

We could pursue wisdom as we could pursue wealth, purely for our own benefit and use, one more possession which possesses *us* rather than a gift not under our control; not for *getting* but for *giving*, part of the flow of God's energy, quality of life, without which life has no meaning, indeed, cannot exist. So we're digging for gold here in its molten state – not an activity to be recommended. It's not so much about goals to be achieved as purity of intention – a surrender to the ways and will of God. It's a martyrdom of sorts as William Tyndale well knew:

*By faith we receive of God, and by love we shed out again
And that we must do freely, after the example of Christ,
without any other respect, save our neighbours wealth
(ie welfare) only; and neither looking for reward in the earth,
nor yet in heaven, for the deserving and merits of our deeds
as friars preach, though we know that good deeds are rewarded,
both in this life and the life to come. But of pure love must we bestow ourselves,
all that we have, and all that we are able to do, even on our enemies.*

(quoted in Rowan Williams' s 'Christian Imagination in poetry and polity' 2002 p. 9)

And elsewhere in the same volume:

*Jesus Christ is not good and generous so that God will be good to him. Jesus
Christ is good and generous because the life of God lives in him. (p.10)*

No one is good but God alone, so Jesus is teaching the rich man and his disciples to go to the source of all goodness and receive goodness as a gift to be given away for our neighbour's wealth (or welfare) and not our own. We trust it will come back to us *though we know that good deeds are rewarded* but a pure heart surrenders even this, as calculation, and embraces the not-knowing consequences of love, *is* love in its surrender to God. It is an exercise the disciples are as much puzzled by as the rich man, and ourselves ,too, in our calculating approach to life 'What's in it for me?' our default position. 'What's the wise thing to do in the present situation?' can easily become an exercise, not in *Godly* but *earthly* wisdom, risking only a little of what we have and are, to test God's generosity before committing ourselves further.

Oh no, says Jesus, I want the lot, the whole caboodle, not because I love you less in your imperfection, but because even in your imperfection God's love is total, unchanging, ever more. It's a risk worth taking – indeed, the only risk worth taking or, in the words of Rowan Williams once more:

*If the heart of meaning is a human story (ie Christ's), a story of growth, conflict
and death, every human story with all its oddity and ambivalence becomes an
interpretation in terms of God's saving work all areas of human experience
matter.*

*And the goal of a Christian life becomes not enlightenment but wholeness – an
acceptance of this complicated and muddled bundle of experiences as a possible
theatre for God's creative work. (p.2. Wounds of Knowledge)*

Now that's wisdom for you.