

# The Transformation of our human greed: Reconnecting with our common origin, our Mother Earth

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Luke 12: 13-21

Beloveds!

Last week Pastor Anita invited us to consider the storms of life and prepare to face these storms by sticking together, supporting each other, traveling light to meet the demands of these storms practicing love, compassion, and cooperation as a community that breaks bread and prays together, seeking justice and transformation.

This week, we are exploring Luke 12: 13-21. What does it mean to follow Jesus and his perspective on money? Our love for the accumulation of money (greed) is being identified as "the elephant in the room in our modern society" linked to the injustice of poverty and the destruction of our common home, evident in the increasing climate change and destruction of the ecosystems that sustain life as we know it. Let us explore what options we can find in Jesus' teachings to transform our understanding of money as the beloved community here at Seattle First Baptist Church.

This passage is part of what can be identified in the Gospel of Luke as Warnings and Encouragement. The author describes Jesus and the disciples in the middle of a crowd of many thousands (V1.) We can picture Jesus being asked by a group member to help him convince his brother to SHARE or divide the INHERITANCE, which could be many things such as land, a house, or money. Jesus says I am sorry, I am not a judge, so I cannot rule between you and your brother. However, I will give you, your brother, and this crowd a WARNING so YOU CAN BE ENCOURAGED BY THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATION, the transformation of HUMAN GREED. And he proceeds to tell a parable that depicts his perspective on transforming greed into blessings:

- One: Let us always remember that when it comes to money and possessions, we must always recognize that everything we have, including our bodies, is fundamentally connected with Earth's soil. We are soil; what we eat, wear and drink are associated with Mother Earth. Jesus is saying,

do not get obsessed with money; instead, be thankful if you are blessed and have wealth and many possessions. If we remember that all we have come somehow from Mother Earth, we will be able to defeat greed and be thankful. (v.16)

- Two: Let us always remember that life happens NOW, not in the past, not in the future. Life happens in the present. Why do we have all that beautiful expensive China accumulating dust? Take it out and use it, throw a party, invite friends, and use your costly dishes and silverware now. Share your blessings, because, who knows, we may get sick and die tomorrow like the man in the parable. (v. 17-20)

- Three: When we find ourselves thinking THINGS ARE NOT GOING THE WAY, I WANT THEM TO GO please know that you are alive, and things never go the way we want to. There will always be surprises. The man in the story was surprised to realize that he was blessed beyond of what he needed but also that his death was around the corner. Things did not happen the way he wanted to. Jesus is inviting us to consider that life will surprise us and thus, we must be able to share both our blessings and sorrows with the community. When we find ourselves saying things are not going well, remember, life is always becoming. We can take a deep breath and say: I AM ALIVE, I WILL USE MY CREATIVITY TO TRANSFORM WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW INTO A BLESSING FOR US not just for me, for the common good. We have the power to exercise agency one little step at a time.

So, what does it mean to follow Jesus in His perspective on money for us today?

We, are invited to reconnect with Mother earth:

As a modern materialistic Civilization, we are seriously declining because we have forgotten our profound connection with Mother Earth. We have become a Modern Mechanistic Civilization when in reality are in need of becoming an Ecological Civilization in harmony with the Earth and creation.

Our climate is changing because we forget that cars, buildings, war armament, the machinery we use to create deforestation, extract oil and coal, the chemicals we un-necessarily use for industrial agriculture, and all the unnecessary stuff we buy filling up our closets and garages with what we consume and do not use or use it only for one event, the elements we obtain in fracking. All of these have the exact origin, it is called Mother Earth.

Our modern economic structures were created to support human well-being instead of degenerating life on Earth. The financial system we know now is investing in planetary liquidation—a short-term source of monetary wealth and a near-term cause of biological depletion, increased poverty and inequality because of greed (1).

Yes, things are not going well. Nonetheless, there is hope if we follow Jesus' perspective and the wisdom of all the religions in the world in a great scale. Instead of loving money, we must love God by loving Mother Earth and the diversity in creation present in all communities. We must abandon greed:

In his book *Regeneration: Ending the climate crisis in one generation* Paul Hawken says:

“...the current economic system is extractive. We take, we dam, we enslave, we exploit, we frack, we drill, we poison, we burn, we cut, we kill. The economy exploits people and the environment. the energy and commitment of youth; the resilience of nature and the way animal and plant species can be rescued from extinction; and the human intellect, which little by little is focusing on how we can live in greater harmony with nature. We are becoming aware of our connection with our Mother Earth.

The ongoing cause of degeneration is inattention, apathy, ignorance, and the worst, greed. Climate change may leave people feeling as if they have to make a choice between “saving the planet” and their own happiness, well-being, and prosperity.

Not at all!

Regeneration is possible, it is not only about bringing the world back to life; it is about bringing each of us back to life.

It has meaning and scope; it expresses faith and kindness; it involves imagination and creativity. It is inclusive, engaging, and generous.

And everyone can do it. It restores forests, lands, farms, and oceans. It transforms cities, is about designing and building green affordable housing, is about reversing soil erosion, rejuvenate degraded lands, and to power rural communities.

To reverse global warming, we need to address current human needs, not an imagined dystopian future. If we want to get the attention of humanity, humanity needs to feel it is getting attention. If we are going to save the world from the threat of global warming, we need to create a world worth saving. If we are not serving our children, the poor, the BIPOCS, the LGBTQ+ communities and all those that are excluded by the powerful, we are not addressing the climate crisis and greed needs to be transformed in our hearts. We will transform our present challenges but it require one thing: Include everyone because we need broad participation” (2)

IN CONCLUSION: LET ME SHARE A STORY about the kind of transformation we need to become re-connected with where we come from our mother earth. This story is from the late Latin American Poet and Resistance Song Composer Facundo Cabral on the issue of money:

- God took the form of a beggar and came down to a village. He looked for the shoemaker's house and said: Hi Brother, I am destitute; I do not have a single penny. These are my only sandals and, as you can see, are torn. Would you do me a favor and please fix them for me?
- The shoemaker said: I am tired of everyone coming to ask me, and no one gives me anything.
- The Lord, as a beggar, said to the shoemaker: I can give you what you need.

- The distrustful shoemaker, realizing that the person in front of him was a beggar, asked him: Ok, my friend could you give me the one million dollars I need to be happy?
- The beggar responded: I can give you ten times more than that but in exchange for something. In exchange for what? Asked the Shoemaker. In exchange for your legs. Answer the Beggar
- The Shoemaker asked: Why would I want ten million dollars if I cannot walk?
- Then, The Lord, in the form o a Beggar, said to the Shoemaker: Well, would you consider one hundred million dollars in exchange for your arms?
- The Shoemaker asked: Why would I want one hundred million dollars if, without my arms, I would not be able to eat by myself?
- Then the Lord, as a Beggar, told him: Would you consider a billion dollars in exchange for your eyes?
- The Shoemaker, stop for a few seconds, and answer: Why would I want a billion dollars if I am not going to be able to see my partner, my children, my grandchildren, my great-great-grandchildren, the diversity of my friends, the eyes of my pets offering me love, the beautiful flowers, the sunrise, the sunset, the rivers, the oceans, the trees, the snow, the beautiful colors in the big glass windows, the colors, the diversity in my community, the inspiring spire, the stars?
- Then, The Lord, in the form of a bagger, told the shoemaker: My friend, oh my dear friends, what a fortune you have, you are indeed wealthy, are you going to be able to realize it today? (My paraphrase and interpretation of Spanish Version)

Dear friends, this journey is spiritual work. Let us pay attention, ponder, listen, take breaths, re-connect with all that God offers us in Mother Earth, and ground ourselves in our values of love and justice. Small things, when done in a community, are powerful; if you hear the voice calling you forwards, take action: It is about today, it is about together with all the diversity: If it is not you, then who? And if it is not now, then when? Greed can be transformed.

This is the Word of God for all of you, all of us! Glory be to God. Amen.

Notes:

(1) Hawken, Paul. Regeneration (p. 7). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

(2) Ibid (p. 9, 247 action +connection)

(3) Hawken, Paul. Regeneration: Ending The Climate Crisis in One Generation, Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. “We conclude the book with Action + Connection. There, we show that the solutions detailed here, scaling and growing, meet the goals established by climate scientists and the IPPC. All of the solutions described are doable and realistic. They require one thing: broad participation. You are welcome to read the end of the book first if that is helpful”. (How to use this book section p.11)

(4) Facundo Cabral The Shoemaker Story Spanish:

[https://youtu.be/SmOoR\\_eO\\_ns](https://youtu.be/SmOoR_eO_ns)

Other resources:

For more inspiring information please visit the Climate Foundation

Webpage [www.climatefoundation.org](http://www.climatefoundation.org)

Defund Hate:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/13JeMgOzDM6yME8ssx37WRpYaiHAavz90oR21h6MdwEE/edit>

Faith in Action:

<https://faithinaction.org/podcast/episode-61-rev-dr-emma-jordan-simpson/>