He goes on to tell a story about a very lucky rich farmer who has had a bumper crop.

Now keep in mind who is in Jesus' audience when he first told this story. Jesus is talking mostly to poor farmers and sharecroppers, who don't have two pennies to rub together. They might have two changes of clothing. They lived payday to payday and if they weren't hired one day they and their families wouldn't eat much that day. If they had land they probably could barely feed themselves, let alone have much left over to sell.

Put yourself in their sandals. Close your eyes and hear this story again.

There once was a rich man who had some land. It produced a good crop. He thought to himself, “What should I do? I don’t have a big enough barn to store it all. Then it came to him. “This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build bigger barns. Then I will have room to store all my grain and all my other goods.” Filled with great satisfaction a smile spread across his pudgy face. He thought to himself, “ I have enough good things stored up to last for many, many years, perhaps to the end of my life. I can enjoy the good life and take it easy. I can rest, eat, Drink, and ENJOY life..”

Alright, you can open your eyes. Let’s stop right here. What are you thinking right now? What do you think Jesus’ listeners would have been thinking at this point in the story? (*get responses from the congregation*) (*If there is time one might play “If I were a Rich Man” from “Fiddler on the Roof.”*)

I can hear them saying to themselves what Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* says, “Lord who made the lion and the lamb; you decreed I should be what I am. Would it spoil some vast eternal plan, if I were a wealthy man.”

Richard Swanson in his commentary us back to Genesis 2 and God’s creation of Adam. God scoops up some mud and fashions Adam. In fact *adamah* roughly means “mudguy.” Now I remembered this from seminary days but Swanson goes on to point out, “This Mudguy is fully formed but lifeless. And then God blows into Mudguy’s nose. Then Mudguy becomes ... ‘a living being.’ This is a good and workable translation, but the Hebrew is more interesting (and metaphorical) than that. In Hebrew Mudguy becomes a living throat. This means a couple of things. First being, a being who want things. This is because the throat was the metaphorical home for desire in ancient Jewish theological anatomy.” (*Provoking the Gospel of Luke, p. 174*)

You've got to hand it to those ancient Hebrews. What an apt description of who we are as human beings, we are "living throats" that desire to be filled. Judging by the commercials that saturate every waking moment of our lives we are indeed "living throats" demanding to be fed in oh so many ways. If we follow their lead we will indeed need bigger barns: bigger medicine cabinets to hold all the miracle drugs, creams and potions to keep us healthy and looking young; bigger closets for all our shoes and cloths; bigger garages to hold more and more vehicles of ever increasing size; bigger houses to hold all our furniture, books and do dads; and bigger and bigger self storage units to hold all the overflow! Add to that the fact that we are the most overweight society on the face of the planet and the ancient Hebrews definitely had it right, we are living throats!

As "living throats" we become self-centered. Did you notice in the Gospel passage how many times the farmer with the good crop said "I?" The farmer only gets 4 verses to say his piece. In these four short verses he uses "I" SEVEN times! He doesn't even mention his family, let alone others; a "living throat" that describes him pretty well.

If we're honest it describes us pretty well too. Perhaps it's worth noting that he is not a bad person. He doesn't steal these crops. There is no mention of his getting them by slave labor. He isn't even described as being greedy. He is only described as already being rich. His main problem seems to be that his horizons are not wide enough. He receives an unexpected windfall, an unexpected blessing and he can think only of himself. He simply adds to what he already has. He doesn't think about the poor or God, just himself. He lives out of his "living throat" side.

Thank God that's not the whole story! Not only are we living throats we are also created in the image of God, animated, brought to life by the life-

giving “breath of God.” Genesis also tells this side of the story. Not only does our “living throat side need to be fed, so does our “image of God” side.

This is why Jesus once said, “Man does not live by bread alone.” Of course we all know that some wag also added, “Man does not live by bread alone, but he doesn’t live long without it!” That’s the tension in a nutshell isn’t it? Both our “living throat” side and our “image of God” side needs to be fed. This is definitely true, but Jesus had no doubts which side was more important and which side tended to be overlooked the most. “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and the rest shall be added to it.” “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.”

At the end of our days what do we want to be rich in? Material things? Or relationships with others around us and God? Do we want to be rich in the things that our various barns can hold or do we want to be rich in good deeds that leave the world a little better place for our having been here? When the questions are put that way the answer is pretty obvious to almost all of us I suspect. Jesus knew this. He knew we are “living throats” and that we are created in the “image of God.” He knew that given half a chance we would see the wisdom of what he was saying.

With thoughts of taking his ease in retirement, of eating, drinking and making merry whirling through his daydreams, the farmer in story receives a metaphorical slap across the face to bring him to his senses, “But God said to him, ‘Foolish man! Tonight your life will be taken from you. So who will get those things your have prepared for yourself?’

Good question that! The lesson may be obvious, but we “living throats” need a little wake up call every once in awhile. May we be rich toward God. Amen.

