

Luke's Gospel is about inspiration and authority. Inspiration because the characters, both the young man asking the question as well as the rich man in the parable are inspired by money. They also see the authority in their life as coming from financial means. Inspiration and authority are often entangled: as we are inspired by something it has a certain power over us: those of you who have a creative outlet understand this all too well. In fact, many artists have a muse, which is someone or something that gives them inspiration.

Pablo Picasso's muse was Dora Maar, and they were in a relationship throughout their lives together. She inspired paintings such as *Weeping Woman*, *Woman Dressing Her Hair*, and of course *Portrait of Dora Maar*. Muses are close to our hearts and allowed to see the creative process, Maar was the only one to witness Picasso's anti-war painting *Guernica* while it was being created.¹

As a person of faith, I hope and pray that someone's muse is God. When we receive inspiration, it is best when grounded in our relationship with our Creator, this will lead us to recognize that all of our blessings flow from God. In our gospel text today, a man saw himself as his own muse and inspiration.

A large question in this gospel is around authority. This brother is a younger son, and his brother, the older sons would have kept control of the estate after the father had died. In my mind, I could see the two of them going to an actual court for a decision.

It is also possible that this younger son is a pharisee since he is addressing Jesus as teacher.² The way in which this man addresses Jesus reveals a great deal about himself. Talking to a pharisee his response is different than it would have been speaking to someone who did not have the same educational background.

This parable is analogous: Jesus is portrayed as judge in the story and we recognize it is God is the only judge in anyone's life. The ruling in the story is also fairly simple: God calls the rich man a fool for seeing himself as his own type of God and ruler. "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"³

We understand that the man's possessions will be divided between his descendants. In the end the rich man did not set himself up, he set up a legacy of riches for someone else to spend. The rich man will not be sitting drinking pineapple whips by the Galilee Sea. He will not be sleeping in and waking up to a nice leisurely jog. He will not be spending the money on jewelry for his much younger spouse. The man will not be doing anything except facing God. At that moment, he will have nothing to show for all his earthly possessions.

We do not even know if he has deep abiding relationships with family and friends, as they have no role in his vision for a wealthy future. The descendants will divide the spoils between themselves.⁴ The only thing we know is that this man's cares about himself and lacks concern for God or his neighbor.

Jesus meant the story as a warning. He saw people who were concerned with status and wealth rather than God's love and caring for others. God's love is not reflected in our bank account.

¹ I reacquainted myself with Dora Maar on: <https://magazine.artland.com/20-famous-muses/>, we learned about her in school, however, the teacher did not mention the other aspects of their relationship.

² Edwards, J.R. (2015). *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to Luke*. Nottingham: Apollos.

³ Luke 12:20

⁴ Hendriksen, W. (1978). *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. pp.

The rich man does not thank and glorify God, he looks at what he has done in life. The man was a fool because he did not think he had any need to serve anyone but himself.⁵

Jesus begins by asking, “Who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” Of course, Jesus is the judge of our very being. The way in which we respond to his judgment determines our character. What I mean by that is, if Jesus is the center of our life we will recognize when he is working for good; we see the Holy Spirit working in our conversations with friends. If Jesus is the center of our lives we recognize when he is struggling to break through in our hearts. Finally, if Jesus is the center of our lives we will recognize that our blessings are heavenly things: eternal life, love of God, etc.

We will also see that earthly possessions are temporal. We cannot take money or riches with us and if those are the primary source of comfort we do not have a strong relationship with God.

This is a different type of prosperity Gospel: instead of praying to seek selfish financial riches, we seek to be rich toward God. Someone once told me that instead of praying for the thing they wanted most they would pray for God’s will in their lives. When they told me this, I wondered how my life would change if I did the same thing. This is the same change of heart that Fr. Roman referenced in his sermon last week: what would our world look like if leaders asked for God’s will do to be done in their lives?

In our world, wrangling over disputed items when someone dies is an all too common tale. In the human world there is a son who is worried about having his inheritance, which perhaps he needed to live or perhaps just to be more comfortable.⁶ Regardless, his ultimate concern is for himself, and his dreams don’t include honoring God or caring for his neighbor. The parable Jesus tells is about a man who is worried about relaxing well instead of serving well.

God wants us to rest and to serve. We must listen intently to God’s words in the world. God is leading us to a path of putting others first - this is an important theme in Luke’s gospel. It is often mistaken for disparaging the rich when in fact it is about lifting up all members of God’s creation.

There are rich people who have blessed this Church and this world with their abundance. In the same way, we value each member, in this parable, God is saying to value the relationship we have with Jesus more than the money we collected during our life, because we will have that relationship forever.

In the time of the early church the traditions around Jewish piety were kept in the community. This meant giving to the poor and caring for them. A few weeks ago, we began sitting with God for one more minute and in many ways this is a fast. How great for us that we have so many ways and opportunities to continue blessing others as well through our support of the church.⁷

Our inspiration comes from many people and places, and is best when grounded in our heavenly creator. A friend might inspire us to look at our life and make a change so our life lives to reflect a service to God. A spouse inspires us to love as God loves us. Children inspire us to great faith without worrying about earthly concerns. According to legend, after the messy relationship with Picasso ended, he moved on to someone else and Maar converted to Catholicism saying, “After Picasso, only God.”

⁵ Hendriksen, W. (1978). *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. pp.

⁶ Craddock, F. (). *Luke: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary*.

⁷ Craddock, F. (). *Luke: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary*.

I wonder how much better her life would have been if she put God first. I wonder how much fuller her life would have been if she began with God she might have saved herself from years of loneliness and abuse.⁸

This parable invites us to search our hearts and consider what it means to be rich toward God. The more in tune we are with that relationship the more we will be able to praise God from whom all blessings flow.⁹ Amen.

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⁸ To read about her abuse go to: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dora_Maar#Relationship_with_Pablo_Picasso. The quote is from: <https://magazine.artland.com/20-famous-muses/>

⁹ Doxology -Lift every voice and sing #56