

Sunday School Notes: 4 August 2019: Luke 12: 13-31 Real Treasures

We have all seen photographs of the pyramids in Egypt. But do you know why they were built? They were monuments to the power of the pharaohs who built them; but they were also store houses to contain all that the dead person would need in the afterlife: jewels, clothes, games like chess and draughts, food and water – and even in some cases servants, who were buried with the Pharaoh. The people of that time believed life went on as usual after death, just in another place.

Similarly the Chinese Emperor ordered the making of a terracotta army (it was on display at the Waterfront a couple of years ago). This was a vast army (about 800 soldiers, 130 chariots with 520 horses) all made from clay and buried with the Chinese Emperor so that he would have a great enough army to fight his battles in the afterlife!

Of course, these kinds of beliefs made people keen to hang on to their possessions and their power. How much they had when they died would affect how much they had for eternity. Living like this makes us selfish, and that is the opposite of what God wants. The rules given during the Exodus made this very clear, but people had conveniently ‘forgotten’ these rules. (Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind and your neighbour as yourself)

But there was one person in the crowd who was brooding on his own problem and wasn’t really hearing what was being said. He felt he had been cheated out of his inheritance by his brother. That kind of thing happened regularly and it may have been true. In fact, it may even have been that his brother was in the crowd listening to Jesus also and the young brother thought this was a good chance to publicise his brother’s faults.

Despite his request, Jesus refused to hear the arguments. Now that seems puzzling: if God is really involved in our lives, shouldn’t Jesus have cared?

It is only when Jesus goes on to speak that we realise that he did care; he cared about the fact that these brothers were being eaten up with anger and jealousy. This would ruin them and so Jesus told a story to explain that ‘things’ aren’t important; it is how we live that matters.

Once there was a rich man who owned a really productive farm. The soil was wonderful, the rain fell and all his crops grew marvellously. But the rich man did not thank God for the seeds and soil and rain; he did not obey God’s laws about sharing and caring for others. Instead he worried: His barns were too small to house all the produce and what was he going to do! Eventually the rich man decided to pull down his old barns and to build huge new ones which could house everything he owned and keep everything safe.

That sounds sensible, doesn’t it? But the rich man forgot God in his planning. He just thought about how he would be able to relax and ‘eat, drink and be merry’ for the rest of his life. And he forgot to ask God how he should act. And he certainly didn’t spend one moment thinking of others who were in need. He was thoroughly selfish.

God who knew all about everything knew that the rich man wasn't going to live much longer! He was going to die that very night and he wouldn't have 'paid his debt' of gratitude to God (the language here is that used by creditors). He certainly wasn't going to enjoy all his possessions – someone else would inherit them and enjoy them.

Jesus explained that the man wasn't rich in the important things. He had lots of possessions, but he wasn't rich in his attitude or obedience to God. He had forgotten how he was meant to live.

So how should he have lived? It wasn't wrong to be rich. But he should have lived in thankfulness to God for what God provided.

We must remember not to let 'getting' be the most important thing in the world. Even the richest person in the whole world will die and leave all those riches behind. The only thing which will last will be 'treasure in heaven'. Our focus should be on building our relationship with God, not on building barns or storehouses for earthly things.

How do we do this? Saying 'grace' before meals is a good place to start! We thank God for what we have. What else could we do?

Say 'thank you' to God for all good things eg good sport, good marks

Remember to share (God suggests a basic of 10% of all we own should be set aside to do his work, which includes caring for the poor.)

Consciously plan to live our whole life for God, etc