

enjoyment in life. It doesn't come through accumulating stuff! We shouldn't feel guilty about our blessings. God is a God who blesses. We don't feel guilty if we have nice stuff. We just don't let the stuff have us. Did Paul command those rich people, saying "Buy more stuff! Go splurge on yourself, you deserve it! Buy extra storage for your stuff!"? Nope! Instead, he commanded us: *"They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share."* (18) To do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous, and willing to share. You may not be liking what I'm saying this morning because we tend to find our self-worth in our stuff. It feeds our ego. And our ego is like our stomachs. It always ends up on empty and we need to feed it more and more. So, Paul tells us what God wants us to do. And when we do this, in other words, when we share, when we are generous, when we are rich in good works, this is our reward: *"thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."* (19)

The result is that we can take hold of that which is truly life. That means we take hold of the life God offers us. Jesus said in John 10:10 that He told us and He came to offer us life abundantly. That's the life we have been offered. Our lives don't consist in the abundance of stuff. But when we choose to give out of our abundance, when we choose generosity, we will experience a blessing. That's truly life. Less of what doesn't matter and more of what does. Better is one handful with tranquility, with contentment, with peace, with joy, with simplicity, with the ability to be generous, and with the heart to be a blessing, than two handfuls with toil, gaining more and more and more stuff, and with toil and chasing after the wind. Strive for less of what doesn't matter, and more of what does. This world is not our home! Are you investing in Heaven?

Let us strive for less of the stuff that just accumulates and gets in the way of what matters. Instead, strive for more intimacy, more peace, more joy, more committed and deeper relationships, more generosity, and more blessings that are truly blessings. Let us strive for less of the distractions and less of the bills. Instead, strive for more of the life that is truly life because our calling, our life, is too valuable and great. Our God is too good to waste this one life on things that don't last. When we've got one handful, we can help those who are down. We can give them a hug and we can give them our hand. Better is one handful.

September 27, 2020
Making Room For Life (3)
The Accumulation Trap - Letting Go
Ecclesiastes 4:4-6, Matthew 19:16-22
Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

We tend to accumulate stuff. We accumulate clothes and electronics. We accumulate hurts and seeds of discontentment and jealousies. So, we need to learn letting go of some of the stuff that weighs us down and holds us back so that we can really live the life that would be honoring to God. Here's a thought which goes against the world's ways: "It's better to have less of what doesn't matter and more of what does matter." The problem is everything in our culture screams the opposite. In the beginning of the Bible, in Genesis, God created Adam and Eve. Everything was great. They had one thing they couldn't do: "Don't eat from that tree." And, they were good with that! Then that sneaky serpent slithered along and asked them. "Did God really say you can't eat from that tree?" Satan was implying they were lacking something that God was intentionally holding back on them. That He really didn't want them to be fulfilled, content and joy-filled. So, Adam and Eve believed something was missing in Eden. They didn't recognize they had all of these blessings. They believed what they didn't have was what they needed to be happy, fulfilled, and complete.

And we've bought into this as well. We believe there's something else out there that we need, which is better, which will fulfill us. One day I talked to Dennis, if the time comes to change our screen in the sanctuary, it would be better to have a TV rather than a projector. If one 84" 2K super Smart TV would be good, then a 100" TV 4k would be better. In today's text Solomon says, *"Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind."* (Ecclesiastes 4:6) In other words, it's better to have less of what doesn't matter and more of what really does matter. Why? Because our life is too valuable, our calling is too great, and our God is too good to waste our life on stuff that does not matter or last.

Jesus warned us about this in Luke 12:13-15. There's a powerful story about two brothers who were excited about their inheritance. One of them asked Jesus. *"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all*

kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.””
(Luke 12:13-15) It didn't just apply to those days, but maybe even applies more to our day. Beware! Be on your guard! The enemy wants us to believe we need more, because he's out to steal, kill and destroy us. Jesus is reminding us there's a battle for our spiritual lives. And that battle is as dangerous and important as if there was a thief lurking around the corner waiting to jump out at us. So, we need to be on our guard against all kinds of greed because life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.

Every store wants us to run out there for their specials. They want us to believe we need what they're selling. We are not what we have. We aren't what we drive, we aren't what we wear, and we aren't what we own. We aren't the stuff that we have. The lie is what we don't have is exactly what we need to be happy, fulfilled, joyful, significant, to feel good about ourselves, to be important, to be popular, and to have a good house. What if the stuff we have is actually robbing us from the life that we want? The more we strive for more and the more we realize we can't attain it, makes us want it all the more. Solomon said that better is one handful with tranquility than two with toil and stress and anxiety and chasing after the wind.

So, today I want to encourage you to get out of the accumulation trap and to get rid of stuff! I know that it's so difficult to do. Our lives don't consist of the abundance of junk that we have in our drawers, or in our closet, in our attic, or in our garage that's overflowing so that we can't park our car in the garage. Our life doesn't consist of our stuff. In today's text in Matthew 19, did you hear what Jesus said to the rich man? *“Go and sell your stuff and give to the poor.”* (21) In other words, you'll have less of the stuff that doesn't matter. And you'll have more of what really does matter. You'll have more of the kingdom of God! And the problem was - this guy was so into his stuff that he went away sad. He couldn't part with what he thought he needed to make him who he was. His identity was tied to his stuff. Catch that! We easily fall into that trap, too!

Don't get me wrong. It's not wrong to have stuff. It's not wrong to have nice stuff. God is a generous God and blesses us. But it's wrong when our life is defined by our stuff. It's wrong when we believe that more stuff is actually what we need to be fulfilled and happy. Stuff will not fill the void in our heart and spirit. It's a spiritual void which can only be filled by God's grace, love and power. Our battle is spiritual. If we give stuff away,

we're afraid we're going to need it later. We think it's really going to be cool and transformational in our lives.

Can you make the effort not to let stuff weigh you down? Better is one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with a toil and chasing after the wind. Have you ever chased after the wind? You can't catch it! Did you know that 62% of people go shopping and buy stuff to cheer themselves up? When they feel down and depressed, they go shopping and get more financial struggles, because that's gonna make them feel so much better. It's our new entertainment. When we buy stuff, it makes us feel more powerful. It gives us a sense of significance to buy something we don't need with money we don't have - to impress people we don't like. But here's the remedy for it all. It's to give more.

Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:17-19: *“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”* Look again at verse 17, Paul says, *“those who are rich in this present world!”* And we breathe a sigh of relief. *“Glad he's not talking to me. I'm not rich. I work hard and barely scrape by. He's talking to my bosses and the owners of the companies. He's talking to all of the professional athletes and actors/actresses, musicians. That's who really needs to read this.”* But, don't deceive yourselves. If you drove here this morning, you're in the top 5% of rich people in the world. If you can eat 3 meals a day, order a pizza, if you have a warm place to live, if you have your clothes, then you're rich. This passage is for us, for all of us. Paul wants us rich folks to do something. We're incredibly blessed. This verse is for us to hear and internalize. Paul's command is for those who are rich, you and me, not to be arrogant, not to put our hope in wealth which is so uncertain but where are we to put our hope? Put your hope in God! And this is what's so cool. Look at what God does for us, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

Do you see that! Hold on for a moment! What does God do? He richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. God wants us to enjoy this life. He gives to us abundantly, so that we can have pleasure and