

Pastor's Message – 7/31/22
Luke 12:13-21

While I was doing research for my Message today, I came across an article about an interesting system used for capturing monkeys in the jungles of Africa. I don't know if this is still done, but the goal was to take the monkeys alive and unharmed for shipment to zoos in America.

In an extremely humane way, the captors used heavy bottles, with long narrow necks, into which they deposited a handful of sweet-smelling nuts. The bottles were dropped on the jungle floor, and the captors returned the next morning to find a monkey trapped next to each bottle.

How was it accomplished?

The monkey, attracted by the aromatic scent of the nuts, would come to investigate the bottle, grab for the nuts, and be trapped. The monkey can't take its hand out of the bottle as long it's holding the nuts, but it is unwilling to open its hand and let them go. The bottle is too heavy to carry away, so the monkey is trapped.

I wonder if that is what Jesus is talking about in our Bible reading today? I have become aware of just how much stuff I have accumulated over the years and how that stuff we own can begin to own us because, once we have it, we have to take care of it. Better to let it go. Perhaps better not to have it at all. Better not to accumulate stuff and wealth. So, was Jesus anti-rich? Maybe it comes down to his caution in verse 15: "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."

Jesus knew it was not about:

money, but the love of money, which is the actual verse in 1 Timothy 6:10;

possessions, but the overabundance of possessions;

working hard and getting ahead, but about working only to "store up earthly wealth" (v. 21);

being rich, but about being "rich toward God."

These sayings of Jesus are meant to turn our hearts to him, and not just so we can get a reward from him. If we put him first in our lives, then we can gain a better perspective on our future. We will be more concerned about justice for others and for the needs of others.

I had an interesting exchange with some of the kids from Wee Care last week. I had gone in to talk to the managers about blocking the exit with toys and started a conversation with the kids who were creating arts and crafts with beads. There was a little bit of a disagreement building because

of the attitude of one of the boys, “I don’t like to share,” he said. I suggested things might go better in life if he would learn to share.

So, in earshot of the adults, I enlisted him and the other children in my original goal, that of keeping the exit clear. I explained that it would be much safer if there were ever an emergency and they would have to leave quickly to keep the toys away from the door so that everyone would be safer. They all promised that they would help do that. I don’t know if they will, but I hope they have some sense of working for each other, which the adults heard too.

I hope I was able to teach some Biblical values. The Bible is consistent in the theme that:

- we are given to — so that we might give to others;
- we are blessed — so that we might be a blessing;
- we are loved — so that we might love;
- we are reconciled — so that we might reconcile;
- we are forgiven — so that we might forgive.

I think Jesus is inviting us to live for others and live for God. A stingy old lawyer who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness was determined to prove wrong the saying, “You can’t take it with you.”

After much thought and consideration, the old ambulance-chaser finally figured out how to take at least some of his money with him when he died. He instructed his wife to go to the bank and withdraw enough money to fill two pillowcases. He then directed her to take the bags of money to the attic and leave them directly above his bed. His plan: When he passed away, he would reach out and grab the bags on his way to heaven.

Several weeks after the funeral, the deceased lawyer’s wife, up in the attic cleaning, came upon the two forgotten pillowcases stuffed with cash.

“Oh, that darned old fool,” she exclaimed. “I knew he should have had me put the money in the basement.”

We don’t come to Jesus with our earthly wealth and possessions.

Weak and wounded sinner
 Lost and left to die
 O, raise your head, for love is passing by
 Come to Jesus
 Come to Jesus
 Come to Jesus and live!

Now your burden's lifted
And carried far away
And precious blood has washed away the stain, so
Sing to Jesus
Sing to Jesus
Sing to Jesus and live!

And like a newborn baby
Don't be afraid to crawl
And remember when you walk
Sometimes we fall...so
Fall on Jesus
Fall on Jesus
Fall on Jesus and live!

Sometimes the way is lonely
And steep and filled with pain
So if your sky is dark and pours the rain,
then
Cry to Jesus
Cry to Jesus
Cry to Jesus and live!

O, and when the love spills over
And music fills the night
And when you can't contain your joy inside, then
Dance for Jesus
Dance for Jesus
Dance for Jesus and live!

And with your final heartbeat
Kiss the world goodbye
Then go in peace, and laugh on Glory's side, and
Fly to Jesus
Fly to Jesus
Fly to Jesus and live!

Chris Rice