

I have this problem and I was wondering if you could help me out. I went into my closet here in my study and found some things. (Pull out my unused stuff and talk about it.). As you can see, I have never used any of this stuff but I keep it under the assumption that one day it will come in handy.

Let me say that if you are having a yard sale right now or are planning on having one, I applaud you. Yard Sales are, in my opinion, something really good. Because they are a recognition that there is stuff in our life that we can do without. Stuff that we know could be used by someone else. Stuff that can be recycled.

I don't know this for a fact but I imagine that lots of folks are having yard sales right now out of financial necessity. It was reported this week that 1 in 7 of us live below the artificial poverty line which has been set for this country. Lots of us are struggling financially and we see some of our stuff around us as an opportunity to make some extra money in order to supplement our income and pay for things that we are having problems paying for otherwise.

I don't know what my parents are going to do with all of their stuff in their home. They are getting ready to downsize to a 2 bed room duplex after living in their home for almost 60 years. I think they are spending a lot of time right now cleaning out the old stuff. What does one do with the junior High school football pads from the 1940s or the books that were last read in the 50s and 60s? What about the 40 year old pinewood derby car or the trophy from playing little league baseball in the 1970s?

Others of us may not be storing up stuff but we might be worried if we have enough financial resources for the future. Maybe we are worried because we have some stocks and we have seen our investments depreciate by a large percentage. Some of us may find ourselves kicking ourselves because we lost a lot of the wealth that we accumulated at one time in our life.

I read the following quote recently which might speak to a few of us about whatever we define as our stuff. The author of this article says that,

We overvalue stuff. He then says that this was a big problem for me when I had no money. I felt poor, and stuff seemed valuable, so almost instinctively I accumulated it. Friends would leave something behind when they moved, or I'd see something as I was walking down the street on trash night (beware of anything you find yourself describing as "perfectly good"), or I'd find something in almost new condition for a tenth its retail price at a garage sale. And pow, more stuff. In fact these free or nearly free things weren't bargains, because they were worth even less than they cost. **Most of the stuff I accumulated was worthless, because I didn't need it.**

What I didn't understand was that the value of some new acquisition wasn't the difference between its retail price and what I paid for it. It was the value I derived from it. Stuff is an extremely illiquid asset. Unless you have some plan for selling that valuable thing you got so cheaply, what difference does it make what it's "worth?" The only way you're ever going to extract any value from it is to use it. And if you don't have any immediate use for it, you probably never will.

I also read recently that the one industry that is doing well right now is the storage industry. As people downsize they pay the \$50 or so per month to put their stuff in storage. Industry experts say that storage renters plan to return in a few months but usually it takes years before they return and then never end up using the stuff anyway.

I thought about our stuff accumulation as I read this morning's two passages of Scripture. Over the past few weeks we have been following the life of the Old Testament character of Joseph. We learned that he was one of 12 sons and that he was the favorite of his Dad. His brothers became jealous of him and sold him off into slavery. He ended up in Egypt and through a wrongful conviction he ended up in jail. He is in jail when we pick up the story today.

Here we have a story where Joseph tells Pharaoh that the next 7 years will be prosperous. But then there will be 7 lean years after that. Pharaoh listens to Joseph's dream interpretation and follows his advice.

Many of us accumulated a lot of stuff during some prosperous years. But now many of us find ourselves living during some lean years. And we aren't quite sure what to do with the stuff that we have. Then we are reminded of this parable this morning that Jesus tells about the dangers of keeping too much stuff close to us. Jesus seems to imply that stuff can actually lead us to not trust God in the future.

So I am wondering something this morning. I wonder if we look at our stuff whatever we classify as our stuff. Maybe it's the stuff in our storage room in our house or out back. Maybe it's the stuff that we are paying \$500 a year to store in some storage unit; maybe it's the stocks or bonds that we are holding onto.

I wonder what would happen if we took whatever can be classified as our stuff and said, you know what, here it is God. Show me how to use this stuff in a way that glorifies you. Show me how to use this stuff in a way that helps someone else. Show me how to use this stuff in a way that shows your love to the world. Show me how to use this stuff to show my love for you.

If we listen to the story of Joseph, it is ok to store up stuff for a certain amount of time. But then there should come a time to use this stuff to help other people and to serve God's will.

Many of us find ourselves living right now during the 7 lean years. It's a scary time. We remember the prosperous years. But now we are in the 7 lean years. This story from Joseph teaches us that God isn't just God when life is abundant and prosperous. God is also faithful and true when there are droughts, hunger, and despair.

During what is a season of drought for some of us, I pray that God shows us how to use whatever stuff we have accumulated in a way that serves God and helps God's people. AMEN.

-“Get Rich Slowly” article found at

<http://www.getrichslowly.org/blog/2007/08/10/the-tyranny-of-stuff/>

-Text: Genesis 41; Luke 12:13-21

-Given: Sept. 19, 2010 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)