

The Bulwark

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DO OUR POSSESSIONS POSSESS US?

It was 1859, and the steam clipper Royal Charter was returning to Liverpool from a trip to the goldmines in Australia. It is said about 450 passengers drowned just off the north coast of Wales, when the ship got caught in a massive storm. While the wreck in of itself is tragic, there didn't need to be that amount of lives lost. Rather than leave their gold behind which was packed in money belts that they were wearing; it was apparently too precious to them to abandon when they were so close to home. Humans, it would seem have strong and, at times, irrational obsession with their possessions.



Marie Kondo has made quite a name for herself as an organizing consultant and author. She frequently appears on television and Netflix released a series entitled "Tidying Up With Marie Kondo". At the core, her message to people as they seek to rid themselves of unneeded items in their homes, is to "hold up each item, and ask, does it spark joy?" If the answer is yes, keep it. If the answer is no, then give it away. That may be too difficult for some, as closets are packed to overflowing. Garages have been stuffed to the rafters. But then there is the storage units that people happily pay hundreds if not thousands of dollars annually to house the overflow and that gets packed to the gills.

So, do our possessions possess us? In many cases the answer is a resounding, "yes". On one hand there is recognition of what Solomon penned in Ecclesiastes 5:19, "Furthermore, as for every person to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also given him the opportunity to enjoy them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God." While on the other hand there is what Jesus said in response to a person in a crowd who demanded, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." (Luke 12:13) To which Jesus said, "You there—who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over the two of you?" He then went on to say, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one is affluent does his life consist of his possessions." (Luke 12:14-15)

"Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, I WILL NEVER

DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU." (Hebrews 13:5)

Notice the words "being content". The word content carries with it a few applications and definitions, but as seen in Hebrews 13:5 it basically means, "pleased and satisfied with what one has; not disposed to complain; to appease the desires of" (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary) Paul noted in Philippians 4:11-13, "Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." He learned and so must we.

Sandwiched in the early part of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus laid out an essential truth regarding where ones priorities lay. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:19-21) Each one must on their own accord decide who or what has greater value. However, so many think they can juggle a relationship with God along with rank materialism. Note how Jesus tied this segment up in the same sermon as seen in verse thirty-three of Matthew six. "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness..."

So back to the question, do our possession possess us? That is a question each one must answer for self. Paul sought to remind Timothy of such as seen in 1Timothy 6:7-10. "For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." We need to exercise care that we are not swept up by our desires. (wbe)