

Daily Devotional Guide

Monday - Read verses 13-15. The subject of coveting possessions arises by someone interrupting Jesus to make a request. It is a strange request. He asks Jesus to settle a dispute with his brother over an inheritance. Some things never change do they? This kind of dispute is as old as the hills. Families are often torn apart over an inheritance. At the bottom of these conflicts is often greed. Jesus refuses to be a referee in this dispute. Instead, he gives a lesson on greed. Look carefully at verse 15. What does this verse mean to you?

Tuesday – Read verses 16-21. Look at the rich man in the parable. Is there anything evil about him? Is there any theft or mistreatment of anyone? Any criminal activity? No, some might even say he is living the American dream. What is wrong with that? He is careful and conservative. He is not unjust. Well, if he is not evil or unjust or criminal, what is he? The parable calls him a fool! He completely lives for himself. It is all about him. He talks to himself, plans for himself, he congratulates himself. When he dies suddenly, he is marked as a fool! It brings to mind Luke 9:25, **“What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses himself?”** This parable tells us that to covet and hoard money and material things is foolish. It is foolish because it puts goods in the place of God, and it is an act of total disregard for the needs of others.

Wednesday - Giving of oneself and of one's goods and money is essential to following Jesus and living the abundant life. Giving is where real life is found. We see this over and over again in the teachings of Jesus and the life of the early church. Look at Luke at 6:30 and 16:19-31. Then read Acts 4:34-37.

Thursday – Read Luke 12:22-34. When Jesus says “do not worry” he is not talking about a healthy concern for something or someone. He is talking about a preoccupation with money and possessions. According to the Jesus, this preoccupation is dangerous for four reasons: It reflects a lack of trust in God, a lack of interest in the Kingdom, a lack of Generosity toward those in need, and a lack of being productive. Jesus says birds and flowers can be the best teachers of what it means to depend on God. Fred Craddock reminds us that “those who put the Kingdom first, give first, will not only have their needs met, but will share in the abundance of the Kingdom” (verse 31). Verse 32 reminds us that it is God's great desire to give us the abundance of the Kingdom.

Friday - Read verses 33-34. In these verses Jesus gives us the remedy to covetousness and anxiety about money and possession. Jesus says we can be free from both by doing by being generous! Extravagant generosity is a core value of following Jesus. You cannot follow Jesus and not be generous with all that you have. Reflect on your life today. Are you generous with the blessings God has given to you?

-Fred Craddock's commentary on Luke (*Interpretation* by John Knox Press) was a helpful resource for me in this devotional guide.



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Hope Worth Sharing

Sunday, October 24, 2010

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: Psalm 39: 7, Luke 12: 13-21

I am grateful to Andy Stanley and his program, “The Assumption of Consumption.” Many of the principles in Stanley’s program are found in this sermon. I am also grateful to Dave Ramsey and his program, “Financial Peace.” This was also a resource for me as I prepared this sermon.

I have some great news for you this morning that is going to blow you away. Ready? Most of you in this room have extra money. Most of you have extra money that you didn't realize you had.

If you have been to a movie in the last few weeks you have extra money. If you have been to Dunkin Donuts or Starbucks lately for a coffee fix, you have extra money. If you have change in the ashtray of your car right now, you have extra money. You see, most of us have extra money and we didn't realize it. How many of you wear pajamas to bed, wear clothes for work, wear clothes for casual dinners, clothes for Sunday, clothes for a really nice dinner? How many of us have closets filled with clothes for every occasion? If we do, we have extra money.

How many of us trade in a perfectly good working car for a newer one? How many of us trade in a perfectly good working cell phone for a newer one? If we have, we have extra money. And now we know what we do with our extra money! You see, you didn't know how much money you had until I told you this morning, did you?

Now, let me tell you about this recession

we are in and how it affects most of us. Of course, there are many who are devastated by this recession. Unemployment and homelessness are at an all time high. But if you are living, eating and sleeping indoors, the pinch you are feeling in this recession is simply this: you don't have as much extra money as you used to have. And you know what? Jesus addresses this very issue in our text for today. Jesus talks about our extra money and why we have it.

I know money is personal and emotional. It always is. So, I feel I need to offer full disclosure to you this morning and establish why I feel I have the authority to talk about money with you today. Brandy and I have always believed that everything we have belongs to God. Brandy and I have always believed that we are stewards of what God has given to us. Because of that, Brandy and I, since the beginning of our marriage, have tithed (10%) to the church. Right now, Brandy and I give 12% of our income to the church. Brandy and I live by a simple philosophy with our money – we give it, save it, and then we live on the rest. And we have discovered the power and joy of living our lives this way which is what I want to talk to you about today.

So, most of us have extra money. And the question I want to ask today is, “Why do we have extra money?” You know our culture always focuses on what we don't have. This is the nature of consumerism. In order for consumerism to survive, the culture must convince us that what we want is really what we need. We got to have the

latest clothes, golf clubs, cell phone, television, etc. And so what happens is that as soon as we have extra money we spend it on these things. Andy Stanley reminds us that when we think about it we never want anything until we are aware that we don't have it. This is the power of advertising and the influence of our peers.

Most of us believe that the reason we have extra money is to consume more. And I want to tell you this morning that this is a LIE! So, why do we have extra money? Well, Jesus tells us why in our text for today in Luke.

Jesus was teaching and preaching. A great crowd was following him. And in the middle of all this our text says that the man shouts out and asks Jesus to settle a dispute between he and his brother over an inheritance. You see, some things never change. This kind of dispute is as old as the hills. But it is kind of strange, isn't it? "Hey, Jesus, we need you to give us some financial counseling here. Settle this dispute for us?" And Jesus refuses to be a referee over this dispute. Instead, he says in **verse 15, "Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for a person's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."** You see, Jesus was exposing the danger of greed, the danger in thinking that your life means nothing more than the stuff you have.

Then Jesus tells a parable beginning in **verse 16, "The land of a rich man produced abundantly."** So, Jesus says that this man has a lot of "extra" money! **Verse 17 says, "And the man thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my extra crops?'"** Poor fellow. Don't you feel sorry for him? He's really suffering for Jesus. **Verse 18 states, "Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.'" This is a great idea, isn't it? It is if that is all there is to life. If there is nothing more than the abundance of our things, it is a great idea. Hoard it and consume it.**

Then **verse 19 says, " 'And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, and be merry.' "** Andy Stanley reminds us that this man made the assumption that he had as much time as he had stuff. He didn't understand why he had all this extra stuff. Now, if the parable ended here at verse 19 it would make a great American dream story,

wouldn't it? This guy is brilliant and rich. It is a story worthy to be in Fortune magazine. But the story didn't end here. **In verse 20 it says, "But God said to him, 'You fool!'"** The world may call this man brilliant. God calls him a fool.

Why is this man a fool? Well, he is not a fool because he was rich or because he saved. He was a fool because he did not know why he was rich. God continues in **verse 20, "This very night your life is being demanded of you."** You see, the man ran out of time before he ran out of stuff. Then God says, **"And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"** The answer: someone else's because he is dead. Everybody leaves everything behind. I've done a lot of funerals and I've never seen a u-haul behind a hearse. We only get credit for what we give, not what we keep. Then comes the most penetrating part of this text, **verse 21, "So it is with those who store up treasure for themselves but are not rich toward God."** What this verse means is this – those who assume that their life is about consuming for themselves, saving for themselves, hoarding for themselves instead of being rich toward God, their lives will be a total loss, totally empty.

Stanley reminds us that hoarding is not the problem. Hoarding to the exclusion of God is the problem. Saving is not the problem. Saving to the exclusion of God is the problem. Saving for retirement is not the problem. Saving for retirement to the exclusion of God is the problem.

But Jesus gives us the key to be free from greed in verse 33. He says to take our extra money and give it away. Be generous with it. Give it to God. And then in verse 34 he says something familiar to most of us, but most of us don't understand what it means. Jesus says, **"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."** Most of us think this verse means that whatever is important to us is our treasure. This is not what it means. Look at the words closely, **"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."** Jesus is simply stating a fact. What this verse means is this: You want to know a person's devotion to God? Don't look at their prayer life. Don't look at how often they attend church or read the Bible. Look at their bank statement. Look at their check book because that is where their heart is.

You see, Jesus is not after our money.

Jesus doesn't need our money. Remember, he is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Jesus is after your heart. And as Stanley says so well, "Jesus knows that the direct route to your heart is your pocket book." Jesus knows that until you can break free from the lie of consumption you will never be able to give God your heart. Jesus knows that if you have a savings plan and a spending plan but no giving plan your life may be a total loss.

Experts remind us that Americans are great at giving spontaneously, sporadically, and sparingly. If there is a need in Haiti, an emergency or a special project we will pass the hat and give generously. But Americans are not very good at systemic percentage giving. It is the same way with many people in church. When we have an emergency or a special project, many in the church are very generous. But many in the church need to improve in the area of consistent percentage giving. If each person in our church gave 1,000 dollars a year to the church (less than 100 dollars a month) we would never have to have a stewardship campaign again.

The only way to break free from greed and emptiness is by giving to God through his church a priority percentage of your money consistently. It is a spiritual discipline. Now, I know for many of you 10% percent seems like a lot. It looks overwhelming. But God does not expect you to do it overnight. Take small steps. If you are giving 2 percent commit to giving 4 percent next year. Write it down on your pledge card and God will honor it. You can do it! Remember, the goal is only 10 percent. God tells us we can keep 90 percent. That is a great deal!

But it is hard for many to see tithing as a great deal because, generally speaking, the more people make the less they give. Why? The more the amount of money there is the more people think of what stuff they can buy with that money. This is why it is often true in churches that the less people make the more they give. In many churches some on social security give more than many who have large salaries. Read the story of the widow's mite.

Become a percentage giver to God. You see, what is at stake here is not just the life and ministries of the church or the work of God's Kingdom. What is also at stake here is your very life and whether it will be meaningful for God or a total loss. Why do we have extra money? Stanley

reminds us that we have more than we need to serve those in need. This is why God has given us extra money.

Now, let me say a word to some of you who are thinking, "Oh, I can't stand sermons on money. Charley, why don't you do a sermon on prayer, the prodigal son, or love." Well, if you feel the tension when hearing a sermon on money, let me say that you have just discovered the very place God wants to work in your life. Because God wants your heart and he knows he will not have it until you are free from the lie of consumption. If you have a problem with sermons on money the truth is your possessions possess you. And it does not have to be that way! Your key out of that prison is generosity! You just can't imagine the joy that is found in living generously with the blessings God has given to you.

Andy Stanley talks about the time his wife went shopping for a dress for the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington D.C. they were both invited to. When she found the perfect dress she called Andy and told him it cost 3,000 dollars. After he dropped the phone, he told her that this was a special occasion and since she really wanted it to go ahead and buy it. She called back five minutes later and told him she decided not to buy it. When Andy asked why she said, "All I could think of were the kids we support in Rwanda and what we could do for them with 3,000 dollars. With that money we could build a whole wing to their hospital." What did she do? She went to a regular department store, bought a dress for two hundred dollars and looked great.

Awareness is a powerful thing. You have extra money. What are you going to do with it? Amen.