

I Believe in God...But I Act Like I Can Take It With Me

Welcome/Prayer

Introduction

The culture in America today seems to focus more on quantity than quality, and Christians are not exempt from that philosophy. It's as though the more we accumulate, the more we want, regardless of whether we need "more." Many of us, like the man in Jesus' story from Sunday's message, act like we can take our stuff with us when we die. When we buy into that mindset, we're really living as Christian Atheists. Sure, we believe in God, but we're operating as if He doesn't exist when we act like we can take it with us.

Preparation

Read aloud the key passages related to today's message.

Luke 12:16-21 (NLT)

¹⁶ Then [Jesus] told them a story:

A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. ¹⁷ He said to himself, "What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops."

¹⁸ Then he said, "I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. ¹⁹ And I'll sit back and say to myself, 'My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!'"

²⁰ But God said to him, "You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?" ²¹ Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.

Break it Down

Re-tell the story.

Recall the story from Craig's message about the "successful businessman," who basically works himself to death. He put all of his focus into his career; however, when it came to his wife, children, or his own health, *those* things would get his time and attention "when things settle down." As we know from the story, that time never came. The words, "visionary, innovator, maverick, and leader," were used to describe the man, and one word—the word he'd given his soul to achieve—was declared in every eulogy: "success." Recall, though, that the story doesn't end on the man's success. God sends an angel to the man's gravesite to declare a different message: F-O-O-L.

1. How would you complete this sentence, "When things settle down, I will..."?
2. Why do you think the Lord used such harsh language for the man in the story? What was foolish about his approach to life?
3. When and how have you become convinced of the foolishness of trying to accumulate more and more?

It all goes back in the box. (ref. John Ortberg's *Monopoly* lesson via his grandmother)

1. Have you ever been jolted by the reality that, all of a sudden, "it all goes back in the box?"
2. What are some things we work hard to obtain/achieve, but don't last forever...or not even very long?
3. Why does faith, hope, and love last forever? What makes love the greatest of these?.

Loving God.

1. When and how did you come to know God's abundant and eternal life?
2. What are some ways that helped you fall more in love with Jesus? What could you do now?

Loving Others.

1. Describe the greatest gift you've received. How did it make you realize that you were loved?
2. When have you felt really "rich" through an act of service or generosity?
3. Consider and discuss the truth of Winston Churchill's statement: "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."

Conclusion

After loving Him, God wants us to love others. As it is in our relationship with God, we love others by sharing ourselves with them. The Bible makes it very clear that we are to share with others whatever we have been given so that they, too, might come to enjoy a rich relationship with their God. When we get to the fork in the road, let's not choose the path of the Christian atheist who says, "I believe in God, but I act like I can take it with me by accumulating more and more and keeping it all for myself." Instead, let us be true Christians who say, "I believe in God, and I know I can't take it with me; so, I'm going to live a life of love by sharing what I have with Him and with others." After all, "you can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead" because love and real life, the kind God gives, never go back in the box.

1. Recall the membership vows that we take when we join the United Methodist Church. Which of the membership vows do you do best at keeping—prayers, presence, gifts, service, or witness? Which one needs the most work?
2. What is one thing you could do to love God more? To demonstrate your love for others?

Close in Prayer