

January 14 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
 Luke 12:13-21 This Year—Take a Break by Andy McDonald

We are just two weeks into this new year and so it may seem a little out of place to already be advising, “This Year—Take a Break”.

Some of you, maybe most of you, hard working over achieving people, might wonder about this advice so early in the year. I mean we’ve just made our New Year’s resolutions and they are hard enough to follow through on, and advice like “This Year—Take a Break” doesn’t seem terribly helpful.

We may be thinking that a better sermon would be something like, “This Year—Be Diligent” or “This Year—Keep Trying” or “This Year—Be Faithful” and even if in our heart of hearts we know pacing, sane pacing, is important to our success we may think it a bit early in this year to be encouraging taking a break. Save that one until at least after the first quarter year of work. After those first three months of work that it takes to pay our taxes for the year, maybe then would be a good time for a sermon on the value of taking a break.

What pops into your head as a mental image of taking a break?
 I think of stopping work for a moment. (Picture of horse drawn plow)
 From the archives of early life in Canada here’s a great scene of a drink or soup being poured to give a break to the plow man. (Picture of two guys sitting on break) Or just not working for a few minutes Maybe you think (Picture sitting by stream) of hiking and finally stopping to take a break. Or maybe (Picture of guy on lawn) it’s a full blown lay down and take a nap kind of moment.

With a sermon title like “This Year—Take a Break” I could even be speaking on the value of taking the weekly Sabbath rest, a real break.

But none of these hit directly on our scripture teaching for today. I think Jesus parable we will look at in a few minutes is really about knowing when enough is enough!

Seriously we are people who seem to have a hunger for more. How much food is enough? How many times have you pushed back from the breakfast or lunch table moaning about how full you are, and saying something amazingly foolish like, “I don’t need to eat again for days!” But the real truth is, especially if you are a little bored, it won’t be 2 or 3 hours and you’ll be grazing. It won’t be that long after the kitchen is all back in order that you’ll begin poking around, opening cupboards, or the refrigerator wondering about what might be consumed! When’s enough really enough?

Or you finish a nice meal and then—what’s for dessert? And faced with this option (Picture of an apple and a piece of chocolate cake) how much healthy food is enough?

Have you ever known a person with a ‘workless’ disorder? Seriously William Glasser named this disorder that describes people who are always about to get a job. Or if one that was promised didn’t materialize it was someone else’s fault. They are forever preparing to work they just never get around to it. People with this disorder are notorious for becoming lifelong students, nearly obtaining a degree in multiple fields, but never quite qualifying for actually going to work. And someone has to eventually confront them with (Picture of Graduation cap and diploma) “When’s enough education going to be enough?

(picture of money) When’s enough money enough? When I can pay my bills, or afford a new car, or have enough to pay cash for my kids college, or can retire, or travel or have a second home? How much would be enough?

Sleep is critical. There’s this great temptation in our hunger for more stuff, to short change our time for sleep. We know we need to sleep. There are all kinds of consequences for sleep deprivation, (Picture of kid sleeping) But when’s enough sleep enough?

There's one of these illustrations that has really gotten out of hand. When I was a kid growing up we had TV, see I'm really not that old. But for a long time we had three options. (Picture ABC, CBS, NBC). It made it really easy to decide if there was anything worth watching on TV. You stood beside the black and white TV and you twisted this dial that changed channels and it was only a matter of seconds that you knew all the options and if none were pleasing you just turned off the set, you'd had enough of TV.

Today (Picture of channel icons) there are many places where cable or satellite reception now provides like 200 channels. How do you know if there's anything worth watching? At 5 seconds a channel it takes a quarter hour just to surf the channels! When are enough channels enough?

Of course if you are a collector of something when do you have enough? Bettina Dorfmann (Germany) (Picture of Bettina with dolls) has the world's largest collection of Barbie dolls. As of February a year ago she had, 7,246 different Barbie dolls, that she has collected since 1993. She's said she'll keep collecting them as long as she's breathing!" Really—when would you have enough Barbies?

Even in the spiritual realm we can wonder when's enough enough? When have I read my Bible enough? (Picture of guy praying) And how many prayers are enough? What does it mean to pray without ceasing?

How much stuff is enough stuff? You've heard of hoarders who just can't seem to let any of their stuff go and feel compelled to get more. Two boys were born to the Collyer's in the late 1880's. The older boy was Homer who completed law school and his brother was Langley who became an engineer. The brothers never married and when their parents died they inherited their home in NYC and they moved in. The brothers were hoarders and a bit eccentric. Langley the engineer rigged the house with booby traps to protect their things. Both were forever bringing things home. Homer eventually went blind, and plagued by other health issues was home if not room bound and Langley would bring him food. Both brothers died at home in the late 1940's. Homer

died of malnutrition because his brother Langley accidentally sprung one of his own booby traps causing some of their stuff to fall on him and take his life.

When the city had to deal with the house they found it crammed full of stuff. (Three pictures of their junk) crammed literally to the ceiling in places. They removed 130 tons of stuff from the home—including a Model T chassis and 14 pianos. You have to wonder on the last walk down the street when Langley picked up that next book or that broken thing by the sidewalk to add to their stuff—when would enough stuff be enough? 130tons!

On Christmas morning this year things were a little different for us. We had done most of our giving of gifts on the eve of Christmas Eve, because some of the family had to leave on Christmas Eve for work obligations on Christmas day. So Christmas morning was more relaxed than usual. We decided to go for a walk. So Vicki, Aaron, Whitney and I took the dogs and took our usual route around Lake Silver. About half way around the lake there's beautiful new home on the lakeside. I'm sure it's a million dollar home. That morning I so wished I had my camera. In the driveway of this home there were 2 or 3 little kids, I think one was still in a diaper. There they had a big flat cardboard box sort of like one of these (Picture of boxes) They had tied a rope on the front and were attempting to drag one another across the driveway in the box. I laughed out loud. I'm sure the parents had abundant toys under the tree—I mean something significant had come in that box. But the toys weren't enough—the kids gravitated to the box.

Listen, we live in a time in earth's history, and we live in nation that is plagued by a seemingly insatiable hunger for more. It is interesting that Jesus doesn't condemn people for having wealth, or abundance but finds fault when there is undo attachment, selfish holding and hoarding, and when it become the place in which we put our trust.

I've seen families go nuts about division of inheritance. Heirs who are all making it financially having wars over who gets what percent of the assets of the family. The greater riches of family love and relationships sacrificed at the altar of their never being enough, the altar of a hunger for more.

One day as Jesus was teaching someone in the crowd called to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." It was likely a younger brother. In that culture the oldest son received a double portion of the estate. And it sounds like the younger brother is seeking, at least from his perspective, a more equitable division of assets.

Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Jesus is like "not my job" but then he immediately said something that our life practice may reveal we seem to ignore! It is a teaching of a truth that is counter cultural to our American heritage and culture. It flies in the face of American enterprise and increasing consumerism.

Then Jesus said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a person's life does not consist in the abundance of their possessions!"

What do you think of that counsel? Seriously? How do we measure a person's life? Isn't it often by how much they can, do, or will earn? When we rank people in value or importance or status based on their net worth aren't we saying that a person's life does consist in the abundance of their possessions?

The right investment portfolio. The status car, or house, or boat. The wardrobe of perfect outfits. The vacation to exotic places. When a culture realizes the easiest money to raise is by selling lottery tickets—because the whole society says the more you have the more valuable you are as a person, we've totally lost touch with the teaching of Jesus.

He said “A person’s life does not consist in the abundance of their possessions!” The Message Bible says it this way: “Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot.

Then Jesus told a story, he could have introduced it by saying, “This Year—Take a Break”

The farm of certain rich man produced a terrific bumper crop. The rich guy talked to himself—“What am I going to do? I don’t have anywhere to put the harvest. My barn is already too full.”(Picture of barn) Then he said, “Here’s what I’ll do: I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. There I will store all the harvest and all my goods. And I’ll say to myself, “Self, you’ve done well. You’ve got it made and can now retire you have plenty for years to come. Take it easy, have the time of your life, eat, drink and be merry.”

But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”

As prized as every pound of junk the Collyer brothers collected, at their death most of it didn’t become somebody else’s junk most of it became 130 tons of garbage. Whether we collect 130tons of trash or 130 tons of gold a day will come when it is another’s trash or treasure.

Sometimes people want to use this and other parables to teach that it is evil or wrong to be wealthy—that affluence is displeasing to God. But notice—Jesus doesn’t condemn the rich guy in this story for managing his farm in a profitable manner. He doesn’t pass judgment on the rich guy for being rich.

Wealth isn’t the problem but our relationship to wealth.

Jesus conclusion or moral of this parable he states in Luke 12:21

“This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

How do we break this habit, this disease, this bent toward a hunger for more? How do we determine that enough is enough?

How do we manage our resources responsibly to care for our needs while on earth and at the same time be rich toward God?

There's an old Roman proverb that says money is like salt water the more a person drinks the thirstier they become."

Wealth, the acquisition and amassing of wealth, can be a great blessing if we see it as a tool to be used and not as a god to be worshipped.

Here's how you can take a break from the hunger for more in 2012.

First recognize that you have responsibilities and they aren't all equal.

- You have a responsibility to, as far as within your ability, to care for your needs—saving, having resources to meet your needs isn't selfish but self-sacrificing.
- You have a responsibility to care for your family—provide for a place to live, and food to eat, education, etc.
- Recognize that each individual will need to spend time in conversation with God about where the lines of generosity and care blur with excess and extravagance.
- Don't judge others by your economic standards. What would be excess and reckless for me might fit comfortably and be very responsible in your budget and vice-a-versa

Second, spend some time counting your blessings.

- There's something about naming and counting our blessings that raises our contentment level. That hunger for more may get diminished if we simply recall all that we currently enjoy.
- Focus on the spiritual blessings—God has given you eternal life, you are saved by God's grace, God loves you with a perfect unchanging infinite love
- Maybe memorize Paul's counsel in 1 Timothy 6:6-10 "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought

nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.”

Third, let go of some of your wealth, of that thing or those things where you place your trust other than Jesus.

In Jesus’ story the rich farmer is self condemned because he was all about himself and not rich toward God. To live for self is to perish. Building bigger barns in this story is Satanic—it is the spirit of Satan to get, to be all about self indulgence. It is the spirit of Christ to give, to sacrifice self for the good of others.

There is nothing wrong or evil about having nice things and being economically comfortable. In fact submitted to God those blessings become a blessing not just to the holder of stuff but to all those with whom they share.

So This Year—take a break, a break from just wanting more for ourselves. A break from the task master of not quite enough. And give.

Share responsibly in ever enlarging circles. Care for yourself, and your family, your church and community your country and the world. Those circles bring home the reality that we have the greatest responsibility where there is the closest proximity.

Mike’s wife had seen Nancy many times, at least Nancy had been in her field of vision. But one day she really saw Nancy. And through a series of events and conversations they got acquainted and Nancy trusted her enough eventually to have her visit where she lived in the woods about 3 miles from where we sit. Over several years Mike and

his wife invested in Nancy. Helped her get medical care, watched her relapse into drug dependency, and then start again to fight those battles. They took her to SS board and got her on disability and eventually helped her find housing. It wasn't an easy journey. This couple had plenty to do and other places to spend their money. But when Nancy visited our Rotary meeting and they shared this several year story her life has changed.

Mike and his wife, their lives have changed too, for them this worked, it was their place to be rich toward God and put a deposit in Heaven's bank. And when we all get to heaven where gold is so common they use it to pave streets, Mike and his wife won't have brought any of their gold but they will be able to enjoy Nancy's company for eternity.

This year—take a break from yourself most of you have enough so use your money to do good for someone else, This year—take a break from that incessant hunger for more share what's in your barn instead of just building a bigger one—This Year—Take a Break.