

**“The Abundant Life of Giving”,  
based on Luke 12:13-21, David Jahnke, 8/1/10**

Crowds followed Jesus around because he was such an interesting teacher. And one of them told him to make his brother give him his inheritance—their parents had died and there was a fight over who would get the property—the house and land and all the stuff and the money.

Jesus worries a lot about families who fight over stuff. Brothers and sisters often fight over stuff. What do your mom and dad say when you and your brother or sister are fighting over a toy? One word that probably comes out a lot is, “SHARE!”

Another thing I always tell my boys is that everything actually belongs to God! And Seth, of course, always remembers this when he wants to play with something Dietrich has! “Dietrich, it’s not yours. It’s God’s. (So give it to me...)”

Jesus’ first point is, families should never fight over stuff. Everything is God’s, and we share everything in the house together!

But what if the first brother had not shared the inheritance with his brother. Just like when your brother will not share with you. That’s probably why he told Jesus, “Make him share!” In these situations, we must negotiate. We must sit down and calmly talk things through in order to find a solution without fighting.

And the same is true for all of the families of the earth! Countries often have big fights called wars over what belongs to whom. And first of all, if everybody knew that everything was God’s and wanted to share land and resources, we would have less reasons to fight. But beyond that, countries need to sit down and negotiate about what belongs to whom, instead of fighting over it.

But Jesus had an even more important lesson to teach; it was about greed. Have you children heard that word before? Greed is wanting more and more stuff. Greed is the thing inside you that says “I cannot be happy unless I get or have...” But Jesus says that having more or better things cannot make us happy.

Jesus tells a story about a rich man whose land was producing a great crop. And the man had no place to store all of his crops. So he decided to tear down his barns in order to build bigger ones.

There was a comedian who did a great skit about all our stuff. And how, over time, we get more and more stuff that fill up more and more space. And what do we do then? We have to get bigger houses. Why? So that we have a place for all of our stuff and so we can get more stuff.

I wonder what Jesus would like us to do with all of our stuff? I wonder what he thought the man should have done with all of the extra food that he had?

When the man was done building the new barns and storing all his food, he thought, “Now I can relax and eat and drink and have fun.” But God told him that all that time spent working and storing things up was wasted because he was going to die that very night. That is sad right?

I think that God wants to tell us that our lives should not be focused too much on the future. And you little guys and gals know that very well! You are not usually excited about talking about the past; nor are you worried about the future. You want to play and eat and drink and be merry all of the time—which I actually think Jesus would say is an aspect of Kingdom living! Kingdom life is full of Merriment.

But here is the thing. Did you ever notice how playing by yourself gets boring after a while? We need friends and brothers and sisters to be merry with! The more we realize that everyone is a part of God’s family—the more we joyfully share food and drink and play and stuff with others, the happier we will be.

Of course this is true not only in our personal lives but in our churches. We have a vibrant hunger ministry happening in the church-- a Food Bank which provides around 40 grocery bags full of food and more to area families. We have cake, chili, and brown bag lunch teams making and providing food to the hungry in Elizabeth.

And now we received a \$7000 grant to further this important ministry. Hopefully, with continued increases in giving, we will be able to sustain this ministry ourselves after the first year. But we need more than financial gifts. We need all of you who have been involved thus far plus many more to continue to witness to God's abundance. It's a lot of fun...

The problem is we grown-ups are often like the man who built more and bigger barns.

There is an interesting advertisement which poses the question, "What is your number? And then you see these orange numbers around everywhere-- mostly in the millions, \$1,428,319; \$1,215,783. The ad suggests, "Everyone needs to have a number— they have to store a certain amount of money-- in order to stop working and enjoy themselves." And I guess that having a number is prudent (wise). We need to wisely manage our money— or rather God's money. But we cannot so focus on the number and the future that we do not fully enjoy the present! And we cannot let "the number" keep us from sharing with others— helping them and us to live in the present.

I was sitting with one of my professors wondering about my future after being sick with chronic sinus infections in Corpus Christi. He spoke of wishing that he and his wife had more income. And my mind immediately went to saving for retirement. And he said, "Oh no no...I just want to be able to give away more and help more people out."

The problem with the rich man in the parable was not that he was rich. It was that his pursuit of wealth and his fear of the future kept him from being rich toward God. It kept him from truly enjoying the fullness of life- the giving, receiving-- the sharing of life that brings true joy.

Here at this table, we learn how to be rich toward God. We learn how to eat, drink and be merry in the present. First and foremost, there is always enough for everyone at this table. Second, everyone gladly brings their gifts— actually we bring our entire selves to share life. Here we are reminded that we are actually one— united in love-- as we commune in the body of Christ. To the God of all grace who calls us to eternal union with Christ be all the power and the glory now and forever. Amen.

