scaring the hell out of rich folk
I’m worried about our planet (415.26)
about our country and democracy
about our churches
about our denominations
our profession as preachers

And I think I know one root cause
beneath all these concerns.

It’s the problem Jesus addressed in Luke 15-16.
Luke 15: Religious elites complain: You’re eating with *sinners!*

Lost sheep
Lost coin
Lost son.

but Jesus wasn’t finished. he had 2 more parables to tell.
Luke 16 - Unjust/Dishonest Manager/Steward

(wrong title)

The Steward Who Switched Sides

One of the simplest, clearest parables ... if you know 3 things about 1st century economics.
ROME:
invade and occupy
extract and exploit
tax the poor and
reward the rich
RICH:
South, Judea, Jerusalem
Real estate investors/developers
Buy distressed farms in Galilee up North
Make tenant farmers
Collect tribute - sell to Romans, get richer
MANAGERS/STEWARDS:
middle class, middlemen
collect tribute from poor
trickle down wealth from Romans to rich to them
16 Then Jesus said to the disciples, "THERE WAS A RICH MAN who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. 2 So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.'"
3 Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. 4 I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’
5 So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ 6 He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ 7 Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’
8 And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. 9 And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.
10 “Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. 11 If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? 13 No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You CANNOT serve God and wealth.”
14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. 15 So he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God....
Lost sheep, lost coin, lost son
Rich man and shrewd manager

Jesus is still not finished.
19 “THERE WAS A RICH MAN who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate lay a poor man named **Lazarus**, covered with sores, 21 who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.
He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’ 25 But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’
27 He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house— 28 for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’
29 Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ 30 He said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’
He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”
Jesus was wicked smart. He saw the real problem of the religious elites: they loved money.
because they loved money, they couldn’t see …

they could not recognize the other as their brother, sister, friend, neighbor.
why am i preaching this sermon to you, preachers?

because …
this work is hard.
it helps to know why.
the american church in nearly all its forms has thrived for 400 years because it made a deal: it told people, “you CAN love both God and money.”
because american christians loved money so much -
they stole the lands and lives of millions of native people
they enslaved, raped, sold, tortured, and exploited millions of people of african descent
they created an apartheid system of jim crow, treated immigrants shamefully.
they exploited a beautiful land and threaten to destroy it more and more.
our love for money blinds us so we cannot see:

the other is our brother/sister/friend/neighbor.

the earth is the Lord’s, every sparrow has value, not ours to exploit & plunder.
i have money. i earn money. but when i see what the love of money does …
i hate money.
i despise money.
i want to use it for people, not use people for it.
the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil.

who will challenge the people of our churches to see the danger of the love of money?

who will break the old american deal with money ... and who will make a new deal with God: to put money in its place.
i know rich, middle class, and poor people who do not love money, but use money to love people. i know rich, middle class, and poor people who love money and use people to get more money.
money is dangerous.
like crack.
like heroin.
it seduces.
it makes you high.
it gets you hooked.
so you need more.
and you’ll do anything.
and hurt anyone.
to get it.
there are good and honest ways to make money.

but if you love money, you will hate God and do much harm.

and even someone rising from the dead will not convince you to repent.
let us preach the truth about money.

let us help our money-blinded people see what has true value.
warning: we will not break the strangle-hold of money-love on our american christians with one sermon, so ...
let us summon every ounce of courage, craft, subtlety, artistry, sensitivity, boldness, cleverness, creativity, and furious persistence to help people see that ...
money is unworthy of our love. but people are. all people. no exceptions.

and the earth - every mountain, river, wetland, forest, breeze, tree, and sparrow
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It’s the problem Jesus addressed when spoke
of three lost things and two rich men.

Amen.