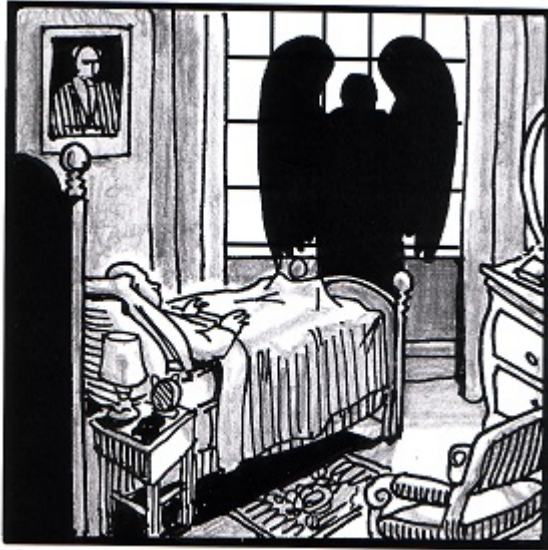


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“Take care to guard against greed ... for one’s life does not consist of possessions” (Luke 12:15).

Anyone who watches even a moderate amount of television will recognize which commercials dominate programming: cars, food and medications. Yet along with them are a rising number of ads for wealth management and investment strategies. In a consumer-consumption economy that first injects need, even anxiety, then promises satisfaction and security, money rivals health as a top concern being pitched. Do you have enough? What if you outlive your savings? Who will take care of your survivors?

People without money are anxious to get it; people with money can never have enough. Millionaires and billionaires are the rock stars of the American dream. A prudent approach to saving and investing is advisable, but an obsession with money can take over a person’s life and become the only measure of success that counts and the idol they worship because they believe it will guarantee happiness.

Jesus is asked by someone to settle a quarrel between two brothers over the family inheritance. He refuses to judge the matter, then tells a parable about a wealthy landowner who just doubled his harvest and is indulging fantasies about a long retirement filled with ease and pleasure. Little does he know that he will die that very night. He is a “fool” for obsessing over his possessions instead of investing in wisdom and spiritual maturity, the path to ultimate wealth and eternal happiness.

We should not discount the power of wealth to do great good, yet how many people have amassed fortunes instead of nurturing loving relationships while sowing potential conflict among their heirs eager to divide up their estates? Their legacy is a curse rather than a blessing, and their example is a cautionary tale instead of an inspiration.

What does it mean to store up treasure in heaven? If we hope to meet God face to face in eternity, we can't prepare any better than to read, then live, the powerful parable Jesus told in Matthew 25:31-46.

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