The World Is Not Enough
Luke 12:15

"a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions"

You can't take it with you! Or can you? A colleague recently told me about an interesting sight he witnessed. From the vantage point of a busy intersection, a funeral was in full procession. My friend, the captivated onlooker, watched the passing parade: a freshly washed funeral coach, limousines and the assortment of cars and SUVs of relatives and friends all with their headlights beaming.

There was nothing out of the ordinary here except what coincidentally happened to be following the last car in the procession — a transit van full of all his possessions...apparently he's mentioned in his will that he want everything buried with him!

Some people do actually live and die as if they will be able to take it with them. Like the pharaohs of ancient Egypt, many long for an after life; even if it does resemble a "Temptation Island" one. In the gospel of Luke 12:13-21 there is recorded a story about a man who lived and died as if he could take all of his beloved possessions and honours with him. Instead of loading transit vans and building pyramids however, he was building bigger barns. He lived for the day at hand. He thought that this world would be enough.

The parable that Jesus spoke (Lk. 12:16-ff.) came on the heels of an inheritance dispute that was brought before Him (Lk. 12:13). We are told that there was a person from the crowd who demanded of Jesus that He tell his brother to give him his rightful share of his father's inheritance.

Here is a common scenario played out before us. It is a family dispute that is as ancient as Cain and Abel, Isaac and Esau and as contemporary as today's family court. Who is going to get the father's inheritance? Who gets the prize?

If you really want to see true human character at work, watch people while the estate is being divided. There are brothers and sisters who are not speaking to each other today because of financial family feuds. These arguing brothers before Jesus were scrambling for dad's money like two kids fighting over who gets the last piece of the pizza from big Johns.

Jesus put His finger on the problem of the one who was concerned about getting his fair share. His problem was covetousness! Greed is no respecter of persons. Greed has the pervasive ability to trickle down from the boardroom to the break room. The Bible says much about the dangers of how greed can divide and conquer our heart. We cannot serve two masters. We cannot serve both God and riches (Matt. 6:24).

And like Martin mentioned in his sermon last week...who is your idol? Is it God or your possessions?....I realized last time when I looking how much I give to God in terms of collection and realize that we as individuals need set our priorities right.....we pay so much for life insurance, house/property insurance, entertainment but yet we give so little a month/week to help the work of the lord.

Jesus made a profound yet a simple statement that penetrated to the heart of this inheritance dispute. "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Lk. 12:15c).
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In other words, life is more than stuff! As humbling as it may be, who we are - our position, and what we have - our possessions, are not enough. Life consists of more than lesson observations, deadlines, appointments, stock options, and a summer holiday somewhere in Scotland or Wales...depending on the weather he he.

Downsizing

We miss the point of the story that Jesus told in response to this issue if we just see it as a smug condemnation of the world's wealth and ways. Jesus was no killjoy. Remember, His first miracle was performed at a wedding! He likes to Chill out....Jesus was not saying that money or possessions were evil. It is the love of money that is a root of all kinds of evil, not money itself (1 Tim. 6:10).

If there is an implied condemnation upon this rich man, it is that he hoarded up his wealth and never gave anything back to society. That is the real tragedy! To the one who knows to do good and does it not, to that one it is sin (Jas. 4:17). While the hungry passed by, this man's abundant food stocks sat and rotted in his warehouses.

The fact that there are still so many that go without in our world is one of the inexplicable tragedies of our modern prosperity....people flying in private jets and drinking champagne as water whilst people struggle to get basic running water is just diabolical.....again don't get me wrong....people like Bill Gates, George Clooney, etc are all doing their best to help out but we wish there was more.

Windfall

The man portrayed in Jesus' parable (Lk. 12:16) had an especially good year. His proverbial ship had come in. His company experienced an explosive profit windfall. Creditors and shareholders were celebrating their success, and the rich man - the CEO had plenty of liquid assets and job security. His problem (if you can call this a problem) was that he had so much excess he ran out of tax shelters and storage space. His safes were crammed full!

What do you do when you have more than you could possibly use? You have two options. One, you could give some of it away. You could bless others. Did not Jesus teach that it was more blessed to give than to receive? (Acts 20:35). Or was that just another high sounding religious cliché spoken only by a poor carpenter who did not have any worldly goods to give?

I honestly believe that giving to others never entered the man's mind. I say that because of the obvious inward focus the man had. At least eleven (11) times he used the words "I" and "my." He was so wrapped up in his small world that he had no time or energy to possibly think of anyone else, but himself.

Gains

The only other option for the man's good fortune was to store his goods. So the old barns came down with well-placed detonations and a row of shining brand new warehouses were built. Now he could finally kick back, take it easy, sit by the pool side, and sip his champagne.

We too have done a little barn building of ourselves haven't we? We have all of this world's goods (renting personal storage space is a tremendous growth industry) and yet we have so little of what we really need. Are our homes packed full of all the latest technology-stuff but our hearts desperately barren of anything living and eternal? Have we settled for a world that is enough? If we have, it is a small world and ultimately a world that will not be enough.
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How many barns do you have to build before it is enough? How many "lifestyles of the rich and famous" properties, Jags, and internet business ventures, before enough is enough? The man in the parable had an insatiable appetite for possessions. When you have much you expend much energy trying to preserve what you have.

No wonder Jesus said that we should lay up our treasure in heaven where rust cannot destroy and moth cannot consume (Matt. 6:19). Taking care of life's stuff is a full time job and leaves you little energy for real living. How subtle is the change from having possessions to having our possessions have us.

The deceptive danger of possessions and power is that they provide a false sense of security. This man's security was in his supply of possessions (Lk. 12:19). He thought he had made contingency plans for every conceivable human situation. There is certainly nothing wrong with making provisions for the future and being wise stewards. Yet, when our material prosperity becomes our security it is a sure step down the path of presumption and covetousness.

We need to know that God loves us not for the size and stability of our portfolio. He does not love us based on our performance. He loves us because he has created us in his image. His love is not conditioned on your first quarter earnings or your year end evaluation! Our identity, who we are, is not in what we own. What's so amazing about grace is that God loves us as we are.

Losses

Why then did God use such strong language in calling this rich man a fool (Lk. 12:20)? It was not because he was wealthy. It was not even because he planned for his future. He was a fool because his life was self-centered and his plans did not include God or anyone else for that matter. Today, in our iPAD driven world, we plan for everything.

We meticulously set our appointments, carefully plan our estate, prepare for our kids school expenses and dream of our life after business meetings. We plan for everything in life but we fail to plan for that which must come to us all-death! We fail to plan for eternity. The rich man in the story planned for life, but he did not plan for death. What was his sin? It was two-fold: he neglected his stewardship (too whom much is given, much is required, Lk. 12:48) and he tragically neglected his salvation.

Jesus essentially told the man, "What good will all of your stuff be to you after you're gone? You can't take it with you." To put all of your time, energy, and wealth into this world is to invite certain disappointment. The world is not enough. It is not enough to fill the emptiness in your soul. It is not enough to gain peace here and peace with God. It is not even enough to secure your eternity. The world is not enough.

Restructuring

In the medieval morality play entitled Everyman, the personification of death pays a visit to the character Everyman who represents all humanity. When death comes to Everyman, he responds by crying out, "O death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind." Death is like that. It never comes for us at a convenient season. John F. Kennedy, Jr., Princess Diana, Michael Jackson, and Dale Earnhardt.

All people of great means and influence and all struck down in the prime of life. When it was least expected. We can never know how much time we do have but we can be ready when it is our time.
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We can also be found faithful with what we have been entrusted with. I am reminded that not long before Payne Stewart’s death that he made a life-changing commitment to Jesus Christ. He reordered his priorities.

The man in the parable was at the height of life. He had everything but because he did not do anything with what he had he lost that which he held precious. The ultimate disappointment in life is to discover that this world is not enough. In the James Bond movie, "The World Is Not Enough," Bond tells Electra King the sultry oil heiress that her scheme to seize control of the global oil supply will not succeed and even if it did, the world would not be enough.

The rich man in Jesus’ story finally learned that lesson but it was a lesson learned too late. Life does consist in so much more than what we have. Are we making provisions for eternity? And are we laying up treasure in heaven as faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to us?

My challenge and prayer would be that all of us will hear again the still small voice of God and the simple yet profound words of Jesus: "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Matt. 16:26). One’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. There is so much more. Indeed, the world is not enough!...do remember God has a purpose for you and this world is not our home.