

By Beattie Wilson

Sunday School Lesson

INTRODUCTION

Again and again citizens of the United States are assured by political leaders that ours is the highest standard of living in the world. We have indeed the most abundant life that men have ever known. We have supermarkets overflowing with food and other items, huge department stores crammed with merchandise of all kinds, and parking lots and super highways clogged with expensive automobiles. Wherever navigable water is found, there are large marinas filled with boats of all types. We are told we have more food, more television sets, more telephones, more elevators, more air conditioning, more private and commercial planes than any people on earth.

In such a civilization as this the words of the Son of God come home to us with meaningful intensity: "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Men cannot find real life or true joy of ultimate fulfillment in things. This is because we never have enough of the things we desire. Our true life is found in relationships with persons and in the qualities of faith, hope, love, joy, and peace. Above all is our relationship with our Heavenly Father and Jesus our Lord. Here, life finds meaning, intensity, variety, and genuine, abiding satisfaction.

THE LESSON

"And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." (Luke 12:13-15)

At this time Jesus was speaking to "an innumerable multitude of people." While He was speaking of witnessing for God and trusting in His Spirit in times of dire persecution, one of the men in the crowd interrupted Him with a question about an inheritance. The inheritance had not been divided to his satisfaction and he sought Jesus' help in seeing that it was properly done.

Jesus refused to even listen to the details of the complaint this man wanted to present. Notice the contrast: here was a great teacher of spiritual truth speaking of deathless realities, and in the crowd was one whose principal concern was that he reap every possible material advantage in some legal dispute over an estate. Jesus perceived that this man's whole life's trust was not on spiritual truth, but on monetary gain. The last of the Ten Commandments tells us, "Thou shalt not covet." It is not wrong to need or even to want certain earthly things. We need food, clothing, and shelter. Surely it is not wrong to desire the possession of nice things. According to the Genesis account, when God placed the man and woman He had made in their first surroundings, they found themselves not in a wilderness but in a garden. God did not give man one or two scrawny fruit trees, or a scrubby arid, or seemingly hostile place to live. The impression is that it was a verdant, luxuriant, and fragrant place with abundant provisions for man's nourishment and delight.

To "covet" is to desire something that belongs to another and to begrudge him its possession, believing it should rather belong to you than to its legitimate owner. This questioner of Jesus coveted the inheritance of his brother.

Each of us possesses life as a gift from God. We have no more life if we possess many things, and we have no less life if we possess few. This we can see the futility of covetousness. Jesus illustrated this principle with the Parable of the Rich Fool.

"There was once a rich man who had land which bore good crops. He began to think to himself, 'I don't have a place to keep all my crops. What can I do? This is what I will do,' he told himself; 'I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, where I will store the grain and all my other goods. Then I will say to myself, Lucky man! You have all the good things you need for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink, and enjoy yourself!' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night you will have to give up your life; then who will get all these things you have kept for yourself?'" And Jesus concluded, "This is how it is with those who pile up riches for themselves but are not rich in God's sight." (Luke 12:16-19)

The nationality or race of this man is not identified. The story would be fitting anywhere that crops are grown. A good harvest is not in itself a sign of divine favor. Jesus himself said that God makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. Surely one could not start a barn rebuilding program after all the harvest was gathered. The fact that there was going to be a storage problem was foreseen by this man. He was a person who was alert to a situation involving his work and welfare. We have to admire this man's industry, foresight and general ability. Here, however, we see that his motivation was self-centered. He was not thankful to God for the health and ability he had been given. His only concern seemed to be his own comfort and enjoyment. He did not think of just a few days or weeks of well-earned rest, but years of self-indulgence.

Jesus calls us to look to God as our ultimate security. It is not possible for us as humans never to have anxiety, never to be perturbed by present problems or apprehensive of future ills. But we have confidence in God's presence and care. Jesus repeatedly assured us "our Father knows." God considers us very valuable. Jesus insisted that we are much more important to God than birds. He knows each one of us. This, Jesus stated, is our ultimate source of strength and stability.

The way we spend our money is one index of the way we spend our lives.

Dr. King: "Everybody Can Be Great"

By Benjamin F. Chavis
Special To The Post
Dr. King once said, "All men are interdependent... Whether we realize it or not, each of us lives eternally 'in the red.' We are everlasting debtors to known and unknown men and women."

As that quote clearly shows, Dr. King's greatness lay not just in his amazing capacity to galvanize the civil rights movement into a potent force for good, equally important, he also understood and acknowledged the solid contributions which others made to that great struggle.

Take the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955, for example. Most of us know about Rosa Parks. But how many of us know the name of Joanne Robinson? Ms. Robinson was the co-chairwoman of the Women's Political Council back then. When Mrs. Parks was arrested it was Ms. Robinson and her organization which helped get the word out about the boycott. She was a teacher at Alabama State College, the local black college.

The night after Mrs. Parks' arrest, Ms. Robinson by herself, secretly ran off 40,000 boycott leaflets on the college mimeograph machine. She then called all the teachers in her organization and told them to have a student ready to pick up the leaflets as she drove by their schools. The students were there, they distributed the leaflets within the segregated public school system

and word was quickly spread throughout the community. Then there was E. D. Nixon, a crack organizer with A. Philip Randolph's union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and president of the Montgomery NAACP. In fact, Mrs. Parks, at the time of her arrest, was the local NAACP secretary as well as an activist in her own right. When Mrs. Parks was arrested, it was Nixon who went to the jail with Attorney Clifford Durr to bail her out.

Nixon had already recognized the oratorical power and leadership potential of the young Martin Luther



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King, just 27 years old at the time. When Nixon telephoned the black ministers of Montgomery to suggest a boycott organizing committee, he also suggested that they meet at Dr. King's church. As Nixon recalls, "I intended to pin his (Dr. King's) name to a star."

And let's not forget Rufus Lewis, who had organized a voter's league back in the late 1940s to increase black voting strength in Montgomery. When the boycott began in 1954, he became the head of the boycott Transportation Committee and set up the system which, with military precision, moved thousands and thousands of black folks every day for 381 days.

Ms. Robinson, Ms. Nixon and Mr. Lewis -- all of them were regular folk just like you and me. However, because of their already-established networks and by working together under Dr. King's spiritual leadership, they were able to use the spark of Mrs. Parks' arrest to ignite a community.

As Dr. King said, "Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve...you only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love." And, I would add, you also need a commitment to take risks in the interest of your people.

Editor's Note: Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. is executive director of the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice.



Allstate Insurance Company has announced that Angela Lloyd has completed the Company's Sales Training course held at the Allstate Field Training Center in Atlanta.

Ms. Lloyd is originally from Rocky Mount, N.C.; she is a 1978 graduate of Rocky Mount Senior High School and a 1982 graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She holds a B.A. degree in psychology.

Agent Lloyd will be working out of the Sears Financial Center, Eastland Mall, 5599 Central Avenue, Charlotte. A full circle of protection including homeowners, life, auto, business insurance, and motor club will be offered; she will also represent Allstate Finance.

CPCC Celebrates National Community College Month

A beach party, an encore presentation of "A Chorus Line," a free lunch hour musical series, and the kick-off of an alumni association lead the list of special activities at CPCC during February.

The special activities at Central Piedmont Community College are in celebration of National Community College Month.

"This month gives CPCC an opportunity to help people become more aware of this community-oriented institution with the motto 'We can help,'" said CPCC President Dr. Richard H. Hagemeyer. "Charlotte area citizens from all segments of society have found this to be true, and we hope they will help interest other citizens by telling their story and that of their college."

Change into your beach clothes at the CPCC locker rooms and dance to the music of Sugar Creek at a beach party on Friday, February 7. Or take the free bus from uptown to spend your lunch hour listening to a variety of musical groups at the free Thursday Recital Series sponsored by the college's Performing Arts Department. And CPCC's acclaimed production of the Broadway musical "A Chorus Line" returns on Friday, February 28.

"Futures begin at CPCC" is the college's slogan for the month and will be used as graduates seek out others to join the new alumni association. Receptions for potential members of the organization will be held during February at each of CPCC's learning centers. Special services which may be available to members include trips at group rates, scholarships for children of alumni, and social functions.

The college will take information on its programs and innovations to the public through shopping center

exhibits in February. Exhibits will include hands-on computer demonstrations, blood pressure and other health checks, and demonstrations from the performing arts and physical education departments at the college.

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