

Luke 18:18-25 Curing Affluenza 3 10.02.05

Scripture

Prayer

Today, I will continue the sermon series Curing Affluenza. The first Sunday of this series we looked at two gospels.

One the Gospel of the Big House,
the other Christian gospel and the life of a
generous Christian.

We compared the life of someone who is generous
and another who is greedy.

Week II, we looked at the “Irony of Abundance” in
America and noticed how busy we are, and yet how
we neglect some of the most important things in life.
We made a commitment to loving God and loving
neighbor first, and then making room for the Ping
Pong ball activities of life.

Today, I want you to ask yourself one question:

How much is too much?

Put another way:

How much stuff can you keep and live a responsible
Christian life and how much should you give away?

I'd like to begin with a riddle:

What is the favorite toy of a three year old?

(Parents of three year olds know this immediately.)

The favorite toy of a three year old is the toy that
somebody else has.

It's the way three year olds are wired, isn't it?

The toy that is most interesting is the toy that
somebody else is playing with.

If you're a parent supervising a group of three year
olds, it can drive you mad, but the reality is:

It's part of the way all of us are made to help us
survive.

God has wired us with a desire to acquire.

Now you may immediately say we grow out of it but
let me offer a couple of examples.

When the weather man says it is going to snow, have
you ever gone to the Stop and Shop?

It looks like 3 to 6 inches and people are buying
weeks of supplies.

They keep restocking the shelves but it seems like
people are planning for the big one.

Months supplies of milk, bread, toilet paper,
all for

3 inches of snow.

It's a little crazy

I know you're saying that's a unique phenomena but has anybody seen the movie Super Size Me.
It's the story of one man who decides he will eat nothing but McDonalds for 30 straight days-for breakfast, lunch and dinner-he's eating McDonalds.
He has one rule.
He'll never order the Super size menu unless it's offered.
Before he goes on the McDonalds diet he goes to five different physicians.
A general practitioner.
A heart specialist.
A dietician.
And a couple of others.
He's in good shape.
He walks to work.
His girlfriend is a Vegan chef so he is eating the best or organic food prior to his diet.
Then he goes on the McDonald's diet.
It begins with splendor as he is offered the super size meal and he orders a Double ¼ Pounder with cheese.
10 days into it, his health has not faired well.
By day 18 his doctors are begging him to quit.
They are afraid that some of his organs may fail.
His cholesterol is off the charts.

The movie Super Size describes the evolution of the hamburger, fries and a Coke at McDonalds.
In the fifties, they served one size hamburger and one size coke.
The 12 ounce coke with four teaspoons of sugar gave way to the medium coke with six teaspoons of sugar.
In the 70 they introduced the large coke, with 24 ounces and 8 teaspoons of sugar.
This gave way to the extra large coke with 18 ounces of sugar.
And in the nineties they developed the super size coke.
48 ounces of drinking pleasure with 24 teaspoons of Sugar.
And we know the fate of the little 2 ounce burger has been delegated to little kiddie's meals to be replaced by the Double Cheese Quarter Pounder.
You don't want to know what is in it.

The great irony in America is that we have so many choices.
Good choices and bad choices;
an abundance of this and an abundance of that.

Add to this abundance a desire to acquire **and** an advertising industry that has made an art form of

inciting our desire to acquire things that we aren't necessarily good for us and presto; you have the American Irony of Abundance.

Our consumption of food that is not good for us is hurting our bodies.

Our consumption of the shore line makes us dangerously prone to hurricanes in the South and Earthquakes in the West.

Our consumption of oil affects our foreign policy in the Middle East
and threatens the fragile peace that we hope for.

The irony of abundance raises its ugly head again and here we are the richest country in the world making some of the most deprived choices.

So what are we to do?

What are we to do as Christians in America?
In a culture of consumerism how are we buy what Jesus would buy?

Put another way, how much stuff can we keep and call ourselves a Christian?

How can we help our families be responsible consumers and generous givers when their peers and all of the media tell them to buy, buy, buy.

I think last week's advice to make room for loving God and neighbor first is still good advice. If you love God and neighbor first on a daily basis, it is going to affect the way you spend your money. If you make room to love God with all your heart might and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself, it will make the way you consume more consistent with the Christian life.

Here is another possibility.

On Sunday, take a Sabbath from shopping.

One day a week fast from shopping.

At first you might find it painful, but after a couple of weeks I bet you will say:

"I have so much more time and I'm spending my money differently."

Do one thing to set yourself apart from a culture bent on consumption.

Next week, we will look at a variety of possibilities for Curing Affluenza, but now, let's turn to the scripture lesson for the morning.

When Jesus looks at the rich young ruler, he sees someone like us. Let me retell the story.
The one rich by the world's standards says to Jesus: "I'm trying to do the best that I can, living the way my parents taught me. I'm working hard, I'm trying to raise a family, and I'm trying to be a good parent, a good spouse, good son or daughter, and a good citizen.
I'm doing everything that I can to do the right thing but I still feel as if something is missing.
Jesus looks at him and with compassion says: "All of your stuff has gotten in the way.
If you really want to live well, you're going to have to give it all away and follow me."
And we know the end of the story. The rich man went away sad.

The parable is as true then as it is now.
Our stuff, all of our things, all of our responsibilities can rob us of life.

But here is the beauty of this parable.
The rich young ruler went away sad.
He isn't condemned.
He isn't cast away.

He isn't punished.

It says: "He went away sad."

It's the same for us.
God allows for us to go our own way.
God let's us choose what path we take.

But all the while, God looks on us like Jesus.
Hoping we will choose the path to life.
Hoping we will be generous and not greedy
Hoping we will choose the path that brings peace for ourselves and our world.

In Deuteronomy 30:19 God says:
I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse, choose life.
Choose life!
Amen