

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

**Called to What Lasts**

Luke 12:13-21

May 3, 2026

**Barns or Houses**

I don't know much about barns, but I do know a bit about houses. And, I've been thinking about real estate more than usual the last few weeks as my wife, Susan, concluded her job in Oklahoma City and we listed our Oklahoma home for sale.

And, in full disclosure, while this recent personal transition gives me a good reason to be interested in real estate, I've always been fascinated with houses. If you want to capture my attention all you need to do is to start throwing around real estate terminology. Try using terms like move-in-ready, recently updated, gated community, lot size, and cost per square foot.

So, let me begin with the story of my early real estate experience in here in Tarrant County. Humor me. Travel back in time with me a few decades to when I was in my twenties.

When Susan and I got married, we began our life together in a simple single family brick home about 20 miles southeast of First Christian in Mansfield. This ideal new construction starter home was around 1300 square feet and had 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, and a 2-car garage.

Our first move took us further east to Cedar Hill to another new construction property. It was roughly twice the size of our first home and was two stories tall. The house came with an additional bedroom and an extra living space. It even sat on a corner lot.

Our next move brought us to my hometown: Arlington. We found our way to a home about 15 miles east of First Christian that was about as old as we were. The house was even larger with 5 bedrooms and a 3-car garage. Somehow, we managed to fill nearly 3,000 square feet rather quickly.

Our final move during this stage of life was the shortest; it allowed us to expand yet again into a larger home in the same neighborhood. It provided even more space, closer to 4,000 square feet. And, notably it had 5 bathrooms for our family of 2, along with 3 living areas and a large swimming pool.

While we never once tore down our home to build a bigger one, we grew quite competent in moving up to homes that were larger, pricier, and in more desirable locations.

Our family size remained constant at two, but the number of things we owned and the number of square feet we air conditioned to contain and maintain them continued to grow.

In my young adult years if you had asked me "how much is enough house?" I likely would have answered "I don't know, but I would like a little more space."

While we never spoke the words, our lifestyle suggested that bigger really is better. And, sadly, reflecting back, I am all too aware that the ever-expanding size of our homes was just a symptom of a larger problem.

That's the part I couldn't see at the time. What felt like normal, even successful living, was quietly forming a deeper question beneath the surface: How much is enough?

### **Father and Son Wisdom**

Thankfully, I'm not the first person to wrestle with that question.

Robert<sup>1</sup> and Edward Skidelsky<sup>2</sup> are two academics who happen to be father and son. Together they wrote a book with a catchy title: *How Much Is Enough?*<sup>3</sup>

I bring their book to your attention because the Skidelskys name something that sounds a lot like the wisdom of Jesus in this morning's parable.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert, the father, passed away earlier this year. He is an economic historian best known for his best known for his award-winning three-volume biography of John Maynard Keynes.

<sup>2</sup> Edward, the son, is a lecturer at Exeter University specializing in aesthetics and moral philosophy.

<sup>3</sup> Robert and Edward Skidelsky. *How Much is Enough? Money and the Good Life* (Other Press, 2012).

In a world shaped by constant pressure to want more, they offer a needed corrective. They imagine a more balanced society with less emphasis on consumption and less inequality. And they argue that such a shift is unlikely without religion.<sup>4</sup>

The elder Skidelsky is a widely recognized expert on John Maynard Keynes. Keynes is the economist who imagined a future where his grandchildren would work only 15 hours a week, supported by rising productivity and shared prosperity. In that world, leisure would be at the center of the good life.

Parts of that vision came true. Productivity and wealth increased, but the shorter work week never arrived. Why? Because the desire for more never slowed down and because the gains were not widely shared.

The Skidelskys take that gap seriously. They argue that we have misunderstood what wealth is for. We have mistreated it as an end in itself.

They name what they call the “basic goods” of life, which include health, security, respect, friendship and leisure. And they suggest that these basic goods should be viewed not as things money helps us get, but as the very substance of a good life.

And those are not things you can buy or store away. Perhaps the Children’s Sermon offered an effective simplistic summary.

### **A Personal Shift**

Now . . . if I had continued on the path I established in my twenties the math is simple: Susan and I would now be living in a home with at least 30,000 square feet of space.

Thankfully, however, I learned that the quest for more – whether more square feet or more income or more stuff – is unfulfilling and counter to the Way of Jesus.

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<sup>4</sup> Greg Smith. "Review of How Much is Enough." Available at [sowhatfaith.com/2012/07/09/review-of-how-much-is-enough](http://sowhatfaith.com/2012/07/09/review-of-how-much-is-enough)

I wish I could tell you that I learned this important lesson and recalibrated my life because I suddenly became wise and holy. The reality is much messier and less flattering.

In my early thirties, I accepted a call to serve a church in Naples, Florida. But in that astronomically expensive housing market, a home anywhere near the size we'd grown accustomed to was out of the question.

If you have ever downsized, voluntarily or involuntarily, then you know that it causes you to really rethink your things.

If we needed to eliminate 10% of our stuff, we could have easily taken care of that in a day or two. If we needed to cut back and say goodbye to 25% of our belongings, we could have managed after some longer conversations. But we needed to let go of half or more of everything we owned.

After years of acquiring more and more, the idea of getting rid of 50% of all that we had was an incredible challenge. Ultimately, we found a way. We said goodbye to boxes and boxes of books, rooms and rooms of furniture, decorations of every sort and for every season, and a variety of things old and new both large and small.

Now, a few decades later, I can honestly say that I no longer look at real estate the same way. My new perspective applies more broadly to material things and even the concept of acquisition.

If you stop by my office here at First Christian or at White Rock Center of Hope or if you find yourself in our home in North Arlington, you will be underwhelmed by the number of things present. The spaces are welcoming but light on stuff. Some would say minimalistic.

### **Treasure in Heaven**

While Jesus spoke about barns and I have talked about houses, the truth is much greater than the category of real estate. At the heart of Jesus' lesson is our basic disposition about our stuff.

Christopher Maricle, the author of the book that inspired our current sermon series, suggests that this is all about building up treasure in heaven rather acquiring stuff here on earth. And, he proposes we live into this priority by taking three actions: detaching from earthly possessions, maintaining an abundance mentality, and acting justly.<sup>5</sup>

I think I've spoken plainly about detachment. It doesn't mean we shouldn't own anything, but it does mean that our stuff doesn't own us. We must not be preoccupied with building up more and more here on earth.

His idea of an abundance mentality is a reminder that there is enough. Regardless of how much or how little we may have, there is always enough to share. It is a generosity-oriented perspective. In contrast, scarcity is what leads us to believe the popular lie that we don't have enough and never will so we should work tirelessly and acquire endlessly. One option is liberating, relational, and generous while the other is a form of bondage that is selfish and stingy.

Finally, acting justly. As we think about our finances and our stuff, we are invited to expand our thinking beyond ourselves. We remember that Jesus invited us to join him in the work of co-creating the kingdom of God on earth as it already is in heaven. There is so much that we can do with our resources to accelerate the arrival of a more just world for all people and for all of creation. And, there is much we can advocate for.

## **Conclusion**

Today's Gospel lesson is one of Jesus' most challenging and countercultural teachings.

None of us knows how long this life will last. All of us, however, can choose how we live each day. All of us can choose how we answer the question, "How much is enough?" And, all of us can build up treasure in heaven. Amen.

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Maricle. *The Jesus Priorities: 8 Essential Habits* (Upper Room Books, 2007), p.61-86.