



Candlewood Church



The Rhythm of Less

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BIG IDEA – More often than not, less is more when it comes to possessions.

Scripture Focus – Then he said, “Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.” **Luke 12:15 NLT**

How can LESS be MORE?

We assume more margin comes from better time management, working hard to manage a full life. But Jesus's economics run the other way: you can't **manage** your way to rest; you **reduce** your way to it, giving us room to breathe and room for God to move. The stuff you own and the obligations you've taken on aren't neutral, they all cost something; mainly our attention! And **attention is the one resource rest actually requires.**

The problem of more.

Everything is not neutral.

Owning stuff or stuff owning us.

The rhythm of less, in your stuff and obligations

SCRIPTURE:

Then someone called from the crowd, “Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father's estate with me.” Jesus replied, “Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?” Then he said, “Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.” **Luke 12:13-15 NLT**

Someone in the crowd asks Jesus to settle an inheritance dispute, essentially "tell my brother to divide the stuff fairly." Jesus refuses to be the arbitrator and instead names the real issue underneath the request: guard against covetousness, life isn't made of possessions.

Then Jesus told them a story. I'm going to also tell you a story ☺

PERSONAL STORY:

My sons made a point, as we are driving a full truck of stuff to the new place, and I was completely blind to it. They weren't negotiating over which boxes to keep. They named what was underneath the boxes.

Here's what I heard, "whatever is in this truck, is probably stuff we don't want!"

Chinaware!

Let me just tell you, China is just one of a great illustrations describing the massive change over the years. **What is a respectable dinner setting is supposed to look like today?**

I had to face this question: **Did we own stuff or did stuff own us?**

Grandma's Whiskey Decanter.



Among the pictures, memorabilia and keepsakes I saw a common theme. My grandparents wanted me to have this items because:

1. It let me know they existed. And, not just existed, but lived in a time and setting that is unlike my own. Whether it was a picture of farm or a factory, or a [tchotchke](#) (trinket) from a honeymoon to Niagara Falls or a road-trip to South Dakota to see Mount Rushmore.
2. It let me know that they **cherished these rare moments that weren't extravagant, but they were adventurous.** These "**heirlooms**" became memories to speak on their behalf after they were gone. I don't know the story behind the Whiskey Fisherman, but I'll bet it was a snapshot taken in the life of my grandmother. I don't know if our children will keep it, sell it or throw it away.

RHYTHMS OF LESS

Today we are continuing to look at REST. But this one is difficult because it allows the Word of God, the Spirit of God, to poke into our personal lives, dealing with what is now popularly called, minimalism – continuing to see rhythms of less with our belongings to help us be at rest.

What are our rhythms of less?

When Jesus speaks words that span every era, culture, and circumstance, let's be clear about something: He's not trying to **rain on our parade or crash our party**. He's telling us the truth that will guide and guard our lives, freeing us from the very human habit of **always wanting more than we need**.

Jesus spoke in an ancient time to ancient people of a completely different culture, circumstances and way of life. Yet, because Jesus is... well, Jesus, when He spoke, it wasn't bound by any of those differences.

His Word, God's Word is timeless, eternal and radical. It was then; it is now.

To discover what Jesus was really talking about when he got super personal about possessions, we need to slow down and look at our own inventory. He makes a deep point showing us our flaws concerning our stuff. Stuff doesn't just clutter space, it costs attention, and attention is the one resource actual rest requires.

Every extra box is something your eyes and mind have to manage even when you're not using it.

Here are three movements of how Jesus dealt with the stuff behind the stuff.

Movement 1: The Diagnosis — Luke 12:13-15

Meanwhile, the crowds grew until thousands were milling about and stepping on each other. Luke 12:1a NLT

Jesus begins his open-air teaching.

Then, as if someone in the crowd interrupts Jesus mid-teaching,

"Then someone called from the crowd"

"Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father's estate with me." Jesus replied, "Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?" Then he said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own." Luke 12:13-15 NLT

Whatever setup the guy was trying to get Jesus to participate in – **it clearly did not work.** Instead, Jesus asks one of his famous, “let’s think about this, shall we” questions; “who made me a judge over you?”

Then, instead of commenting on **how the brother’s should split the inheritance**, Jesus goes much **deeper**, into the core of the human soul. He drops the “G” word in a conversation about money and stuff! Oh, I guess there isn’t a “G” word! Then let’s just say it together, Jesus said – **“Guard against every kind of GREED!”** He goes right past the argument entirely and **names the appetite driving it.**

One question, no debate: “Do you really need all this stuff?” I wanted to get defensive, the same instinct I am sure that anyone in that Luke 12 crowd probably felt hearing Jesus.

Jesus just skipped over some kind of fair division and goes straight for the heart.

But I knew my boys were right.

The stuff I thought I owned, owned me.

Movement 2: The Direction — Matthew 6:19-21

The Bible app, which is completely free, created and maintained by [Bobby Gruenewald](#) from Life Church in Oklahoma, has Bible reading plans and simple, poignant videos for each day. The app has been downloaded by over 1 billion people and 25.6 million app opens per day. This one was from just this past Friday, August 21.

VIDEO



The devotional put it like this:

“The deceptive yet popular story in our world is one of scarcity, convincing us that resources are limited. That storyline makes us stingy or anxious, causing us to see others as competition or obstacles to getting what we need.”

Jesus points to the here and now, but then invites us to look up; to look beyond the present and peer into a future reality. Heaven is **more real.**

Peter hits this in [2 Peter 3:13](#) "But according to his promise we are waiting for **new heavens and a new earth** in which righteousness dwells."

But even more importantly, John's Revelation (the end of all and beginning of forever) says it even stronger, [Revelation 21:1](#) "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for **the first heaven and the first earth had passed away**, and the sea was no more."

Jesus first directs us to what is happening in our lives now, but shifts our thinking toward what is coming.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." [Matthew 6:19-21 NLT](#)

That last line carries all the weight of where we think, feel and live.

Jesus does not say, "**choose better things to love** and your treasure will follow your heart there."

He says the opposite: **your heart goes wherever you've already been storing things, whether you chose that or not.**

The heart doesn't lead. It follows.

The clarity of that truth explains why purging 50% still wasn't enough.

I felt good about getting rid of half the stuff I had dragged along with us for two major moves! But **there was another 50% that held and directed my heart!**

I didn't fail at decluttering.

I agreed with my boys and identified that my heart had already relocated into two truckloads of stuff, but cutting the pile in half **did not automatically relocate my heart to where it needed to be.**

Movement 3: The Warning — Luke 12:16-21

Back to Luke to pick up the real warning of why Jesus' words are both hard, and life-giving.

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." Luke 12:16-21 NLT

The rich fool has a good problem: his land produced so well he ran out of room. His solution is to **GO BIG, BUILD MORE**, not less. "I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones."

"Turns out we didn't even need to learn how to build our own. We just started renting them, by the millions."

There are more storage facilities in this country than there are movie theaters – a 10 to 1 ratio.

We cooperatively spend about \$45 billion dollars storing our stuff in roughly 50,000 storage facilities!

Here's the kicker... Jesus says, "That very night, **God Himself calls him a fool!**" And Jesus throws out this tongue-in-cheek line asking, "**Then who will get everything you worked for?**"

Who gets everything you worked for?

I experienced Jesus' sermon in real time. I had one truck for the movers, professionally packed, reasonable. An entire second truck, completely full, for everything else. That's like my own bigger barn.

REFLECTION

This isn't really a checklist kind of reflection. It's more about a question.

What's something in your life right now, stuff or obligation, that you would be defensive about if someone questioned it. **The way I almost got defensive in the truck?**

APPLICATION

Easy commitment, small steps

Choose one category (closet, garage, calendar, subscriptions, a commitment) and remove a fixed number of things this week.

I'd be willing to be open enough to ask for folks to join me in taking small steps to properly getting rid of stuff that I just don't need to mentally or physically care for anymore. **Even as small as one item or one box of stuff a week.**

SCRIPTURES

Luke 12:13-15 NLT ON SCREEN

Then someone called from the crowd, "Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father's estate with me." Jesus replied, "Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?" Then he said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."

Luke 12:1a NLT **ON SCREEN**

Meanwhile, the crowds grew until thousands were milling about and stepping on each other.

Luke 12:13-15 NLT **ON SCREEN**

Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father's estate with me." Jesus replied, "Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?" Then he said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.

2 Peter 3:13 ESV

But according to his promise we are waiting for **new heavens and a new earth** in which righteousness dwells.

Revelation 21:1 ESV

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for **the first heaven and the first earth had passed away**, and the sea was no more.

Matthew 6:19-21 NLT

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

Luke 12:16-21 NLT

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."



DIG DEEPER NOTES



The Word Behind "Greed"

Right before Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool, he names the actual problem in one word: **pleonexia**, translated "**covetousness**" or "**greed**" in **Luke 12:15**. It's a compound word, literally "more" plus "to have," the desire to have more. Not a passing want, an appetite. What makes the word worth tracing further is where else it shows up. **Paul uses it twice, in Colossians 3:5 and again in Ephesians 5:5, and both times he calls it something stronger than a bad habit. He calls it idolatry!** Putting a craving for more in the same category as bowing to a false god sounds like a stretch until you sit with his logic: an idol is simply whatever you're actually serving underneath your stated beliefs. **Pleonexia is idolatry because it quietly**

reorders what you're serving, even while everything else about your life still looks devoted to God.

Jesus diagnoses the crowd with this word before he ever tells the parable. The rich fool isn't a separate lesson. He's what pleonexia looks like when it's given forty years and a good harvest to work with.

Blue Letter Bible, entry G4124, pleonexia — blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4124/esv/tr/0-1



What "Moth and Rust" Actually Meant

Matthew 6:19 is usually remembered as "moth and rust," but **the Greek word behind "rust," brosis, doesn't actually mean rust anywhere else in Greek literature.** It literally means **"eating" or "consuming."** Most scholars think Jesus has **grain stores in mind here, not corroding metal,** picture a family's wealth stored as wheat or grain, and rats, worms, and vermin slowly eating through it. Whether it's cloth being eaten by moths or grain being eaten by pests, the image is the same: **whatever you store will eventually be consumed by something smaller than you.**

The second half of the verse holds an equally overlooked detail. **"Thieves break in and steal" is a fairly bland translation of dioryssō, which literally means "dig through."** Homes in first-century Palestine were commonly built of mud brick, so a thief didn't pick a lock, he **tunneled through a wall.** Your treasure was only ever as secure as a wall of dried mud. Put together, **the verse isn't really about moths and metal. It's about two entirely different threats, decay from within and theft from without,** and Jesus naming both in the same breath to make one point: **nothing stored on earth is actually safe from anything.**

For further study: Blue Letter Bible, entry G1035, brosis — blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1035/esv/tr/0-1; entry G1358, dioryssō — blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1358/esv/tr/0-1



Storage is an obsession in the United States

We Just Rent Our Barns Now

The rich fool had to physically tear down barns and build new ones. We skipped that step entirely and built an industry to do it for us. **The U.S. self-storage market is worth roughly \$45 billion a year, spread across an estimated 50,000 facilities holding more than 2.3 billion square feet of space nationally.**

The more telling number isn't the size of the industry, it's who's renting. A 2025 study by the Self-Storage Association found that **16.68 million American households rented a storage unit in 2024, about 12.6% of all households, up from 11.1% just two years before.** That's roughly **one in eight homes paying monthly rent on a separate building for the things that didn't fit, or that we couldn't decide to let go of.**

Over 60% of storage rentals last six months or longer, meaning this mostly isn't moving-day overflow, it's stuff parked indefinitely. And **more than 77% of all storage revenue comes from**

individuals and families, not businesses. This is a personal-posessions industry, built almost entirely around people, not companies.

More storage facilities than movie theaters – As of May 2026 there are only 5,000-6,000 theaters in the U.S.

SCRATCH NOTES:

A series-wide note: this whole arc, Habits (time) → Minimalism (stuff) → Pathways (priority of relationship), tracks nicely from *outer* to *inner*. **You're moving people from rearranging their schedule, to rearranging their possessions, to rearranging their priorities**, each one a little closer to the actual center, which is just being with God, less encumbered each week.

Week 2: Minimalism

The rhythm of less, in your stuff and obligations

The tension: We assume more margin comes from better time management, working harder at managing a full life. But Jesus's economics run the other way: you don't manage your way to rest, you *reduce* your way to it. The stuff you own and the obligations you've taken on aren't neutral, they all cost you attention, and attention is the one resource rest actually requires.

Biblical anchor: Matthew 6:19-21 ("do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... where your treasure is, there your heart will be also") paired with Luke 12:15 ("life does not consist in an abundance of possessions"). A strong supporting image: the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21, who solves a good problem (abundance) with *more* (bigger barns) instead of less, and dies that very night having never gotten to enjoy any of it. That parable is almost a parody of the modern instinct to expand capacity rather than reduce need.

Possible story shape: Something concrete and physical works best here, a closet, a garage, a storage unit, a calendar so full that something good had to be cut to make room for something better. The strongest version of this story is one where letting go of something good (not something obviously bad or sinful) is what actually created the relief, since that's the harder, more honest version of minimalism, not decluttering junk, but releasing things you liked having.

The practice: A bounded, doable action: choose one category (closet, calendar, subscriptions, a commitment) and remove a fixed number of things this week, not "declutter your life" (too big, too vague) but something like "remove five things from one space before next Sunday." Small and finishable beats sweeping and abstract.

Dig Deeper material: The Israelite practice of gleaning and the Sabbatical/Jubilee year (Leviticus 25) as a built-in societal reset against accumulation, every seven years the fields rested and debts were released, a structural minimalism baked into the law itself; the Greek word *merimnaō* ("worry," literally "to be divided/pulled apart") used in Matthew 6:25-34, showing that anxiety and possession-accumulation are linguistically and theologically tied together in this passage; a brief note on the desert fathers' vow of *non-possession* as a spiritual discipline, not an economic one.

merimnáō (from [3308](#) /*mérimna*, "a part, as opposed to the whole") – properly, drawn in opposite directions; "divided into parts" old verb for worry and anxiety – literally, **to be divided**

Jesus said, "do not be divided about your life." Why would he say it that way? Worry is just worry. Anxious is anxious. But being pulled in opposite directions in our life? That's an impossible win.

Can stuff make us duplicitous?

UPDATE:

Your story already hands you the bridge into the text, maybe more directly than you've noticed yet. Your son's question, "**do you really need all this stuff**," is almost a **word-for-word paraphrase of Luke 12:15: life doesn't consist in an abundance of possessions**. That's worth naming explicitly in the message. **A thirty-year-old in a moving truck accidentally preached the sermon before you did.**

Here's how I'd think about breaking the three texts into a shape that fits how you actually deliver a message, less info-dump, more a walk through what happened, and where it lands.

****Start further back than Matthew 6:19-21 or your two suggested texts.** Luke 12:13-15 has an entry point you haven't used yet, and it rhymes with your story in a way that could be a strong open.**

Someone in the crowd asks Jesus to settle an inheritance dispute, essentially "tell my brother to divide the stuff fairly." Jesus refuses to be the arbitrator and instead names the real issue underneath the request: guard against covetousness, life isn't made of possessions.

That's the same move your sons made with you. They weren't negotiating over which boxes to keep. They named what was underneath the boxes.

Opening on that text, before your story, could actually set up the story rather than follow it, since the **congregation hears Jesus decline to referee "stuff" and go straight for the heart**, and then you show them a modern version of exactly that happening to you, in a truck, from your own kids.

****Then Matthew 6:19-21 does the diagnostic work.**** Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. This is the verse that explains why purging 50% still wasn't enough, and I'd lean into that honestly rather than resolve it too quickly. The verse doesn't say get rid of your stuff and your heart will follow. It says the heart already followed the stuff there in the first place, which means downsizing the pile doesn't automatically downsize the attachment. That's a truer, more pastorally honest note than "I decluttered and found peace," and it fits your commitment to not tying things up falsely neat.

****Then Luke 12:16-21, the rich fool, becomes the mirror rather than a separate point.**** He solves a good problem, abundance, with more: bigger barns. You did something close to a real-life version of that before your sons intervened, two trucks instead of one, more storage instead of less stuff. Worth saying that plainly if you're comfortable with it: "I basically built

myself a second barn before I even knew that's what I was doing." The parable stops being an ancient warning about a farmer and becomes a description of what you almost did without noticing.

That gives you a three-beat shape rather than the four-movement structure from Holy Habits, since this material doesn't span one continuous narrative the way Mark 1 did:

1. **The Diagnosis** (Luke 12:13-15), Jesus refusing to settle the stuff and naming the appetite instead
2. **The Direction** (Matthew 6:19-21), the heart follows the treasure, not the other way around
3. **The Warning** (Luke 12:16-21), solving abundance with more instead of less, and running out of time before enjoying any of it

On practical insight without turning it into a checklist: given how Holy Habits landed, I'd resist a "five steps to declutter" close. **The stronger move, matching your own honesty about the 50% not being enough, is a self-diagnostic question rather than a task list.**

Something like: **what's something in your life right now, stuff or obligation, that you'd have defended if someone questioned it, the way you almost got defensive in the truck?**

That question does the same self-selection work "which of these four" did for Holy Habits, except aimed at exposing the thing rather than sorting people into a category.

And the rest connection is worth making explicit rather than assumed: **stuff and overcommitment don't just clutter space, they cost attention, and attention is the one resource actual rest requires. Every extra box is something your eyes and mind still have to manage even when you're not using it.**

Want me to draft the actual movement-by-movement content the way we did for Holy Habits, once you've had a chance to react to this shape?

Claude:

REFLECTIONS and APPLICATION

I'd resist tying this up with "and now I have less, and I'm free."

The honest ending you already have, purged half, still wasn't enough, is stronger and more pastorally useful than a tidy resolution.

It sets up a self-diagnostic question rather than a task list, the same move that worked for Holy Habits: something like, **what's something in your life right now, stuff or a commitment, that you'd have gotten defensive about if someone questioned it the way your sons questioned you?**

Where the story of helpful accountability between two widows does fit beautifully is exactly where you're already placing it, the "next right thing" step, separate from the diagnosis entirely. **The actual mechanism they landed on, one box, a fixed small unit, reported to**

another person who was carrying the same weight, is a genuinely strong model for practice. It's not about greed or storage anymore at that point. It's about how anyone, whatever is actually underneath their stuff, whether it's grief, fear, comfort, or plain accumulation, actually moves. Small, bounded, and not alone.

I'd be willing to be open enough to ask for folks to join me in taking small steps to properly getting rid of stuff that I just don't need to mentally or physically care for anymore.