

How Much Is Enough?

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We're at the Feast of Tabernacles and it's a festive time and it should be—celebrating the upcoming Kingdom of God and our part in it, but I hope we all understand that the food, the fun, and the festivities are not the main thrust of God's festivals in the Kingdom of God. Maximizing the amount of goodies that people have, I think we understand, will not be the main thrust of the Millennium either. I'll cut right to the chase; the title of the sermon today is:

How Much is Enough?

I think we can learn some lessons about the patterns that God has used over the years, and what He might be expecting of us today and what we can anticipate coming in the Millennium. Have you ever thought seriously about how the earth might appear when we start the Millennium? What might be the state and condition of mankind when we start the Millennium—the state physically, mentally, spiritually, of what's left of humanity?

If you read the book of Revelation closely and look at the descriptions and the events that are described there, we might look forward to the world global situation being one huge refugee camp. It might very likely be just that and how are we going to deal with that? Are you prepared to handle a global refugee situation? Is there any indication in scripture of how that might be done—how we might deal with that kind of a situation? There is one situation I think that would give us some indication of how God would work and I'd like to turn there.

Let's turn to Exodus 19 to begin. We have the example of Israel being led out of Egypt finally. They've been in slavery for literally generations—that's all they've known. Being abused and knocked around by taskmasters, or male children being thrown to the crocodiles in the Nile River. The day did come when God liberated them and there they were, a small nation (small by today's standards) but nevertheless significant, two million or so people exiting from what they had known as a part of their life from the very beginning. I'd like to turn to chapter 19 because we'll start by understanding what God is going to do with them and what God is going to do with us for that matter. As God brings the children of Israel out of Egypt, He has a plan in mind of what He's going to try to achieve, so it's important that we focus there. In chapter 19, by this time they've come to Sinai—verse 5.

Exodus 19:5 *Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.* (NKJV)

It's all God's. The notion of personal property is just an illusion, what we have is on loan from God and that's fine, we can use that and take advantage of it. But the truth is, and I think we can get a hint here, that the first option will be to indeed put God first.

6) *And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.*" (NKJV)

That's interesting—He's going to make out of this nation of ex slaves a kingdom of priests. How's He going to do that? How will we teach these people? How did He go about it, how is He teaching us, what will we do in the Millennium then, when we're dealing with people and trying to teach them God's way? Let's understand, you come out of Egypt and you've been in slavery, and God has in mind He's going to make this group of people into a kingdom of priests. You have to know He's going to try to teach them certain things between the time they leave Egypt and the time they get to Sinai when He enters into the covenant with them. So what's He going to teach them?

I think the primary issue is, can you trust Me? Can you do what I ask you to do? Will you follow My instructions? Straight out of Egypt, here we are; we leave during the Days of Unleavened Bread—chapter 14 What happens? We come to the Red Sea; first test for poor old Israel and their circumstances. It is a difficult proposition for them because here they are, they can hear the rumbling of Pharaoh's chariots coming up from the rear and they're at an impasse, and what should we do, and how are we going to handle this situation? We read in verse 11 of chapter 14,

Exodus 14:11 *Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?"* (NKJV)

Interesting, isn't it? In spite of all the things that they've experienced—God running all the plagues through Egypt, and finally the Passover coming, and finally extracted from Egypt—this is their attitude, first day out of the shoot.

11 continued) *Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?*
12) *Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, "Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."* (NKJV)

Oh really! That wasn't what they were saying back in chapter 3 when they were whining and moaning about the mistreatment they were receiving at the hands of their taskmasters and the like. What's the answer, what's the solution? Stand still and see the salvation of the deliverance of God. There are times when the only solution is just that. I'm going to assume here that God is trying to teach them, you can trust Me—I am trustworthy. You can look to Me for guidance, you can look to Me for deliverance from your difficulties and you needn't be upset about how that's going to work out.

In chapter 15 they have the great celebration once they've been delivered, and the Red Sea has swallowed up the army of Egypt, and then at the end of chapter 15 and all the celebration, they go out three days into the wilderness; verse 23 of chapter 15.

Exodus 15:23 *Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. 24) And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" (NKJV)*

What did he do? The LORD showed Him, take this tree, toss it into the water and it will be sweet. So they made a statute and an ordinance for them. Notice verse 25.

25) ... there He tested them ... (NKJV)

All the various situations that we find ourselves in, the first response is, I'm going to complain because of the situation that I'm in, and this is no good and I told you so, and all the rest of those things that human beings do. Take time out and recognize that God has got to teach us any number of things between now and the time He's going to turn the Kingdom over to us, and actually put it into our charge to be of some assistance in helping turn things around—restore all things once again. Have you obtained the level of understanding and expertise that you need in order to be a useful tool by God or for God in the Kingdom? Hopefully we're learning.

So in chapter 16, one thing follows another; something to take note of in verse 1:

Exodus 16:1 *And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month ... (NKJV)*

This is interesting; they left Egypt the fifteenth day of the first month. Now we're a month into this process—we're just about three weeks shy of Pentecost and entering into the covenant that God will make with Israel. So we're getting down to the wire. Are we learning what we need to know? Going on in Chapter 16, verse 2.

Exodus 16:2 *Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. (NKJV)*

We haven't really learned much yet; getting this complaining idea out of our heads is a little difficult. So God is going to test them, going to teach them how. Here's what I expect, and, can we trust God? Let's ask ourselves that question. Next time you're in a really difficult proposition and you're up against the Red Sea and the chariots are thundering at your backside, ask yourself, am I being tested? What's God teaching me?

3) *And the children of Israel said to them [to Moses and Aaron], "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt ... (NKJV)*

This is thirty days on and we haven't learned anything yet—really? Going to make a kingdom of priests out of this bunch and they're still complaining. Most of our troubles, you can look in the mirror and you can see your troubles looking back at you much of the time. How are we going to do this? God is patient—thank God for that.

3 continued) ... *when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*" (NKJV)

Sad state of affairs.

4) *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may [notice] test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.* (NKJV)

Two can't walk together except they be agreed—if we can't demonstrate to God that we're willing to walk with Him, then I'm sorry, we're of no use to Him. So here we go, I'm going to test them. Whether they will walk in My law or not.

5) *And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.*" (NKJV)

Familiar story to us, is it not?

6) *Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, "At evening you shall know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt.* (NKJV)

What? I think they know they are out of the land of Egypt, they are thirty days removed from Egypt but evidently they haven't yet given God credit for all that's gone on to get them where they are. They *will* know that the LORD has brought them out of the land of Egypt.

7) *And in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD; for He hears your complaints against the LORD. But what are we, that you complain against us?"*
8) *Also Moses said, "This shall be seen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the LORD hears your complaints which you make against Him. And what are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the LORD."* (NKJV)

Next time you're inclined to complain, bear in mind, for He hears your complaints against the LORD. Is it serious business or not—do we take our calling seriously? I hope so, because this is a tremendous opportunity we have, but we are being tested, no doubt about it. What's the emphasis? The sermon we had yesterday talked about all the diversions that get in the way, that exhaust us, pursuing dead-end courses of one sort or another. What's the swan song of the United States? More is better and if you

don't have more, you're not getting your share. Billions of dollars are spent to convince you to want things you didn't even know existed and now that you've got them, you're not sure you even want them and you know the story.

I was always glad when I was dealing with my kids and raising children, we ran into some absurd request on behalf of the kids. Sorry we just can't afford that—it was always a good out, we just can't afford that. What if you're the rich man, what if you have an unlimited amount and the kid comes up and wants a brand new Corvette, what are you going to tell him? You can't afford it? You can't tell him that, so what are you going to say? How are you going to deal with something like that? From that point of view, at least from my experience, it was easier to deal with *I can't afford it* than we can go crazy with consumption and desire more and more and more. You never are satisfied. If more is the important thing, you'll never be satisfied. The LORD has heard your complaints, so here's the instruction then. Every morning you're going to get up and gather the manna—you want food, here it is, and they'll do this for thirty-eight years. Let's read on.

10) *Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.*

11) *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,*

12) *"I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At twilight [this is God speaking] you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. [Notice carefully] And you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"* (NKJV)

Think about that for a moment. In the sermon yesterday, John 17:3 was read; you're familiar with it. Jesus, praying to His Father, said, And this is eternal life, that they should know You, the one true God and Jesus Christ whom you sent. I submit to you that what God is doing here is giving them an opportunity to start down the road to eternal life. The key to eternal life is knowing the one true God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God. This will just be the beginning step, of course, but you go back to the very beginning. That was the same option that Adam and Eve were given back in the Garden of Eden. Two trees—God gave the entire thing to them; you can have everything in the garden but this one tree, don't touch it. I suppose, by extension the whole globe, the whole world was available to them. You can have it all but one tree. Don't you think you'd be satisfied with that? If God came to you and said you can have everything in the whole earth except for this one tree, would you be satisfied?

The devil comes along and convinces them not to be satisfied—more is better. So you can have this tree, too. What do they do—they passed up their opportunity. Eternal life was available through one tree and they ignored it. Is God giving you the opportunity to achieve eternal life? To know the one true God? Don't ignore it, take it seriously. There isn't anything more serious in our entire lives. Here's an opportunity.

13) *So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp.*

14) *And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground.*

15) *So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "This is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.*

16) *This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.'*" (NKJV)

Every morning, their bread would be provided, but they would have to go and gather it up.

17) *Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less.* (NKJV)

As in most propositions, some are more capable of gathering than others, so they gathered it up.

18) *So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over ...* (NKJV)

Gathered more than he needed so what did he do with the surplus? What did God ask them to do with surplus—set it aside for his retirement, invest it for a great return somewhere down the line, buy gold? What did He say, what did they do with the surplus, those who had more ability to collect it?

18 continued) *... and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.* (NKJV)

So those who gathered extra did what?—they shared it so that everybody had enough. Again, the question, how much is enough? I can imagine that as this project began to unfold, there would appear those would-be, enterprising young capitalists in the group who would note the little pockets of surplus manna here and there: These people that gather more than they need; we put our heads together and we could corral the surplus and make ourselves a tidy little profit on the side. Don't you think that would have happened? What prevented that from happening? You keep it over until the morning it will breed worms and stink—it was built right in.

You weren't going to compete; the whole lesson is about providing the needs for everyone and learning to trust God. Can you do that? Is that our motivation? What is it that the devil's world encourages us to do? Get as much as you can, accumulate as much as you can and let the devil take the hindmost, and the devil, when the day comes, will take the foremost, too.

20) Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. (NKJV)

I think over time Moses will get the idea that it's a waste of energy to get angry with this bunch. We might acknowledge the fact that we're going to have to deal with this, kind of like parents do with their kids. At some point in time, overreacting really doesn't help. It just expends and enervates you, drains off what extra energy you might have.

21) So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted. (NKJV)

So what's the lesson—if you're going to eat today you got to get out of bed and go collect it. If you diddle around, do other things first, it's going to get hot and melt and you're going to be hungry today. It would only take a day or two to get the idea, right? We hope so anyway. God is going to provide, and indeed some people weren't capable of gathering sufficient, but those who gathered more than they needed put it together, and everybody had enough.

How's it going to be in the world tomorrow—how are you going to feed the refugees of the world today that are going to be a part of our charge in the world tomorrow? It doesn't say in the scripture that we're going to feed them with manna but think about it, it wouldn't be a bad idea actually because if you feed them with manna, you've got to get them all engaged, up and going to work this morning so they can eat, they can learn to trust God, and by the seventh day of the first week we know which day is the Sabbath, and if not the first week, surely the second. Again, this is pure speculation on my part. I don't know that God will do it that way but somehow or other He's going to teach them which day is Sabbath, isn't He? We're going to have to feed them somehow. It's pretty difficult to teach spiritual principles to people who are hungry, who are dirty, who are wounded and injured in various ways. We'll have to deal with their physical needs first.

How much is enough? Do you know? If we were to give you a 3x5 card and ask you to define how much is enough and you did that, would you then be willing to live by what you put on that card? You might think about that. Save yourself an awful lot of heartache if you can understand how much is enough and be willing to confine yourself to how that much. Lot of heartaches come from striving for more.

23) Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'" (NKJV)

Of course, this is a little different than the daily routine because there won't be any there to gather on the Sabbath—there's a lesson to be learned here. The Sabbath is not for

material gain, the Sabbath is for worship, the Sabbath is for rest.

24) So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. (NKJV)

I wonder if anybody is learning the lesson. This is one month into the project, fifteenth day of the second month. Thirty days and we're still learning not to complain. Six days you shall gather, the seventh day, the Sabbath, there shall be none. There you have it, are we going to learn to trust God or are we not? It's certainly an important principle because if we don't learn to trust God we're going to find that we're not going to make it on our own. That I think we can be assured of.

Let's go to the book of Proverbs; there are some interesting statements that will help us focus on the concept of how much is enough. How is God going to deal with people in the world? Is the focus going to be on accumulating stuff? You drive around the countryside, in the last two to three, or four decades, all these self-storage units have been popping up all over the country, so you can take all your junk, all your toys, all your stuff you don't need, don't want, and stick it in storage, and these storage places are popping up all over the place. At home on our street where we live there must be thirty cars parked on the street—why is that?—because their garages are so full of junk that if you sold it in a yard sale you might get \$50 for it but they've got a \$30,000 automobile sitting out on the street, aging in the sun and the weather—how much sense does that make? Not much, quite frankly, but that's the approach we take. On TV what's being advertised—automobiles, pharmaceuticals, beer, fast food—more, more, more; we're never satisfied.

Proverbs 15—the proverbs are little kernels that give us the picture in just a few words.

Proverbs 15:17 *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, Than a fatted calf with hatred. (NKJV)*

Think on that one for a moment. How much is enough, especially at the Feast; we want to live on the upper end of the food chain—the fatted calf—take advantage of things for us that we don't normally do, but one of the things that I've found, in the United States at least, we tend to live at a festive level year-round and we'd better be careful.

What does it look like to sit down at a table, to a meal where the atmosphere is one of love and concern and respect? What does that look like, what does it feel like? Are you in the habit of doing that, when you sit down with family and friends, is that the way you would describe the environment and the atmosphere? When that's the case, when we love one another, when we respect one another, when we're courteous and kind to one another (to quote the Boy Scout law) and we sit down and we're just appreciative of the fact that we're all here together, we're in this thing together, you can have pretty meager fare and be perfectly happy with it.

On the other hand, you can have the fatted calf and be seated at a table in an environment that is characterized by hatred, by strife—I hate you, your great grandfather killed my great grandfather, and I'm going to get you (whatever the issue is). You're always trying to get back at one another, there are unpaid debts and you're holding a grudge against one another, it doesn't matter what the fare is, your appetite is not going to be very keen, your digestion surely is going to be affected. It's not going to taste very well, it just spoils the entire occasion, does it not? Think about it.

What are we going to focus on in the Kingdom of God? Are we going to focus on the fatted calf or are we going to focus on developing an atmosphere of love and respect and concern for one another? Now, we have to eat, it's not a question of whether or not people's physical needs have to be supplied, of course they do but what are we going to focus on? What should we focus on today? When you go back home what are you going to focus on? Back into the rat race to accumulate as much as you can or are you going to work a little harder at establishing an atmosphere of congeniality and so forth. Which do you prefer?

16) *Better is a little with the fear of the LORD, Than great treasure with trouble.* (NKJV)

Let's assume that a little is sufficient, however it is. We have a proper fear of God. The type of fear we were referred to yesterday, about the fear of the LORD and how we've come to the Feast to learn to fear God properly, that's the type of fear that needs to be learned, that is the proper respect and love for God. The kind of fear where God thunders from the mountain and throws lightning bolts around, and you're trembling in fear and you fall off in a dead faint—you don't have to learn that kind of fear. When God puts you in that situation, you know what that fear is. The kind of fear of God we need to learn is to have deep respect for God and to take his instruction seriously, to put it into practice.

You can have all the treasure in the world, and if it's filled with trouble and you don't have God to guide you and direct you, and you're just out there trying to do the best on your own, where does that leave you? It's a difficult proposition. Chapter 16—what are we going to focus on in the world tomorrow? Accumulating great treasure or developing a proper fear of God? What should we be focusing on today? When you wake up in the morning what's your first thought? I encourage everybody as often as I can, first thing in the morning before I roll out of bed (and I don't roll out as quickly and enthusiastically as I once did, at first I have to make sure all the parts are moving properly), to just take a minute or two to focus on who you are, what you're called to, and who you are answering to. Look to God—just a minute is all it takes to get started and then you go about putting God first. What are we going to focus on in the world tomorrow? Are we practicing that now?

Proverbs 16:8 *Better is a little with righteousness, Than vast revenues without justice.* (NKJV)

What does that look like? What is righteousness? We're treating one another with care and concern. If righteousness prevails amongst the people, between the leadership and those being lead, amongst our friends and our family—if righteousness is truly the emphasis and that prevails, it doesn't take very much to provide satisfaction in terms of our physical needs, it just doesn't take a whole lot. But if the emphasis is on vast revenues then what do we find? There's a vast disparity between the haves and the have nots. There are those who have an insane amount of wealth available and there are those who are homeless, with little opportunity. What's going to be the emphasis in God's Kingdom? Are we going to focus on maximizing revenue or are we going to focus on developing righteousness? That's not a hard question to answer, is it?

I think we all understand where the focus is going to be. Well, what's the focus today, what do you trust in, where do we put our trust? It's not that revenue of itself is wrong, but you can look around the world and see when the effort and emphasis is on vast revenues then competition exists, and you've seen these ads where they've got the smart phone and you go to pay for something, and you just stick it there and it blips or whatever it does, and it instantly transfers money from your account to the account of the business—don't you notice that's interesting? If you're going to pay a bill they can transfer money from your account to the other account in a nanosecond; if it's the other way around they're going to credit you; it's going to take five to seven business days. I've never figured that one out but don't argue, it won't help. Alright, a little bit of a diversion there. What's the emphasis going to be, what should the emphasis be now—on vast revenue? Or should it be on developing righteousness, and indeed the proverb says, if we have righteousness and that's the focus of the whole approach, it doesn't take much to be perfectly happy.

Alright, one more; chapter 17, verse 1.

Proverbs 17:1 *Better is a dry morsel with quietness, Than a house full of feasting with strife.* (NKJV)

Again, it's the same principle isn't it? If there's quietness—what is quietness? If there's peace, and everybody is harmonious, and we're contributing to the well-being of one another, and we're regularly making deposits in one another's emotional bank accounts and the like, everybody is at peace and it's wonderful. Under those conditions it doesn't take much; we'll assume that a dry morsel is adequate but if that's all you have, to learn to appreciate it you just go to a house that's full of strife—in spite of the great spread that might be laid out before you, if it's strife at every turn and everybody's trying to get the last jab in and get the last word in, you're back to the same old idea. You've got indigestion in a hurry, you don't appreciate the Feast even though it might be great.

When there's quietness, when there's peace, when righteousness and the fear of God prevail, it doesn't take much in the way of physical things to make things just fine. We're just happy as can be.

Let's take a second and go back and take a look at all four of these proverbs and divide them into physical/material over here—stuff, if you will—and relationships on the other side. What did we see? In terms of the physical part, we have the herbs on one hand versus the stalled ox or the fatted calf on the other. Herbs—you're eating on the lower end of the food chain; the fatted calf, you're eating off the upper end of the food chain. There's a time when we can enjoy both. In two instances the proverbs refer to a little as opposed to great treasure and vast revenue. We'll assume a little is enough—provide our basic needs. Finally, the dry morsel versus great feasting, a house full of feasting. You've got the minimum requirement on the one hand—herbs, a little, a dry morsel, versus the fatted calf, great treasure, vast revenue, a house full of feasting. If that's your approach and the emphasis is on maximizing the benefits in this physical life, I can pretty well guarantee you're never going to be satisfied.

Let's look on the other side of this scale, at the relationship side of these proverbs. On the one hand you have hatred versus love, trouble versus the fear of God, a lack of righteousness versus righteousness, strife versus quietness. Think about it—what are we going to emphasize? If indeed we put the fear of God and love for God in one another, pursuit of righteousness, a quiet, peaceful environment and atmosphere, then it doesn't take very much to satisfy our physical needs.

When I find myself feeling sorry for myself and pouting over my lack of this that or the other thing, I ask myself a couple of basic questions. First, are you hungry? It's not American to be hungry, Americans don't go to church hungry—well, once a year, maybe. ((laughter)) Only this group would laugh at that. If I am hungry, I have the remedy—I have a pantry full of stuff, a refrigerator full of stuff, a freezer full of stuff and if that fails, we're not happy with that, we go down to [a restaurant] and have breakfast there. Are you hungry—no, and I've never been hungry involuntarily. There've been occasions where I've fasted and been hungry but that's because I chose to be. But I've never been in circumstances where I did not have an option—never. Are you cold? No, and if I am I have a remedy—I can put on an extra layer of clothes or I can go in and sit by the fire. Well, we don't have a fire anymore but I can go next door to my son's and sit by his fire. I have options, you see.

Am I naked? No, I've got options there. Am I dirty? Well, I've been in situations where I was dirty but I had the option for remedying it. Well then, what's the deal? You're not hungry, you're not cold, you're not naked, you're not dirty; well, what are you complaining about? Anything beyond that is frosting on the cake.

What was Jesus's approach to these things? Can you quote a scripture? Give us this day, what?—vast revenues? A house full of feasting? There are occasions when those things are available. No, Jesus's approach was give us this day our daily bread—is that all? What was Paul's approach? You know this scripture—having food and raiment they would be content—no, not in this country. If all we had was food and raiment we'd be of all folks most miserable. You know what, having your daily bread, food and raiment in Paul and Jesus's day was probably the norm. If you had that you were

probably just downright thankful, because there probably weren't many options to get much more than that. What's God going to emphasize in the Kingdom of God? What is God emphasizing today?

One of the most profound lessons I've ever learned, and it came early in my experience, first Feast of Tabernacles, Squaw Valley, 1965: I was a twenty-one-year-old freshman student and I think two of the four classes were assigned to Squaw Valley. The Winter Olympics had been held there in 1962, just three years before so the Olympic Village was still in pretty good shape. The students were housed in the Olympic Village. As I recall there were two sets of bunkbeds—the four of us guys in there learning to get along together. I don't recall any bumps and bruises so we must have done reasonably well together. Along with that there's a big dining commons out there in the middle—huge dining commons—not unusual to what I had experienced at U.C. Davis and Cal Poly where I'd gone to college before I went to Ambassador. We were expected (we lived in the village) to eat a meal or two in the dining commons and it didn't take but a meal or two for us to recognize that this was way below the standard we're used to in the dining hall at Ambassador College. Forget this, this is the Feast—I'll see you later!

Word got out and Vice President John Halford assembled the masses, shook his British finger at us and said, you will eat a meal, every day, in the commons. Well, okay, I will but I'm not going to enjoy it. ((laughter)) As luck would have it and as I look back fifty years later—fifty-three now—maybe it wasn't luck. The tables are not individual tables, they're long tables. Church members were there so I just happen by chance to be sitting directly across from a woman, she's from the prairies of Saskatchewan and I'm straight off the farm myself so I know what a farmer looks like. I'm twenty-one and I'm sizing up what to me looked like a middle-aged woman; she might have forty, I don't know, fifty—my kids are older than that but at the time your twenty-one-year-old brain is sizing these things up. I know what a farmer looks like. I can tell from her complexion and from the condition of her hands, this woman didn't have designer nails and she wasn't made up with cosmetics; I can tell from her complexion and the state of her hands that this woman is used to laboring. This is a good example of the salt of the earth. I'm getting a first-class lesson in what the sermonette pointed out—humility.

I'm sitting there mumbling because I've got these faded scrambled eggs and my Tang that passes for orange juice and I'm not happy about it, either. I'm sitting there across from this peasant farmer, this Church member from Saskatchewan. This lady goes on and on and on, praising God—what a wonderful blessing it is to be with Church people. How many congregations in the Church of God do you figure were in Saskatchewan in 1965—probably approaching zero, would be my guess. My experience was, not only am I immersed with Church people—Ambassador College students, professors and teachers—I eat with these people, I study with these people, we go to Church together, it's constant. I began to realize as I'm listening to this woman praise God for being in association with Church people, I'm beginning to take these things for granted and I had only been at Ambassador for maybe a month. So she's going on and on and on about how wonderful it is to be with Church people and isn't this great, and I can tell she's not

well off, she's dressed plainly, plain house dress. I can tell it's beginning to age, has started to fade a little bit, you might notice a seam beginning to divide or a little fray around the edges, and she's going on about how wonderful it is to be at the Feast. How far is it from Saskatchewan to Squaw Valley? Further than I can imagine.

Then she goes on about how wonderful it is to be eating out—what a wonderful opportunity to eat out at the Feast of Tabernacles. I'm sitting over there choking on my faded scrambled eggs and I'm beginning to shrink down a little bit because this woman is putting me in my place. To her, eating out was just not having to cook—eight blessed days without cooking and without a mountain of dishes to do when it's all over. This woman was genuinely excited, pleased and inspired. What she was experiencing was a vast Feast with praising God, and what did I see—I saw a dry morsel and I'm crying about it. It's sad. I thank God for having learned that lesson when I did, all of twenty-one-years old.

A lot of water's gone under the bridge since then—that was a profound lesson. I'm looking forward to meeting Abraham in the World Tomorrow—how about Noah, won't that be fun? That's all good but this little farm wife from Saskatchewan had more of a direct impact on my personal growth and development and my overall outlook on life than Abraham ever did. I can read about Abraham and what he did and what he accomplished and be thankful for that but I'm telling you what—I really learned the lesson from this Saskatchewan housewife—wonderful! It's stands to reason then, what is God trying to teach us? What will be the approach in the world tomorrow? Are we going to focus primarily on accumulating vast revenues and great treasures and eating off the upper end of the food chain for a thousand years—is that going to be the approach? I think you're wise enough to see the approach will be that surely the needs have to be provided. It's not going to be a miserly experience, of course not. But we're going to put first things first and we've been called to put first things first now.

Let's turn to Luke 12. The Feast of Tabernacles is a wonderful time to learn important lessons to anticipate the coming of the Kingdom of God so let's always bear in mind that God is teaching us to trust Him. He puts us in situations that are somewhat compromising and a great deal challenging, and there are no solutions and we learn to trust God, and that's what we have to do.

Luke 12:15 *And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."* (NKJV)

There's a good summary, is it not? One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses and yet that's the focus in our country, particularly in the developed world; it's not limited to the United States—any part of the world where it's an industrialized situation and we're just trying to maximize our accumulated stuff—this could be a problem. Beware of covetousness. The great American Dream is not the New Covenant—do we understand that? God could care less if we achieve the great

American Dream. You could achieve the great American Dream and lose out on eternal life. Who's defining what's important and what isn't?

Luke 12:16 *Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.*

17) And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?'

18) So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. (NKJV)

That makes sense; if you don't have appropriate storage it all goes to waste and spoils, so that's good sense. Verse 19, notice what happens.

19) And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." (NKJV)

That's the great American Dream, folks. Set aside a big, massive bunch of stuff and then in your retirement years you can cruise the world, you can take all kinds of river cruises and odds and ends of things out there—you can maximize your consumption, see things you've never seen, do things you've never done, eat, drink and be merry—right?

20) But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

21) "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (NKJV)

Let's be sure we understand. It's not wrong to be prepared—it's not wrong to prepare for the future to the degree that we are able—nothing wrong with that. There's a quote, I'll think of his name in a minute but the quote is, sooner or later we all sit down to the banquet of consequences. There are consequences for preparation—a good preparation will usually mean pretty good results. Poor preparation—you skip out on school, you get involved in bad company and next thing you know you're strung out on drugs or alcohol or something like that—that pretty well guarantees bad results. So we need to give attention to that but let's understand where the emphasis needs to be. If the emphasis is totally on storing up treasure for ourselves, the end result can't be all that good and it isn't all that good. The world around us demonstrates that over and over. Continue in verse 22.

22) Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. (NKJV)

Life is more than food and the body is more than clothing. Even in this world, in the physical existence, that is true but in the long term, when we're considering eternal life, the food we eat and the clothing we put on our bodies is of zero consequence when it

comes to eternal life. You know the story about considering the ravens and the lilies of the field. Let's notice verse 31.

31) *But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.*

32) *“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (NKJV)*

You believe that? Way back in the beginning—Adam and Eve—what was God trying to teach Adam and Eve? You can trust me, you can follow My instructions, it will be to your benefit. We fast forward to the day of Moses and bringing Israel out of Egypt, what was God focusing on there? You can trust Me. You can learn to obey Me and put Me first and do the things that I have called you to do to prepare for what I have in store for you. What's the lesson for you and me today—same lesson, same pattern, absolutely the same.

Where's our emphasis, what are we going to do first? God offers to provide and He will—can we trust Him to do that? There are opportunities for eternal life—will we trust Him for that? Will we take Him at His word and pursue it? We do need to take it seriously, we need a sense of urgency, we really do or we're going to find ourselves on the short end of the proverbial stick, if you will. Finally, we'll close in 1 Timothy 6. Again, this is familiar territory but it's such a good lesson.

1 Timothy 6:6 *Now godliness with contentment is great gain. (NKJV)*

Yes, contentment—godliness with contentment is great gain. I doubt you'll get elected to public office with that as a main point on your political platform. We want more, we don't want godliness with contentment—what's that?

This is important:

7) *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*

8) *And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.*

9) *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.*

10) *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

11) *But you, O man of God, [O woman of God] flee these things and pursue [what?] righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. (NKJV)*

What is it that God is emphasizing? He has always emphasized the same things from the beginning, yes, all the way to the end, except there won't be an end—it is God's Kingdom.

Here's the admonition; we need to put these things first.

12) *Fight the good fight ...* (NKJV)

It is indeed a struggle at times, especially with the devil running around loose.

12 continued) *... lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called ...* (NKJV)

You understand that? There's nothing on this earth to compare to that which we have been called—you have been called to eternal life.

12 continued) *... and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.* (NKJV)

It's the Feast of Tabernacles—we're looking forward to a time when it won't just be an annual celebration for eight days, it will be the standard by which all mankind will live. So we can certainly rejoice but let's learn the lessons though. Let's recognize what God is teaching us, where we need to put our emphasis, and in so doing we truly will be prepared, not only to be there ourselves but to help and assist others that need help along the way. It's a wonderful calling, a great opportunity, so I wish you well throughout the rest of the Feast, and I think we're all looking forward, with joy, to the day when the Kingdom of God will be established and there will indeed be peace.