

Luke 16:19-31  
Jeremiah 32:1-2, 6-15

### More Than Enough

In this Parable of Jesus, the rich man had more than enough. We are not sure how he came by his affluence. He was lucky and inherited it? He was successful at business and earned it? He was well connected – we do not know. In any case he was blessed by incredible wealth. Jesus says the rich man dressed in purple and fine linen. That doesn't mean a whole lot to us, but to the first century audience those words were the equivalent of owning an Armani outfit. I spent five minutes Thursday at the Nieman Marcus Website looking and men's Armani outfits and they were about \$3500 for three or four pieces of clothing. If you own Armani clothing, you obviously have more than enough.

One of the great things about living in one of the richest countries in the world is that you can just about always point to someone not too far away, who has much more wealth than you do. This is a key strategy in learning to live with yourself and defending your status quo against meddlers like Jesus. As long as there is some uber rich person living in proximity, we can always justify the way we squander the wealth with which God has blessed us. Let me

show you how this works. You see, I don't have to feel guilty for driving a new Prius Hybrid that costs \$26,000+ for at least two reasons. One I am saving boo koo bucks on gas while lots of others are guzzling and two, there are many cars in the church parking lot that cost more than \$26,000.

Unfortunately, Jesus is on to me. He knows how I think. He knew how I would think. He knew people like me who were schemers, connivers and tacticians. He knew that most of us would be just like many of the people he knew – justifiers – excuse makers, and finger pointers. He knew people like me who had more than enough and that's why he told parables. He wanted to “git” us. He wanted to get our attention. You can slice and dice this parable. You can shrink it down and blow it up. You can turn it on its head, but no matter how you try to bend this story to convenience or attempt to soften its message; this parable is an admonition to the wealthy. This parable is an admonition to us.

Do I take this parable to literally mean that Jesus is going to send us to hell because we are wealthy? No, that doesn't really square with my understanding of Jesus and it is basically inconsistent with his behaviors. Jesus had wealthy friends and his ministry was

indeed supported by their largess. Do I think Jesus was making a forceful point? Yes, this parable is beyond the advice category and definitely in the column of warning. Jesus has a message for people like us. Jesus has a serious message for people who have more than enough. One, Jesus is very concerned about the poor. Two Jesus is extremely concerned about the chasm there is between the rich and the poor. And three Jesus is saying wealth is dangerous in that it can make us blind, to the needs all around us.

I mean you get the point. The parable needs very little interpretation. All we really need to do is meditate on the meaning for our life and commit ourselves to change based on Jesus' story. And let's face it this is not Jesus' only parable about wealth stewardship and the poor. Jesus is pretty consistently clear all throughout the Gospel; wealth is a blessing that is supposed to be used to bless others. God has been generous and God expects us to be generous. God expects us to begin our giving at ten percent of gross income. God expects us to put ourselves out for other people especially the poor. God expects us to pledge to support our church and our charities generously. God expects us to use our time and our talents to transform the world, so that it becomes like the kingdom of God. If

we do not use our wealth, our time and our talents, all three, to help others and to work for God's kingdom then we are already lost, we are already living a shadow existence, we are already in fact tormenting ourselves - because the things we are pursuing are not of God. What we truly are thirsty for is God's transformation of the world. Those of us who have more than enough, of us much is expected.

The truth is – this parable is very hard to hear. The truth is that the people who skipped church today got off lucky. Or it may be better to say they got off easy. This is a tough one. Jesus is shaking us. He is asking us to face the fact that we have wealth. We may not wear Armani but we are dressed better than billions of "Lazaruses".

As I said you hear this story and you pretty much get Jesus point; but there are few details in this parable that are very interesting. The first nugget is that of all Jesus' parables, and there are many, this is the only one in which a character is named. Lazarus is the only person ever named in any parable. That has to be significant. Jesus really wanted us to focus on Lazarus, poor and sick, seemingly homeless and so helpless and hungry that the dogs

come lick his sores. Lazarus is not a nobody. Lazarus has a name and a soul and God loves him.

Bread For the World is an mission and advocacy organization for the hungry. On their website they point out that the world is facing a hunger crisis unlike anything it has seen in more than 50 years.

925 million people are hungry. 925 million people whose names God knows.

Every day, almost 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes.

1.5 billion people live in extreme poverty

In the United States 16.4 million children live in homes which struggle to put food on the table.

And it seems to us these are just numbers. Lazarus lives at our gate but we live life merrily numbed by our wealth. We work to end hunger when we support the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering at Easter time and our CAP food pantry. .

One of the more obnoxious moments in this parable is when the Rich man calls out to Abraham across the great chasm. Abraham, oh Abraham – come send little Lazarus here to dip his

finger in water and cool my tongue. The first thing we realize is that The Rich man knew Lazarus by name and still never provided for him. Secondly even from Hades the rich man is still cocky wanting to order the poor man to come serve him. He doesn't quite get it.

We are involved with several ministries in this congregation that help us to develop larger softer hearts, because through them we interact and in some cases partner with poor people. Once a month we have a dedicated group that serves dinner at Sarah's House Homeless Shelter. Once a year we host the Winter Relief homeless shelter in our church for a week and frequently and for a long time we build houses with low income people in need through Habitat For Humanity. We send people on mission trips. We support the ministries of Karla Koll in Guatemala and John and Gwenda Fletcher in the Congo. These partnerships we have with the poor and with others who serve them are just the kind of things I think Jesus would have us do. Because we have more than enough and because we don't want to be like the rich one in this parable, disparaging and unconcerned about a sister or brother, because we have more than enough we partner to change the world. Once you develop a relationship with someone who has way less than enough, you are

forever changed. It turns out that having more than enough is a way God can use us to bless others in the world.

More than Enough is the name of our Fall Stewardship Effort here at Ark and Dove. Because we have more than enough we can plum the depths of generosity. Because we have more than enough, we can respond to Jesus' call to use our gifts to transform the world. Because we have more than enough we can increase our support to this church and to charities that make a real difference in people's lives.

I think I have said something similar to this every year for the past five years; but I meet with the Session two weeks ago and I have to say that they have a rather global and faithful grasp of the ministries we have around here and a strong sense of how resources bless us and lack of resources and tie our hands; people resources and monetary resources. Because of our Long Range Planning Process, each ministry in this church has taken careful stock of needs and dreams for the future. Overall our ministries need about 20 to 30 more sets of hands to operate at peak ministry performance. With 270 members this is a strong possibility. Overall our financial resources seem to be about \$80,000 short of dreams and vision.

With total household income in the 14 to 20 million dollar range, with a sure understanding that we have more than enough; an \$80,000 increase in giving is entirely conceivable and eminently possible. The task at hand is two fold – we need you, for the next six weeks, to listen to the vision that our ministries and teams put before you. We need you pray about what God is asking you to contribute to this vision. Six weeks is more than enough time to undertake this task. Then on November 14 we need you to pledge to the Mission and Ministry work of our church. So please start praying now. I know you don't wear Armani designer wear, but God has blessed most everyone in this congregation with more than enough.