

1 The Stuff Crisis

2 “Stuff”

- In his famous comedy routine, “Stuff,” George Carlin makes the following observations about stuff.
 - Our homes are nothing more than piles of stuff, with covers on them.
 - Places we lock up, when we go out and get more stuff.
 - The only reason why we lock up our homes is because we don’t want somebody to come by and take some of our stuff—especially the shiny stuff.

3 Celebration of stuff

- The holiday season is a spiritual time but also a celebration of stuff.
 - It starts after Thanksgiving on a shopping rush called “Black Friday,”
 - It accelerates through Advent as people max their Credit Cards,
 - It crescendos on Christmas Eve as people check off the last minute items on their shopping list, and
 - Then continues for another week with returns and after-Christmas sales.
- Without a doubt, Christmas is an important chapter in the story of STUFF.

4 Mary’s Visit with Elizabeth

5 The Magnificat

- Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (Luke 1:42–43 NIV)
- As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!” (Luke 1:44–45 NIV)

6 The Magnificat

- And Mary said: “My soul glorifies [magnifies] the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me — holy is his name. (Luke 1:46–49 NIV)
 - Mary gives thanks to God who has given her a prophetic word of encouragement.
 - Which removes her reproach—being a pregnant unmarried woman.
 - Mary rejoices in the “Mighty One” because He knew her personal needs and did something about it—rewarding her for her faith.

7 The Magnificat

- Not only does Mary rejoice in what the Lord has done for her, but she rejoices in what he has done for others.
- the Mighty One—has scattered the proud, brought down the powerful, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry and sent the rich away empty. (Luke 1:51–53)

- All which implies that what God has done for others he will do to all those who trust Him.

8 The stuff of salvation

- So what has brought meaning and significance to Mary is that not only has God chosen her to carry the Messiah, but that He has also been mindful of her personal needs.
 - Angel appears to Joseph (Matthew 1:20)
 - The Lord provides a place for Mary to give birth.
 - Wise Men provide financial resources.
 - Both Simeon and Anna confirms Jesus' special birth.
 - Angel warns them of Herod's plot.
- So what do we have in common with Mary?
- So why do we act like our meaning and significance comes from Stuff?

9 Stuff, Stuff, & Stuff

- If someone were to look in our closets, bookshelves, cabinets, garages, counters, cupboards, attics and basements, what would they find?
- Would they find, we are into stuff?

10 Stuff Crisis

- “We are in a stuff crisis,” writes DeNeen Brown in the Washington Post (March 27, 2010).
- “We are either consuming it, acquiring it, complaining about it, cleaning it, moving it from store to car to house to garage to a Pod parked in the driveway. “
- “We are worried about it. Bored about it. Happy about it.”
- Our stuff has become our baggage.”

11 Compulsive Hoarding

- Compulsive Hoarding is the excessive acquisition of possessions (and failure to use or discard them), even if the items are worthless, hazardous, or unsanitary.
- Compulsive hoarding impairs mobility and interferes with basic activities, including cooking, cleaning, showering, and sleeping.
- A person who engages in compulsive hoarding has great difficulty distinguishing value. To them everything is valuable.

12 Hoarding: Buried Alive

13 The story of stuff

- Annie Leonard, author of The Story of Stuff, says our insatiable desire for stuff is also trashing our environment.
- Leonard believes the answer to the problem is through social engineering by allowing liberal elites and environmentalists to run the economy.

- However, the problem with this is that Leonard doesn't even come close to the real problem.
- The problem is not with the system, but the darkness that is in people's hearts.
- Man is a sinner and as long as he lives in darkness, he will make selfish and self-centered decisions.

14 Jesus warns His disciples

- “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions” (Luke 12:15).
 - Jesus encourages us to take preventative, proactive, pre-emptive measures to ensure that greed doesn't find a place in our soul.
 - In other words, Jesus is asking us to put up Greed Guards, where we ask ourselves “do we really need this,” or “does it supply some other kind of need in my life?”
 - Moreover, Jesus warns us against “all kinds of greed,” as one size does not fit all. It comes in all sizes, shapes and colors.

15 How Much Do We Need?

- Terry Mattingly, who teaches at Palm Beach Atlantic University and is senior fellow for journalism at the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, argues that we can uncover our priorities by asking three simple questions:
 - How do you spend your time?
 - How do you spend your money?
 - How do you make your decisions?
- Answer those questions honestly, and you'll have a picture of what or who is important in your life.
- Jesus reminds us that life isn't about what we have; it's about who we are. In the end, what we have isn't going to matter much.

16 Treasure in Heaven

- As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17 NIV)
- You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’ (Mark 10:18–19 NIV)
- “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” (Mark 10:20 NIV)
- Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

- At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. (Mark 10:21-22 NIV)

17 Treasure in Heaven

- Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"
- The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"
- Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." (Mark 10:26-27 NIV)

18 Treasure in Heaven

- What this rich man lacked was a knowledge of his own sinfulness.
- While the first four commandments were not mentioned, it is evident that what this man lacked was obeying the tenth commandment—thou shall not covet.
- Interestingly enough, there is something special about this man because it is said that Jesus looked at him and loved him.
- Tradition has it that the rich man was none other than John Mark himself—the writer of the Gospel of Mark.
- Evidently, when he walked away, he didn't walk far.
- By God's grace he repented of his greed and followed Jesus.

19 Summary

- Stuff can be a sign of deep spiritual problems where we try to fill the void in our hearts with things.
- Mary, on the other hand, found meaning and significance when she accepted the mission that God had chosen for her.
- Likewise, we too can find meaning and significance when we accept the mission that God has chosen for us.
- Like Mary, Jesus lives inside us.
- Just as Mary believed what the Lord had said about her, and was referred to as "blessed," shouldn't we trust what God has said about us?

20 Conclusion

- According to the Apostle Paul, [God] is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, (Eph 3:20 NIV)
- The context is producing "spiritual fruit."
- Which according to the Apostle John, meets the condition of answered prayer and brings the Father glory (John 15:8).

- This is why it says, Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col 1:27 NIV)
- So what is holding us back from believing?
- Do you want to be called, “Blessed of God!”

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