

## **More and Enough – the Parable of the Rich Fool**

### **A bible study on Luke 12:13-34**

Opening: Leader opens in prayer.

#### **1. Gathering (each member of the group can choose one of the following):**

- Tell the group about a time when you experienced a sense of contentment and gratefulness. What contributed to this experience?
- OR: Share with the group: What is something that you *really want*? Why? Do you *need* this thing? If not, how do you deal with this tension?
- OR: share highs and lows for the past week with your group members.

#### **2. Wrestling with God's Word**

**Read Luke 12:13-21.**

What are your reactions to this story of Jesus' encounter with the person in the crowd and the parable of the rich fool?

What challenges or surprises you?

Read the parable again, imagining yourself somewhere in the story.

Which of the characters do you find yourself most identifying with – the man in the crowd? The onlookers? The rich man? God? Jesus? Why do you think this is the case?

#### **Shalom – the manna society (A theology of 'enough')**

What have you been taught/learnt/heard about what the Bible says about money, economics and justice?

Has this been an emphasis in the Christian teaching you've received so far in your life?

Are you surprised to hear that the Bible as a whole contains over 2,000 passages about poverty, economics, justice, and the use of money? Why do you think the Bible contains such an emphasis on money and its use?

The biblical vision of economics is a 'theology of enough' – a society of *shalom* (or peace/wholeness) where no one has too much and no one has too little. Deborah Storie writes,

'The picture of *shalom* summarises biblical images of the future of God. People rest beneath their own vines and fig trees. They live in houses they built themselves and eat the fruits of their own labour. Everyone has enough; no-one has too much. There is diversity but not division. There is no domination and no fear...The society of *shalom* is a society of right relationship: harmony with God, harmony between people, harmony with creation.'

**Read Exodus 16:11-30.**

In this formative part of the history of the people of Israel, how does this passage demonstrate a theology of 'enough'?

What would it be like for an entire nation to live like this, dependent on God for *daily* provision, for forty years?

Two important points come out of this narrative, which shape the history of God's people. These two points summarise a 'manna society' – a theology of 'enough' and an experience of *shalom*.

1. *God* is the one who provides.
2. Hoarding stinks! Keeping or gathering more for oneself than one needs hurts self, others, and damages the relationship with God.

With this background, and knowing that many of Jesus' hearers would have been literally hungry from day to day, and many would have been deeply anxious about whether there would *be* a next meal for themselves and their family, read **Luke 12:13-21** again, this time imagining yourself as one of Jesus' hungry listeners as he tells the parable.

How is the rich man in the parable violating *shalom*?

Where is his focus?

How do his actions affect those around him?

What does God think of him?

Who will get his stored wealth, do you think?

### MORE

It is *almost impossible* for us to conceive that in a modern, capitalist, global economy, people could really live out *shalom* and a theology of enough. This is because we are *immersed* in a world in which the basic driver of economy is 'more,' and in which almost all of our finances are based on the principle that we can *hoard* (ie keep for ourselves, store up against the future) wealth and power.

In your group, brainstorm the ways in which our economy is driven by the quest for 'more' ...

- eg advertising...
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### ENOUGH

Jesus brings a reality check: the life of seeking 'more' will come to an end; death will catch up with rich and poor alike; a person's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions, nor their security in their stored wealth.

How does Jesus express this in the parable?

How does he characterise the quest for 'more'?

Jesus says 'Be on your guard against all kinds of *greed*.'

The Greek word translated greed is *pleonektes*. Some notes on this word:

*The 'pleon' in this word first means 'too much' with ethically a note of censure.*

'Pleonektes' has the sense 'having more,' 'wanting more' with a reference to power as well as property. 'Forging ahead' at others' expense, 'taking by force,' 'greedily desiring' things. This quest for 'more' damages the self as well as others, since it is grasping for more than is ordained for us. There is no pleonektes in the

divine world.

Read **Luke 12:22-34**

What else does Jesus say about 'enough,' desire, anxiety and provision here?

How is this good news for you?

In response to Jesus' forgiveness and invitation to live out the Kingdom of God, the early Christians formed a 'manna society' which lived towards God's *shalom*. Read **Acts 4:32-35**.

What small but concrete steps could your church community take to live out the theology of 'enough'?

What would your community look like if together you took some of these steps?

How might you do that practically?

If you are interested/convicted by this study, and want to find out more about taking concrete steps towards living out a 'theology of enough' rather than the 'culture of more,' you can find some helpful resources at [www.mannagum.org.au](http://www.mannagum.org.au) . This is just a starting point. Remember that Jesus invites us into *shalom* one step at a time, and although this is incredibly challenging, it is also *good news for us*, who are trapped by 'more,' as well as *good news for those who have less than enough*.

### **3. Wrestling with the world and ourselves**

- Deborah Storie writes: 'The picture of injustice represents the world today. 20% of the people (us) use 80% of the world's resources. What is not immediately obvious is that despair, fear and hopelessness pervade both sides. You can't hide from the harsh reality of the barren lands, but things are equally desperate in the green places – we just spend more on camouflage and public relations, on fortifying ourselves in larger and lonelier houses, on distracting ourselves by 'getting away from' the lifestyles we've trapped ourselves with' ...
- comment on this quote.
- Deb also writes: 'Injustice happens whenever non-love...uses power to maintain the boundary between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” The tools injustice uses serve some better than others: education, information, health care, the legal system, economics, trade, dreams...Injustice is often unintentional. It can be very subtle.'
- How are we in some ways like the rich fool? How are we involved, ever so unintentionally, in injustice? What is God calling us to do about that?
- If you are interested/convicted by this study, and want to find out more about taking concrete steps towards living out a 'theology of enough' rather than the 'culture of more,' you can find some helpful resources at [www.mannagum.org.au](http://www.mannagum.org.au) . This is just a starting point. Remember that Jesus invites us into *shalom* one step at a time, and although this is incredibly challenging, it is also *good news for us*, who are trapped by 'more,' as well as *good news for those who have less than enough*.
- *Perhaps you are asking, as I was when I prepared this sermon, What then shall we do?*
- Learn to recognise and live with 'enough'
- Seek *shalom* and live towards it
- Ask the hard questions about injustice

- Trust in God, not in 'more'

AS you come to the end of this bible study, what do you hear God saying?

What are you going to do about it?

**LSF – LOVE one another, SERVE the world, FOLLOW Jesus**

How does this study on 'More and Enough' invite you and equip you for the life of Loving One Another? -Serving the World? -Following Jesus?

What *could* your group do together (that you couldn't do alone) to practice these aspects of life in the next month or in the coming year?

In your group, plan a non-Bible-study get together to Love, Serve or Follow.

***CLOSING: end with prayer: spend time thanking God for his provision, asking for eyes and hearts open to challenge 'more' and live with 'enough.' Pray for those who do not have enough, and that your community would take practical steps towards shalom. Pray that you might trust in God's promises of provision and work for justice.***

***'Pray for one another!'***