

Intro: Garrison. Pastor. Luke 12.

Pray.

Let me tell you the story of modern American Advertising. It actually all started with Sigmund Freud. Neurologist from Psych 101. Id ego superego. He was the first modern thinker to disagree with the Enlightenment's premise that people are predominantly rational. In the 'I think, therefore I am' view of human nature. Freud said not so fast. Yes, we are rational, but we make all sorts of irrational decisions every day. He said that we're run by our 'unconscious drives'. A sort of automatic impulse in our body.

So Freud says this means we are far more vulnerable to manipulation from the outside and self-deception from the inside than any of us want to believe. Tragically, as Freud was Jewish, the first people to take these ideas seriously were the Nazis who used his theories on human nature to design their propaganda.

But after the war, it was Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays, who brought Freud's ideas to the forefront of the advertising world. He came back from the war with a question. 'If Nazis could use these ideas to shape Germans during the war, could we use these ideas to shape Americans during the peace?' He pitched this idea and has since been called the 'father of American advertising.' You've likely never heard of him, and that's intentional.

In his book titled 'Propaganda' he writes, "The conscious and intelligent manipulation of organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of."

This sort of feels like a conspiracy theory no? But it is in fact true. Politicians and advertisers partnered together after the war in hopes of pushing Americans to buy more stuff. The popular quote that you hear on this is from Paul Mazer of Lehman Brothers:

"We must shift America from a needs, to a desires culture. People must be trained to desire, to want new things even before the old had been entirely consumed. We must shape a new mentality in America. Man's desires must overshadow his needs."

This marked the beginning of 'planned obsolescence' ie why you want to buy the new iPhone every year. Victor Lebow, a retail analyst at the time this was beginning remarked:

"Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction, in consumption.... We need things consumed, burned up, replaced and discarded at an ever-accelerating rate. We need to have people eat, drink, dress, ride, live with ever more complicated and therefore constantly expensive consumption"

And that was in the 50s! Way before anyone had even thought of something called the Internet. Now not only do advertisers base their pitches on Freud's ideas, they have access to your data via social media and internet history and possibly your real life conversations. Like I recently told a friend, 'I'd love to have a hot tub one day, but can't afford it.' 10 min later 'AFFORDABLE HOT TUBS on my FB feed. Thanks a lot Freud.

If the story is true, our unconscious desires are and have been manipulated so that we need, desire and vote for certain things. **What are the markers that it's working?** Here's some recent data:

- Average house has 300,000 items.
- Average home has tripled in size yet storage facilities are now a 2 billion dollar a year industry. 7.3 sqft of storage space per american. Could house entire nation in storage units.

But it's not only that this 'ever more complicated and constant consumption' affects what we have. It affects what we do. The average American watches 3 hours of TV a day. Spends 4.5 hours on their phone, touches their phone 2600 times a day. 2.5 of those hours are spent on social media. And when we're not consuming things and our devices, we're consuming leisure time. In 2021 Americans took 2 billion domestic vacations, most accounted for by Tim Olson. Spending roughly 1 trillion dollars. Yet somehow every year there's over 500 million unused vacation days because we're also working more than ever as a nation. We're a nation of consumers being consumed.

Now it's easy for stats just to be numbers. But let me ask you, think about your budget. Think about your schedule and time. Think about your stuff. Does it ever feel like it's too much? Do you feel jealous of others? Or like you're missing something? Does it feel overwhelming or frivolous? Do you maybe have this underlying feeling that all the stuff and things you do are distracting you from things that really matter? Like loving your family and brothers and sisters in Christ? Or Jesus Himself?

The truth is the Gospel confronts all cultures. And if we're honest I think we know that our culture of consumption probably does not line up with life with Jesus in the Kingdom.

So we have to ask ourselves, how do we follow the way of Jesus in a culture that is constantly consuming stuff, money, media and whatever is the noise of the day? What would Jesus do?

Both in Jesus' teachings and in His life, He shows that consumption of more isn't a part of life in the Kingdom.

Let me show you in Matt 8 where we see this on display in His life.

18 Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, ^ahe gave orders to go over to the other side. 19 ^dAnd a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." 20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

Let's think about this. The Son of God. God Incarnate. Who has dwelt with God in heaven for eternity past. Who created all things out of His own abundance, power and riches. Who created, gold, silver, clothing of every color, diamonds, mansions and money empties Himself, in the language of Philipians, to become a man. And not just a man, a man that doesn't own a home. He doesn't even have a lease! It would seem He

doesn't own anything at all, except the clothes on His back, yet even from other teachings on possessions He would say those might be up for grabs if another is in need.

Jesus would be considered by both our standards in the West, and the standards in His time, a poor man. And He invites us into a rich life of abundance with God.

He says follow me into the life of goodness. I own nothing. I don't even have a predetermined place to sleep tonight.

This flies in the face of how we determine who to follow in our culture. In the world of influencers we are drawn to success and material abundance. We think that riches and stuff are markers of inherent goodness.

If we're being honest we may think: This is 'the way'? Really? Why would the Son of God come to earth this way?

Because Jesus' owned everything necessary to have a perfect life with God.

There are no material possessions necessary or required for life in the Kingdom. In fact, it would seem that it would be much more necessary for us to have Jesus' posture of non attachment to the material in all areas of our life and to ultimately seek to give away things to bless others as well as free ourselves.

Jesus' life shows us that more is not necessary. And He also taught this.

Look to Luke 12. This is a story + a parable about what happens when we get this wrong and believe that more is actually better.

13 ^aSomeone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 But he said to him, ^b"Man, ^cwho made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" 15 And he said to them, ^d"Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

A man comes to Jesus, and asks, will you divide the inheritance. Ie. Give me my money that I think belongs to me. And Jesus responds, who am I to judge this for you? But He's not just throwing His hands up like 'not my problem'. He cuts to what the issue really is.

Be on guard against covetousness. Some other translations say 'greed'. The love of things and money. Consumption.

Essentially Jesus' response, ' I will not sign off on your desire for more possessions and money.' Now he's not saying that money or wealth is bad. It's covetousness. The desire for more. He's making a statement not just about money but about the nature of reality. That the good life is not determined by how much stuff or money you have.

And now He's going to demonstrate the point by telling a parable:

16 And he told them a parable, saying, ^w“The land of a rich man produced plentifully, 17 and he thought to himself, ^x“What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ 18 And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my ^ybarns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up ^zfor many years; relax, ^aeat, drink, be merry.” ’ 20 But God said to him, ^b“Fool! ^cThis night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, ^dwhose will they be?’ 21 So is the one ^ewho lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

You really see the wonder of Jesus’ story telling ability here.

He juxtaposes the land vs the man. The land produces plenty. Emphasis on the land. The land producing has nothing to do with this man and everything to do with God and those who worked the land. He’s blessed by God and hard workers that worked the fields. All he has comes from God. But the man misses it. And he stops and starts talking to himself. ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to put my stuff..’ ‘I will do this. I will.. I will store. I will say.’ It reads sort of like ‘me me me me me.’

This man is blessed by God but he’s so taken in by himself. Instead of praying to thank God he’s talking to himself and can’t see anything other than himself.

We also know he’s focused solely on himself because the question he’s asking is rhetorical in nature. As part of a communal, agrarian society, the question of ‘what shall i do with my crops? I have too many to store.’ Would have been a simple answer for Jesus’ hearers. They would’ve thought ‘share it, duh’.

But instead he says tear down the barns and build bigger ones. More for me to hoard. Which quickly digresses into hedonism. I will eat drink and be merry. I’ll relax. My soul can rest because I have more than enough savings. God’s response. Fool! You die tonight and what will happen to what you have?

You spent all your time focused on your stuff, focused on consumption that you became the one consumed.

Does that sound familiar? Perhaps this man would fit in quite well in 2022 America.

Do you see the sharp contrast between this man and Jesus? Between bigger storehouses and more consumption and nowhere to lay his head. And yet Jesus is clear - He lived the best life, this man lived the foolish life.

We are called to move from being the man with the consumption plan, to the life of Jesus.

But what does that mean?

Simplicity.

Simplicity isn’t necessarily what Jesus Himself is doing or would say He was doing. We don’t have any verses where the word simplicity is stated. Simplicity, however, is a practice where we can follow Jesus into a life

where we're intentionally clearing out anything that is undermining or distracting us from what ultimately matters.

We simplify so that our time, budget, mind and desires are freed to go after Jesus. This is ultimately a means to an end. Life with Him in the Kingdom

Now there are 2 things that I'm not saying when I say we're practicing simplicity.

1. Poverty Gospel. The idea that in order for you to be saved and made right with God, you have to be financially poor and needy. That's not the point. The point is not that in order to be spiritual you have to be in a homeless situation. Or to inflict financial damage and pain on yourself as a means of spiritual growth. Or for God to love you. No. There are good things in life worth enjoying, many of them material, not saying you can't enjoy any of them. The Bible is actually very clear on this - the problem is not the stuff. You can be godly and rich and you can be ungodly and poor.

2. Minimalism. I would argue there's nothing inherently wrong with the minimalism movement. In fact much of it's practical suggestions are very closely aligned with Christian simplicity. However there are few barriers worth mentioning. This isn't about a style. It's not about a type of architecture or how to decorate your home. Or organizing. It's not about just wearing one color. That can be part of it, but that's not the point. It's not about being cool or trendy.

Whereas minimalism is often talked about as eliminating things that are holding you back or distracting you from your true purpose; and that's not necessarily a bad thing, and I hope as we do this you will eliminate some things holding you back, but this is about clearing away things in your life to make more space for God.

Simplicity is the invitation to prioritize a life filled with God rather than a life filled with stuff.

We don't need any more stuff because we have all we need in Christ. We are content. Likewise we don't need any more stuff because we are *secure* in Christ. And it's not just about physical possessions. It's about anything that crowds out our love for God. Anything in your budget, house, calendar or leisure. We don't want more stuff, or things on the calendar or shows to watch or posts to scroll through because we are drawn to the things of God.

Simplicity is choosing to have a more simple life that prioritizes what we would say is most ultimate in our beliefs and desires. It's discipleship by subtraction.

So what I want to do before giving you some practicals is show you three truths about simplicity, or the simple life that we see from Luke 12. Look back:

18 And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my ¹barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up ²for many years; relax, ³eat, drink, be merry." ' 20 But God said to him, ⁴'Fool! ⁵This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, ⁶whose will they be?' 21 So is the one ⁷who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

1. The Simple Life is the Wise Life.

Throughout the Scriptures we see wisdom or a 'wise person' described as someone who lives the best way possible. They understand what life is really about, life with God and loving others, and live accordingly. It's a major compliment to the character of a person to be described as wise. Likewise, being called a fool is also a huge deal.

Note what does Jesus call the man? He calls him a fool. A man who spends his entire life hoarding and gaining more and more - Jesus says just about the worst insult you can get in the bible - a fool. Quite literally translated - "Someone who doesn't know how to live." You can't miss and think, 'Well selfish, yes. But we all make mistakes, especially with money.' Jesus is taking it much further than that.

He's saying this guy doesn't understand the nature of reality. That's where his selfishness came from. He didn't understand where it came from or what it was for.

Simplicity is rooted in wisdom. A wise heart knows, all that I have comes from God. A wise heart understands all the money and possessions in the world are ultimately God's. They're not yours. Every dollar in your bank account came from God. Oh yeah, but I have a job that affords me all that. Okay, well how is it that you got the job in the first place? And how is it that you maintained the job? And have the ability, physically and mentally and competently to work in the first place? That's all God. To think otherwise is to be just like the fool in the parable.

As we live the simple life, we live wisely. We don't get consumed by things but rather own them as stewards on borrowed authority from God. So of course I can give and share. I'm no longer attached because what I have was given so surely God will provide more if I need Him to.

This is true not just of our stuff but of our calendars, leisure time, and relationships. It is foolish for me not to prioritize living in congruence with what I'd say is my deepest desire and what I claim as ultimate, life in the Kingdom with Jesus. So it's wise for me to subtract anything that gets in the way and distracts from that. The simple life is a life of wisdom.

Keep going to v 22.

22 And he said to his disciples, ¹"Therefore I tell you, ²do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 24 ³Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. ⁴Of how much more value are you than the birds! 25 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his ⁵span of life?⁶ 26 If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,⁷ yet I tell you, ⁸even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, ⁹O you of little faith! 29 And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor ¹⁰be worried. 30 For ¹¹all the nations of the world seek after

thesethings, and ⁴your Father knows that you need them. 31 Instead, ⁴seek ⁴his⁵ kingdom, ⁴and these things will be added to you.

2. The Simple Life is the Trusting Life.

It is no accident that right after Jesus tells this parable He jumps into a teaching about anxiety and worry as it relates to our money and possessions.

Jesus here invites us to think deeply about what we truly believe about the nature of reality through a series of simple questions. Is not your life more than food? The body more than clothing? Look at the birds, are we not more valuable than they? Can you add a moment to your life through worry and anxiety? Why are you anxious about your clothes? About the way you look? About being warm and provided for? Won't God provide for you?

Maybe a simple way to summarize what Jesus is saying here is: **What do we really believe about God?**

This truth, according to Jesus, is that we don't need to be anxious about what we have or don't have or even if our basic needs will be met. That God sees us and knows what we need. Of course He will provide for us.

The problem according to Jesus is not that we don't have enough to be content and secure, it's that we don't have enough faith and trust in God who provides all of these things. And His invitation is to simple trust in the Father who already knows what we need and will lovingly provide for us. Instead, seek the Kingdom. Not just seek the Kingdom and good luck to you. But seek the Kingdom and all these things will be added to you.

So we replace anxiety - "what will I do without these things?" - with trust in God - "Whatever happens to me, God will take care of me." Simplicity in this way is actually not just a practice, it is the outcome, the overflow of a heart that believes God will do what He says He will do.

And in doing so we actually begin to course correct our hearts that want more and more for the sake of security and contentment.

Have you ever wondered how to actually get to the place where you feel content and secure?

'There are two ways to get enough. One is to continue to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less.' GK chesterton

How to get there? Trust God. Instead of being tossed about our anxiety, fear and insecurities about what we have or don't have, our peace and hope is centered on the fact that our God knows our needs and loves us enough to provide for us. Which drives us toward a simple life.

Finish up in v 33.

Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. Luke 12:33

3. The Simple Life is the Good life.

The big question then becomes, for all of our materialism and consumption, are our lives any better? By far and large. No. Well-being and happiness has statistically declined since when? Ironically 1952, when this advertising strategy started to become more mainstream.

The recent research on money and happiness is actually really fascinating. All the research is showing that more money doesn't equate to more happiness.

Money won't make you happy... but everybody wants to find out for themselves. -zig zigar.

Not just money. But all materialism and consumption

Not only is the Bible now saying the human heart won't find contentment in stuff. We've now discovered a psychological phenomenon called 'Hedonic Adaptivity'. It means you are wired for really good things to become normal. It's why a couple months after you buy a house you get on zillow and you're like, well that house is nicer. Or new car. Or that new jacket you bought or boots you found at target that you loved and now you've had em for a couple weeks and you're back at target like, well what if I had them in brown?

We now have more than enough data to confirm that Jesus was right all along. That more stuff, money and things to consume doesn't lead to the good life.

You know, I bet for some of us you weren't really surprised at my first two points. As Christians we can look at consumerism and say 'yeah I know that's probably not that great. Not trusting God, not wise.' But then we struggle to actually believe it and try to change. And I think that's because we don't get that it's truly better. The simple life isn't just about wisdom or trust, it's about true satisfaction with God in the Kingdom. It's the good life.

Jesus' concluding point to this interaction beginning with the man asking to divide the inheritance, is to sell your possessions and give it away to those in need. Store up real treasure. Come into the good life. He flips the whole value system on it's head.

The world = More is better. The way of Jesus = Less is more. But not less for its own sake, less because God sees your needs, so devote yourself to Him and give more. When you're stuck consuming and stuck attached to your possessions, you're not really living the good life. You're stuck on a hamster wheel. And Jesus is saying get off the hamster wheel.

He says invest in something better. Moneybags that don't grow old, with treasure in heaven. There's always going to be another vacation you feel like you need, another pair of shoes you have to have, another show to watch, and more money to be in the savings account. But it's all fleeting. Don't get stuck focused on it.

Treasure God and follow Him. Clear out your life and give. And find what you were looking for.

The good life will not be found in my 401k, passive income, the savings, my equity being up in the house..., nor early retirement, bigger houses, or a life of pleasure. —> But life with God in the kingdom. Good life is not

found in stuff or money. We're called to a simple life, free to be generous and to enjoy what we have with deep contentment.

Gospel Conclusion:

The Simple life is better. We simplify to live a life that's attached to God rather than the things we have or do.

We can step into it confidently because we can trust that God knows our needs, but not only our needs, He knows our hearts. And because He knows our hearts perfectly He can satisfy us with a life full of abundance and goodness. It's a gift. It's a gift to live a life free from the hamster wheel. Free from feeling jealous about what others have. Freedom from an overcrowded heart. Or an overcrowded house. Freedom from looking for the next thing to consume. **Freedom to rest and simply live life with God and others.**

It's a gift that's been purchased on our behalf by Jesus, who not only invites us into the good life but makes it possible to begin with.

End with practice guide.

Practice guide.

1. Simplifying Possessions. (house, clothes, clutter etc)
2. Simplifying Time. (distraction, calendar)
3. Simplifying Spending(budget, generosity)

Communion and Pray