

Where Is Your Heart? - MabuhayRadio

Written by The Rev. Dr. Winfred B. Vergara

Saturday, 11 August 2007 17:36 - Last Updated Saturday, 31 January 2009 04:24

(The Rev. Dr. Winfred B. Vergara, St. Michael Seaford, NY, 8/12/07)

A story is told of a rich and greedy man who died. As it was the custom, he had to be embalmed for the wake. The embalmer was alarmed because the dead man's heart was missing. They searched the whole house and found a treasure chest---and on top of the treasures of gold, silver and money---was the heart! In the Gospel this morning, Jesus said: "**Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also**". It summarizes at least three principles by which we must understand treasures.

WHERE IS YOUR HEART? – Luke 12:32-40

1. The first principle is that all our time, talents and treasures are gifts from God.

It is in God that we live and move and have our being. While at one point Jesus said, "Render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" in the final analysis, nothing really belongs to Caesar. All that we have are like loans to us, because our very lives are loans to us. The very houses in which we live in are not going to be ours forever. Someone else will live there one day. Christian values teach us that we are pilgrims in this world and that our ultimate citizenship is in heaven. The question is whether we travel light or we travel heavy. If we therefore, put our hearts into our treasures, we are missing the point. Treasures are God's gifts to us and we ought to love the Giver and not the gifts. Jesus does not consider money as evil; it is the love of money that is the root of all-evil. Jesus does not disapprove of your riches; in fact, he comes to give us life and have it abundantly. What Jesus disapproves is the way in which your heart departs from God when you run after riches.

2. The second principle is that how we use our treasure will determine our future.

Jesus seems to be teaching us that since there are two kingdoms (the earthly kingdom and the heavenly kingdom), then there are also two banks---: the "bank of earth" and the "bank of heaven." If you store your treasure in the Bank of Earth, the moth will eat it, the thief will steal it and the rust will corrupt it. On the other hand, if you store your treasure in the "Bank of Heaven," no moth will eat it, no thief will steal it and no rust will corrupt it. What does it mean? It means that although money is an earthly tool, it can be used for heavenly gain. The late Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Jaime Sin once said about money: "Money is the manure of the devil but for the kingdom of God, it is good fertilizer." Because the church has money, we can spread the gospel, we can have a place to worship God, and we can help the poor and the needy.

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Editor's Notes: The Rev. Dr. Winfred Vergara is the Director of Ethnic Congregational Development and National Missioner for Asiamerica Ministries of The Episcopal Church in New York City; he also serves as Supply Clergy for St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, in Seaford, (Long Island), New York and priest at Holy Child-St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Woodside (Queens), New York.

Because the church has money, we can fulfill our ministry. Conversely, if the church has no money, it can not fulfill its ministry. So many churches because they could not afford to pay their priest, maintain their building and spend for the needs of the ministry, have been forced to close down. Their people are rich in their secular lives but they give poorly to the church. Have you heard of the conversation between the Dollar bill and the Hundred Dollar bill? The hundred dollar bill proudly said, "I've been to so many palaces, so many beautiful places in Europe, Asia, and Africa---all over the world." When asked where he had been, the Dollar Bill sheepishly said, "I've been to church."

Of course, we are not saying that if you give to church with only one dollar, that it is necessarily bad. Jesus was not really impressed with the rich Pharisee giving to the Temple treasury hundreds of dollars but was impressed with the widow who gave only a nickel. Why? Because the rich Pharisee actually gave only a little portion of his riches while the poor widow gave everything she's got!

3. The third principle in this Gospel is that we can both be rich and still go to heaven.

In a related gospel, Matthew 19:24, Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to enter the kingdom of

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God than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." Jesus said these words as a reaction to the rich young man who could not leave his money in order to follow him. At this point, the disciples of Jesus (Peter, James, John, etc.) asked. "Lord, who then can be saved?" Jesus replied, "With man this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible." If God is the center of our life, if God is where our heart is, and if we use our riches to further the kingdom of God, then it is possible to be both rich and enter the kingdom of God.

What if the rich man who died helped so many poor people and lifted them up from hopelessness and despair? What if the rich have helped the wounded to be healed, helped the ignorant to be educated, the homeless have a home, the hungry have food, the prisoners to be reformed, and the drug addicts to be rehabilitated? When he goes to heaven, there will be many people who will welcome him saying, "I was about to steal because my family was hungry but you came into our life and saved us" or "I was deeply mired in drugs and despair until you came and gave me hope" or "My parents could not send me to school and I would have been mired in poverty and despair but your scholarship fund has helped me." And you do that all in the name of Christ!

Yes, my friends, it is possible to be rich and to go to heaven. "***For whatever you did to the least of these my brethren***,"

Jesus said, "

You did it to me

." You have banked in Heaven by what you did to your treasures on earth! Amen! # # #

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