



May 13, 2020: Thoughts on the Bible text

Photo: P. Johanning

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12: 34). The passage from the Gospel of Luke, which we are using for this evening’s devotional, is connected with Jesus’ statements on the kingdom of God. Jesus makes clear what the attitude of a person who longs for the kingdom of God should be like.

A key characteristic of such a person is to have a strong trust in God, which enables them to not let the worries and needs of everyday life determine their life. Jesus says: “... do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you” (Luke 12: 29–31). These are challenging words, and some will ask the question, is there not too much being promised to us and demanded of us in this statement?

The kingdom of God

Jesus speaks of the conditions which are needed to enter the kingdom of God, which is the realm of God’s righteousness and grace. The demands which society can place on people, namely to make every effort to lead our lives in a certain way and to be successful, lose their urgency and importance with this statement. The concern for our earthly life, career, and possessions, which requires so much of our strength, can become an obstruction to gaining the kingdom of God. It is not human activity that is needed here, but the willingness to let God Himself act upon us.

Treasure in heaven

Jesus makes it clear how necessary it is to permit God to be in charge at decisive points of life by using an extreme, and when taken literally, not a completely achievable demand: “Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail where no thief approaches nor moth destroys” (Luke 12: 33). The call to sell what you have and give it to the poor was also heard by the rich young man (Luke 18: 22b), but he then left the Lord Jesus in sorrow. He was not able to accept striving for the kingdom of God as the main focus of his life and could not put aside the concern for his possessions, nor was he ready to unconditionally commit himself to God’s grace and guidance. With this statement Jesus points out that material possessions and concerns are temporary and belong only to the earthly creation.

Whoever unconditionally dedicates himself to the kingdom of God has recognised this and can overcome the fear of the sometimes overwhelming demands of the day. The moths devour the possessions, which can seem so safe and shine so brightly but can then suddenly become small, flimsy, and finally disintegrate into nothing. Jesus directs our focus on to something which is secure and enduring: “... provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail.” This treasure, which is with God, is what we should focus on and this has nothing to do with material possessions such as income, pensions, annuities, or dividends. This treasure is the kingdom of God, in which eternal life with God is possible. The hope of this eternal life gives us a perspective of life that cannot be shaken by anything nor devalued by anyone.

Our plans and wishes

The sentence: “... where your treasure is, there your heart will also be”, enables us to measure ourselves. We might say: I do strive for the kingdom of God and put everything else behind me, but how do we know that this is really true? In the language of the Bible, the “heart” does not mean our feelings or our emotional life, but it means what our will, our desires, and plans are directed towards. Let us examine ourselves: is communion with God really at the centre of my existence, and is it really the actual goal of my life? If we feel that in all the many situations of life—whether they are good or bad—we can keep our focus on the kingdom of God, long for the return of Christ, and have the desire to be a witness of the gospel, then we can be sure that our treasure is really in heaven and that all our wishes are connected to it!

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