

Checking It Twice: You Deserve It

Reconnect – November 28, 2010



Text: Luke 12:15-34, Philippians 4:11-13

Key Thought: What we really need is what we could never deserve – God’s love and mercy.

So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to those in need. This will store up treasure for you in heaven! And the purses of heaven never get old or develop holes. Your treasure will be safe; no thief can steal it and no moth can destroy it. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. Luke 12:32-34, NLT

Pre-Intro: Back To The Doghouse [video]

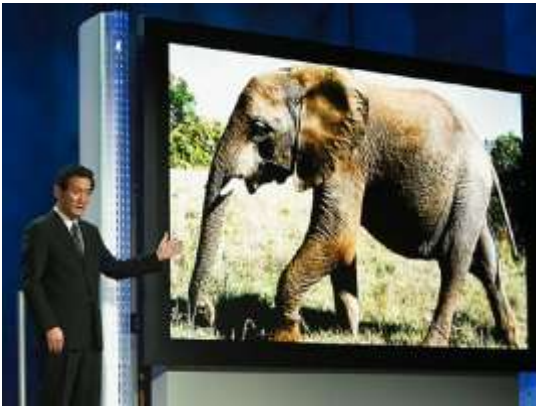
Intro: Black Friday / Boxing Day



Q: Anyone know what holidays were “celebrated” in the US this past week? (Thanksgiving, Black Friday)

- Black Friday – biggest shopping day of the year for the US – to get the shopping season started
- With the reasonably strong CDN\$ right now, this has meant that a lot of us Canucks have gone down or might go down to the USA to take advantage of the deals – so Canadian retailers have countered with deals of their own – shop till you drop
- You can even use your Kardashian Kard – a prepaid debit card put out in the US by Mastercard based on their reality show – you'll pay huge fees, but you'll be able to “keep up” as you kick your Christmas shopping in gear
- Black Friday (and don't forget Cyber Monday) aside, normally here in Canada our shopping holiday is Boxing Day – “now that everyone else has been looked after, it's time for POPPA – or, MOMMA to get what she REALLY wanted!!!”

- And in fact, that’s a strain of advertising that you will hear this time of year, depending on the retailer
- You’re not going to hear it from a toy store, but you might hear it from a store targeting women as the primary shoppers for Xmas presents, or from even an electronics or hardware-type store too
- “Mom or Dad, don’t forget about YOU, in all the rest of your shopping! You work really hard – you deserve it!”



Q: Have YOU heard that message yet this year, or in previous years? How do you react to it?

What it says to us says something about us!?!?

- “If it didn’t work, they wouldn’t use it” – the wonders of capitalism and free markets
- So – what is said TO us perhaps says something ABOUT us

What do YOU think this message says about us?

Plays to our natural selfishness

- this plays to our natural selfishness (greed) – I love to spoil myself and rarely do I ever need any encouraging

Plays to our rampant insecurity

- and insecurity (no-one cares enough about me to get me what I want or need)

Plays to our increasing isolation

- and isolation (no-one knows me well enough or loves me enough for me to GET what I want)

Plays to our welcoming egos

- plays to our egos too – “you put everyone else ahead of yourself all year long...”, “you’re too great NOT to get this for yourself”, “treat yourself”, etc.

Plays to our habits we can't seem to shake



- We all make promises on Christmas morning – “next year, I’m going to get more sleep”, “next year, we’re going to drug the children”, “next year, no more egg nog on Christmas Eve”, next year, “Christmas in Florida!!!”
- And then there’s the “I can’t believe I bought all this crap and the kids aren’t playing with it and we didn’t even make it until noon this year without them being bored and I am NEVER going to do this again”
- Unfortunately, we tend to forget the promises we make to ourselves, and the habits of the season take us over, like a contagion – what are our friends buying their kids? What’s the cool thing out there this year? What is the must have? What is everyone ELSE trying to get? Do I want in on that action? You Betcha!!!
- “acceptable greed” – or making selfishness acceptable – buying things with money we don’t have to fill holes that can’t be filled with stuff

Gaps in our tree (what is the hole we’re trying to FILL here?)

- selfishness – insecurity – isolation – ego – habits
- Suddenly, it’s not a Winter Wonderland anymore, and the dream looks more like a nightmare...!
- If this is all there is, then it’s not enough – we need more than a winter holiday, we need light and life and help to show us the way and come and find us and fix us
- In short, we need... a baby, born to a teenage mom, of uncertain descent, but bringing the love and life of God into our world

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.” **Luke 2:8-12**

- The true God of Christmas works from the inside out, once you bring Him into your life – the trade is acceptance for insecurity, and relationship for isolation – and then that spreads to a lessening of the ego, and less of a need to be selfish, with the convincing and the conviction that comes from experiencing His love
- that can break old habits and even cure selfishness – at least, maybe a little
- And from the moment you welcome God into your life, you begin to change – not often an instant change, but more of a “plant growing” change – you can’t see it when you look at it, but you see by the change over time that something incredible and special is definitely taking place
- You can’t force the love of God, nor do you need to – He offers it
- Not our typical vision of a Christmas gift, but still the greatest one of all
- And to us in our state of constant self-deserving fulfillment, here is what He says to us – a completely different, right out of the blue manifesto:

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need. So don’t be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to those in need. This will store up treasure for you in heaven! And the purses of heaven never get old or develop holes. Your treasure will be safe; no thief can steal it and no moth can destroy it. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

Luke 12:15-34, NLT

- The message of “you deserve it” becomes, according to Jesus, “you don’t deserve it” – but here you are anyway, because of his great love
- And somewhere, deep down, that resonates with us as people – because for every time we tell ourselves “we deserve it”, there’s a nagging feeling, a sneaking suspicion that perhaps, we don’t

TAKE IT HOME:

What we really need is what we could never deserve – God’s love and mercy.

...I have learned to be content with whatever I have.

I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:11-13, NLT



Key Thought:

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Conclusion: Jesus on a collision course [advent conspiracy]

No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us. **John 1:18 NLT**

[play video here – advent conspiracy 2010 youtube]

- Advent Conspiracy movement – to take some of the materialism out of Christmas by Worship Fully, Spend Less, Give More, Love All – to redirect what we do and how we do it
- The spending season has just begun – unless you're Sandy, you probably don't have your Christmas shopping done, and maybe it's not too late to do something to differently shape your strategy this year
- What about this?

Get what you need, get a deal if you can, ask yourself if what you're buying is something you'll still have/be using/need a year from now (fruitcake is not the best example of this) – be choosy with what you get, and not only for yourself, but for others – then you can really make a difference this Christmas that will last

- if "everyone else" has been looked after... but truthfully, they haven't – so many needs in our world, and there are people in need – paradox of Christmas that so much is spent on people who already have everything – "What do you get the person who has everything?" – and unfortunately, we don't often answer that question with "nothing but good wishes"
 - all the charities that can be supported at this time of year, that ramp up what they do – breakfast clubs of Canada, Samaritan's Purse (shoeboxes), Worldvision, Snowsuit fund, Toy Mountain – all deserving, and all lacking – even Reconnect ;)
 - There are so many who have no voice, who are left behind in our organized greed of a holiday
 - Our children are watching – how do we spend or not spend our money at Christmas? – we teach our children about money and stuff by what they see us do, rather than what we say

Response: In His own words, again

- I want to leave you this morning, at the beginning of this season, with the words of Jesus once more – because when He comes into our lives, when His life intersects with ours, when we collide, something has to give – and the way He sees reality – our reality – is so much different than the way that WE see it, especially this time of year

Then [Jesus] said, “Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.” Then he told them a story: “A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. He said to himself, ‘What should I do? I don’t have room for all my crops.’ 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. 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!”’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?’ Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.”

Then, turning to his disciples, Jesus said, “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing. Look at the ravens. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for God feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than any birds! Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And if worry can’t accomplish a little thing like that, what’s the use of worrying over bigger things? “Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?”

And don’t be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don’t worry about such things. These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need.

So don’t be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to those in need. This will store up treasure for you in heaven! And the purses of heaven never get old or develop holes. Your treasure will be safe; no thief can steal it and no moth can destroy it. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

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Prayer