



I can remember back many years ago, like about fifty years, my previous husband and I spent six months touring the UK and Europe. We were as poor as church mice, our first stop in the UK was Earls Court, known as Kangaroo Valley in the seventies and eighties. We purchased a very old Kombi van all set up as a camper, we had two gas burners to cook on, the table folded into a bed and a funny little cupboard served as a cooler, it really couldn't be called a fridge, although during winter months the whole camper was like a cool room. We sold the camper for pretty much the same price at the end of our holiday.

This was our home for six months. We washed in a bucket of hot water and every third night we would stay in a cheap hotel or at a camp site so we could have a decent shower and stretch out a bit.

We had the best time, it was so exciting, every morning we were off on a new adventure, amazing things to see and wonderful people to meet.

We survived quite happily with the basics, two cups, two plates, two knives and forks, we had a saucepan a small frying pan and Allan made a toasting fork out of a metal coat hanger, it worked perfectly, we cooked up some amazing meals.

When we returned home we moved into a small two bedroom flat in Brisbane, we had so much space, and of course later on we purchased our own home. Over the years we accumulated so much stuff, numerous dinner sets, an every day one, a good one for guests, glassware, tea sets, copious linen, towels and so on.

When Derek and I married, we then had two lots of stuff, and when our parents died, we had even more. And now of course we have down sized but still have way too much stuff, we need to go through our villa again.

Derek and I have spent time in Tonga and Fiji over the years, staying in small out of the way villages, and once again, living with the basics, so easy. We rolled up a thin mattress in the morning, we shared communal cooking, we washed in the river and most of the food was grown in the village, fresh and healthy. This left plenty of time for our relationship with God, for sharing with the local community, playing with the children and enjoying the outdoors. We were never alone, even in the loo there lived a duck with several ducklings so we always had company.

These cultures are just so different to ours, I always came home adamant that we would declutter and lead a more simple life and of course that didn't work out too well.

Although, how many of us say that we have big houses full of stuff and we only live in a very small area and we don't wear many of the clothes we have... we have a three bedroom villa and two of the bedrooms are closed off, we rarely use them!!

So, how do we balance our collection of possessions with our important relationship with our God?

How easy it is to store up possessions, especially the things we really like, I seemed to have accumulated so many e mail subscriptions for various products, clothes, homewares, and so on, not that I purchase that much on line, I just like to see what is available. However this can then distract me, and I spend less time with God, I feel that this is the problem, it's not so much about the possessions it's about allowing them to interfere with our relationship with God.

Jesus warns us against the desire to gain more and more things and of placing our security in an abundance of possessions, which sometimes many of us do without really thinking. We are warned against greed, the desire of gaining more and more.

To support this, Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool, focusing on the rich man wanting to store up loads of grain. The rich man decides to tear down his barns and build bigger ones, so that he could relax and enjoy the good life. The rich man's obsession with his storage problem has masked from him, the fact that wealth provides no security against the possibility that life may be short. The only security that is truly lasting consists in being "rich with God".

This parable initiates a theme that becomes very prominent in the Gospel from now on. Nothing is more destructive of life and humanity than preoccupation with acquiring, holding on to, and increasing wealth. The problem is not so much the possession of riches as such. It is the desire to acquire and enhance them, fed by insecurity; preventing people from attending to the relationship with God that brings the only security that counts. Such desire also erodes the concern for the other, that is the basis of true community. Attachment to wealth is incompatible with living, sharing and celebrating the hospitality of God. Notice the word "attachment" to wealth.

Our modern society and culture makes things difficult, we are continually bombarded with advertising and, I am sure it does impact on the younger generation more than us.

We begin to realise as we grow older and wiser, maybe (!) that we don't need so much stuff, there are much more important things in our life.

All of us have experiences in our lives, that have shown us the true values we need to hold on to, especially during sickness, medical treatment, grief, family issues and so on. The most important thing for Christians is a strong and steadfast faith. The presence of our God, our families and friends are all we need to comfort and sustain us through these difficult times. Also, all the many blessings we receive in the form of God's angels who appear out of nowhere at just the right time, to share a kind word, or offer thoughtful practical help.

So, let us go out today and find a quiet time to review our personal attitudes to the accumulation of possessions and our devotion to our loving and faithful God. How do we shape up as we examine the parable of the rich fool? What lessons do we learn from the scriptures that support us through this amazing journey with Jesus?

For example, we read from Matthew, 6, 19-24.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

AMEN