

Sermon

31 July 2022 / Luke 12:13-21/Spark Joy

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Today's takeaway is this: Get rid of all the junk in your life.

It's not doing us any good now and it's not going to do us any good later.

Get rid of all the junk in your life.

It's slowing us down. It's wearing us out. It's causing us pain.

Get rid of all the junk in your life.

All three scripture readings this morning talk about getting rid of the junk in our lives. And the Holy Spirit is NOT just talking about all the physical junk we accumulate, but also the emotional, mental, and spiritual junk that we hold onto.

Get rid of it! All the things you really don't need. Get rid of them.

The writer of Ecclesiastes proclaims "Vanity of Vanities! All is vanity!" They aren't talking about our ego, but rather how everything we are doing is in vain. They write it is like "chasing the wind." It's waste of time.

All the time we spend toiling under the sun...working...worrying. All the worry about what will follow all we've done and accomplished. Who's going to take it over? Who's going take advantage of it? What will become of what we leave behind? The despair about our legacy. The sleep we lose thinking about it. It's all a waste of time.

Get rid of all that stuff you've got and things you do which waste your time.

In the Gospel lesson, Jesus encounters family members in contentious arbitration over an inheritance. Jesus responds by telling them to "**beware of greed, for life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.**" Jesus illustrates the point by telling the parable of rich person with more crops and junk than they have room for. The rich person therefore builds more storage units and stuffs them full. Very self-satisfied with their abundance of possessions, they are shocked when God whispers in their ear," well this was a waste of time because you are going to die tonight. And your family is now going to argue over who gets what."

Get rid of your greed and the need to hold on to so much stuff.

We heard Paul write to the church in Colossus and advise them to stop "fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed," "anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive language," and lying.

Get rid of all the actions and emotions which hurt other people and hurt you.

Get rid of it all. Get rid of all the junk in your life.

But why?

Paul tells his friends, the Colossians, and us, that we should, instead, “set on our minds on things that are above and not on things that are of earth.”

Jesus tells us that the loss of earthly possessions is what happens to “those who store up treasures for themselves and are not rich toward God.”

You see, it is our Christian belief that we are here on earth to bring the kingdom of God right here among us. I’ve pointed this out before and I’m doing it again because it is so crucial to why we are here. We will soon pray the Lord’s Prayer and we will pray “God’s kingdom come, and God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

In God’s kingdom, there is no greed. Neither is there evil desire.... or anger.... or wrath...or malice, slander, abusive language, or lying. There is no meaningless work. There is no vanity. There are no storage units. There is no junk.

Our lives are full of things we don’t need. Things which take us away from our call as Christians. Things we use to avoid our call as Christians. Things which distract us from our call as Christians.

There are physical things we cherish more than we should.
There are activities we engage in that take too much of our time.
There are emotions we hang on to which cause us pain and resentment.

Paul tells us we must not set our minds on all these earthly things but set our minds – our hearts – on things that are above. Things that God wants us to concentrate on. Things which will bring the kingdom of God right here to earth.

It is just so hard to do when we are surrounded by so much junk.

So, how are we going to get rid of all this junk? How do we “unclutter” our lives?

Luckily for us, we live in a society full of books (I know, more junk) which tell us how to help ourselves. DIY. Do It Yourself. Good News! We can de-junk and unclutter ourselves. There is hope. And the Guru of getting uncluttered is Marie Kondo.

Ms. Kondo has books, products, and a television show to help us unclutter our lives - to get rid of all the junk we have. In reality, her helpfulness extends only to the physical clutter in our lives. But Ms. Kondo has 6 principles to follow to help us get rid of junk and I believe these principles apply to our mental, emotional, and spiritual junk as well.

Yes, SIX principles, but I’m just going to skip to the end. The 6th and final principle we are encouraged to follow in order to declutter our lives is a question.

Does it spark joy?

Does it spark joy?

If it does not spark joy, you do not need it.

I watched a news story on Marie Kondo. She was helping someone clean out a dresser full of clothes. They picked up a T-shirt. Ms. Kondo asked the person, “does this spark joy?” The person responded, “no, it does not spark joy.” There is then a ritual where the T-shirt is thanked for its service in the past and then placed in an area with other items which will be donated to charity.

I want you to notice something very important here. The question asked is NOT “Does it spark MY joy?” The question is “Does it spark joy?”

Of course, when deciding to keep or discard a piece of clothing that you are going to wear, the question is personal. Does that item spark YOUR joy? But when we are looking at the big picture of everything we do in our lives, when we are attempting to make this world a better place, we need ask if something sparks joy....in general. In me. In you. In a few people. In many people.

Because what better way would there be to bring the kingdom of God right here to earth than to concentrate on sparking joy in everything we do....in everything we say....in everything we have.

Now...let me make it clear there is nothing inherently wrong with having nice things and participating in activities for fun and recreation. We all need down time and rest for the work we are called to do as followers of Jesus Christ. It's when we let the junk in our lives take over and take us away from the good work, we are called to do that we run into trouble.

We've looked at getting rid of the junk in our lives.
We've looked at why – so we can bring God's kingdom to earth.
We've looked at how – sparking joy.

But how will we know when all the junk is out of our lives? What will that look like?

Paul tells us in today's scripture: “you have stripped off the old self with its practices / and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. / In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!”

We constantly hear about how divided our nation is. How divided our world is. And it is. And that is because our lives and hearts and souls are full of junk!

In God's kingdom there is no us against them. There is all of us together. There is no Christian nation and Jewish nation and Muslim nation. There is us. There is no Democrat and Republican. There is us. There is no immigrant and citizen. There is us.

Because Christ is all and in all.

There is no rich and poor. There is us. There is no queer and straight. There is us. There is no chosen and left behind. There is us.

Because Christ is all and in all.

That's what happens when everyone gets rid of the junk in their lives. And it must start with us. Right here. Right now.

Go out and spark joy, my friends. Spark joy.