

Baptism of the Lord A - 2020 - Matthew 3:13-17

Who Will You Listen To?

An old fable that has been passed down for generations tells about an elderly man who was traveling with a boy and a donkey. As they walked through a village, the man was leading the donkey and the boy was walking behind. The townspeople said the old man was a fool for not riding, so to please them he climbed up on the animal's back. When they came to the next village, the people said the old man was cruel to let the child walk while he enjoyed the ride. So, to please them, he got off and set the boy on the animal's back and continued on his way. In the third village, people accused the child of being lazy for making the old man walk, and the suggestion was made that they both ride. So the man climbed on and they set off again. In the fourth village, the townspeople were indignant at the cruelty to the donkey because he was made to carry two people. The frustrated man was last seen carrying the donkey down the road.

Want to Be Happy? by Leonard Sweet

A week before Christmas a man in his sixties went into a big toy shop and began looking around at the various displays. He returned several times to a counter that featured a little train set. He was particularly fascinated by the great sounding whistle that came from the engine as the train scurried around its oval track. Finally, he said to the clerk who was demonstrating the toy: "I'll take one." Whereupon the clerk said, "Your grandson will love it." "Then I'll take two," the man replied.

It's one thing to take two. But it's quite another thing to take toys, whether little-boy train sets or big-boy Hummer houses, as the measure of happiness.

Every commercial in one form or another seduces us with the notion that money can buy happiness. You want to be happy? Buy that car, wear those jeans. **Consumption brings happiness.** The advertising world even has us broken down into categories so they can evangelize us with the message that money buys happiness faster. Forget soccer moms and metrosexuals . . . Here come the Denim Dads, Karma Queens, Geek Gods, Innerpreneurs, E-litists, Culture Crossers, Parentocrats, Middlemen.

In the world of advertisers, you fit into one of those categories. The New York marketing firm Consumer Eyes has identified 9 influencers that are shaping the future.

Their book is called *Karma Queens, Geek Gods & Innerpreneurs* (2007).

Where one of these 9 consumer types would you fit into?

Innerpreneurs (think Rachel Ray)

Culture Crossers (think Gwen Stefan)

Karma Queens (think Christy Turlington)

Middlemen (think Johnny Knoxville)

Denim Dads (think Peter Saarsgard)

E-litists (think Al Gore)

Ms. Independents (think about the women from *Lipstick Jungle* or *Cashmere Mafia*)

Parentocrats (think Bree from *Desperate Housewives*)

Geek Gods (think your local Apple genius clerks)

What is common about each one of these 9 influencers? Money talks, and money buys happiness.

Did you read where India's richest man, 50-year-old Mukesh Ambani, is building a house for his family in Mumbai? It's only 60 stories high. Of course, it does include accommodations for his servants and staff . . . all 600 of them. When money is the only thing that talks, you are listening to the gurgling, death-knell sounds of a society. When money is the only thing that talks, kindness and compassion go for long walks. When money is the only thing that talks, the voices of the weak and poor are drowned out.

We Draw the Circle Too Small

Roy Lloyd, a Lutheran minister, once interviewed Mother Teresa. He said that one of his questions and one OF her answers stands out in his mind as "a bright sun burning in my mind." He asked her, "What's the biggest problem in the world today?" And she answered, without hesitation, "The biggest problem in the world today is that we draw the circle of our family too small. We need to draw it larger every day." With all that is evil and wrong in this world today it would be easy to answer that question with a hundred different events. That's what makes Mother Teresa's response so jilting.

She is saying that the problem is not so much with the world as it is with us. We need to see more people as our neighbor than we are currently doing. I see Jesus doing this in his baptism. In his baptism he included us in his righteousness. He identified with humanity, with our need to be cleansed, and our need to be made pure. If you have been baptized you have been drawn, by Jesus' baptism, into the circle of God's family. (by Brett Blair, www.eSermons.com)