

Parables: Jesus the Storyteller

Lesson 20 - Whose Is It Anyway?

Warm up -

1. What kind of stuff do you really wish you could have?
 - the latest computer, complete with CD burner
 - a certain cool brand of shoes
 - a healthy bank account
 - a new guitar
 - other:
2. Is having more than enough of everything a mark of God's favor?
3. For a while there, *Who Want to Be a Millionaire?* was the most popular show on TV. What's our fascination with being rich? Does having lots of stuff make us happy?

Lesson -

Somebody in the crowd came up to Jesus with a request. "Hey Jesus," he said, "make my brother share his inheritance with me. Why should he get to keep it all?" Jesus didn't give the guy much satisfaction. Instead he gave him a lecture about being greedy. And then told his story about a rich man who had so much stuff he had to tear down his barns and build bigger ones to store his stuff in.

Jesus' warning about greed is one we need to hear over and over again. Because the sad fact about our culture is that "stuff" is key. We are what we own and what we look like. And we judge others by the same standards. Who are the popular kids in your school? Probably the rich kids. And we'd like to be more like them. Most of us would like our clothes to come with names like Abercrombie and Banana Republic, even if the family budget is K-mart and Goodwill. We'd sooner stay home than be caught driving the family minivan.

Don't get the wrong idea here. Jesus wasn't against wealth. After all, he created us with the ability to make and acquire stuff. It's just that he knew that having a lot of stuff can become a major headache. "Don't forget," says Jesus, "your life isn't defined by what you have." Jesus knew what we sometimes forget: when we focus too much on what we have or what we wish we had, it's hard to put God first. A foolish trade-off, the parable makes clear.

Makes sense. Because when you die, you won't walk into heaven loaded down with all your favorite things. The truth is, you'll leave this world pretty much the way you came in - with just your skin. No stuff. What will count then is how rich you are toward God. That happens when you love others and live for God. And to do that, you don't need a lot of stuff.

Read Luke 12: 16-21

1. As you read this, find out who the rich man serves.
2. What is God's response to this man?
3. The rich man thought he had it made. "Hey, now I can take it easy and enjoy life," he said to himself. What's wrong with this attitude?
4. Verses 18-19 describe what the rich man decides to do. Rewrite those two verses to show what he might have said that would have been pleasing to God.
5. Greed - wanting more and more stuff - is a powerful force we're all familiar with. Why do we keep wanting things? Is it ever possible to have so much stuff that you don't want any more?
6. What's your own attitude toward your possessions? Are you in danger of storing up stuff at the expense of living a godly life? What will you do about it?
7. What attitude should we have about our stuff? Can having lots of things make us happy?
8. In our society, there is a huge gap between the rich and the poor. Discuss how you can start using your resources to serve others in concrete ways. Is your group willing to work on some kind of group project - a food drive, a workday to help shut-ins in your neighborhood, a tutoring program?