

MISTAKING BODY FOR SOUL

“Then He said to him, ‘Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions’.” —LUKE 12:15

A man in a crowd had abruptly interrupted Jesus’ teaching by saying, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus replied that a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions, and He told the parable of the “Rich Fool”.

The parable is about a rich man whose land produced good crops and he didn’t know what to do, because he didn’t have place enough to store all the harvest he had. He decided to tear down his barns and build bigger ones so that he would have plenty laid up for many years. He could then take life easy; eat, drink and be merry. But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?” Jesus ended the parable by saying, “This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God” (Luke 12:21).

Every farmer plans for a successful harvest. There’s nothing wrong with that, but the only concerns of this man were the physical and material things of life. His goal was to get a bumper crop in order that he might get rich and his dream was to live comfortably off his riches. Sadly, this is the portrait of life many people have today. They mistake their bodies for their souls by believing that if they feed and nourish their bodies, they will be content.

This man in the crowd was presumably a Jew who knew the scriptures, because the phrase Jesus used, “Eat, drink and be merry,” originates from Old Testament scripture. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon writes about life under the sun, which is living it from a purely humanistic perspective; that is only by what we can see, hear, smell, taste and touch. He says, “Nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be merry” (Ecclesiastes 8:15). But life under the sun, Solomon concludes, is “meaningless, utterly meaningless, a chasing after the wind”.

The man in the parable is not celebrating a successful life, but actually acknowledging a meaningless life. All he has from his toil and accumulation of goods is that he can eat, drink and be merry. He’s mistaken his body for his soul in thinking that it’s all about the physical. There is no bigger mistake we can make in life than to think that way. It’s in caring for our souls, which God designed with eternity in mind, that we find spiritual life. And it’s our spiritual lives that stores up for us eternal riches that will never perish.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you for the many valuable lessons we learn through scripture. Keep me content with what I have and dependent upon You for the future.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I living my life with eternity in mind?