

**Living the Good Life, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 10070805**  
**Colossians 3:1-11 and Luke 12:13-21**  
**Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 5 August, 2007**

I hear a lot about “the good life” on TV, radio, and the internet. I read about it in books. I see it advertized in magazines and newspapers, but those advertisements don't appear on religion pages. They are often connected with the home or home furnishings, or leisure time activities. If you can lie in a hammock sipping iced tea on a sunny afternoon because you've cut your lawn with a powerful riding lawn mower, you're living “the good life.”

How do we define “the good life”? “Good” is an adjective meaning something has positive or desirable qualities. We do desire nice houses, late model cars, and exciting entertainment so, “good life” could be defined in terms of possessions.

However, “good” is also a moral judgment. The dictionary says, “virtuous, morally admirable, upright.”

What we desire makes a difference. For some of us, it's “more power.” So, we want a bigger drill that will do the job more quickly, or a more powerful computer that will hold more information and access it more quickly. If we use the internet, we want more bandwidth! For others, good is having more attention because of the way we look, so, we want a different hairstyle that will turn more heads or new up to date fashions that will make us feel better about how we look.

What we desire is something learned. It is taught by the world around us. It is hammered into us by the media. Our kids learn what to desire through music, movies, or on “My Space”. But we can control what we desire. It makes a difference who is doing the judging about what is good. Who is it that is calling something good? If it is the media, if it is someone who has fame and huge contracts, we may end up calling shoes, lipstick, cars and homes important. If it is God judging something good, we end up calling intangible things like love and compassion important.

Paul, in his letter to the church at Collosae, made a distinction between “things that are earthly,” and “things that are above.”<sup>1</sup> He listed fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, greed and idolatry as things that are earthly. He continued, listing anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive language, and lying.<sup>2</sup> He said put those things to death. Kill them!

Instead, Paul continues after our scripture reading, put on, as Christians, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and love.<sup>3</sup> In doing this, Paul said, you will feel the peace of Jesus Christ in you. That's a peace which feels good in midst of all the striving, seeking, running and amassing. It is a peace I can feel once in a while when I pray, when I read, or when I am in a discussion with a group of caring Christians. It is a peace I can feel only after I have admitted that I have those earthly desires in me. I need help--divine help-- to put them to death.

In that crash between the values of the world and God's values, it is good to have the support of a loving and caring community. In a discussion with a young man not long ago, he said, “it's hard to do what's right in today's world.”

---

<sup>1</sup>Colossians 1:2

<sup>2</sup>Colossians 3:5-8

<sup>3</sup>Colossians 3:12

“What do you mean?” I asked.

He said, “Well, it’s hard to be good with so much aggressiveness around, so many unkind people”

He is looking for us– the church– to give him encouragement in keeping his priorities straight in the face of what the world does. So, you can see the need for us as a church to uphold the importance of these “things that are above,” to remind each other of them.

Jesus had a conversation with a man who wanted his share of the inheritance of things. Jesus responded with the parable about a man who amassed so many things, he had to build a bigger barn to store his things in.

When we moved here, I spent three days installing shelves in a room off of our garage just to store our stuff, stuff like camping gear, Christmas decorations, model trains, and our children’s toys. Those things really become burdensome. When we amass, we frequently make more work for our children. So, for your children's sake, don't build bigger barns. Instead, concentrate on things that are above. Kids need to receive love, compassion, kindness, and forgiveness.

In our slow moments, when we have to stop our running because someone has died or been seriously injured, we're reminded of our mortality– that one day, our soul also will be required of us. One day, this life will end. That fear is at the heart of our living. Most advertizing is directed to address that fear!

You know, it would be a real public service if every thirty minutes watching television we would hear the words, “You are mortal. One day, you will die!” That would change the quality of our relationships! One day, our soul will be required of us. On that day, all of a sudden, we will learn what is really important to living– not things, beauty, or youth. What's important is our relationships with others and whether they have been loving, kind, and compassionate. We don't store those things up; we give them away.

It's not how much we have, but what we do with what we have that is important to God. Be rich toward God.