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Owning to Rent

When we made our last move it was necessary to downsize. So many treasures of our life would not fit into our new home. It was time to let go. So we did the estate sale/garage sale and waited for our treasures to be appreciated, valued – and paid for. Ask too much – nobody buys. Ask too little and you feel a stab in your heart (and your wallet) that nobody “treasures” your treasures. No matter what you paid for it there are few things that you can own that will appreciate – a Renoir or a Monet or a chair from Louis XIV – have a chance of being valuable. But your furniture, your art work, your china will only bring you pennies on the dollar. What are you supposed to do? You trade it away.

This is an analogy of our life – we “own” it; we use it; we spend it – and at some point we count up what it is worth. What we can get for what is left. We are all familiar with “renting to own.” We can have it now and own it later – at a substantially greater cost.

“Owning to rent” is a more difficult concept to process. Yes, we paid the price. Now it is ours to enjoy and use but when it comes time to sell we are surprised that it “cost” us. There is no free ride or free lunch. We don’t get back what we put in to it. You buy a \$100 pair of shoes, if you wear them once a week it costs you \$2 every time you wear them. If you wear them for a second year it only costs you \$1 each time you wear them. If they don’t wear out you have reduced your cost per wear significantly but nobody will pay you \$100 for them. (Of course you understand I am talking about men’s shoes.)

The equations are different for women. If you have 10 or 20 pair your rate of usage is once or twice per month at a cost of \$4 – \$8 per usage. If you keep them more than a year your cost goes down but the style may change which changes the equation again.

Everything has a cost of usage – your body, your mind, your heart, a lifetime of good works. When you come to an accounting at the end – there often isn’t much “value” left. The ultimate value is counted on what you traded for – the lives you’ve touched, the lives that were transformed, the good you did – the blessing you were. The life you “owned” is the one you rented out to bosses and businesses, to friends and family, to church and community and ultimately to God.

Our challenge is to turn the life we “rented” out into an eternal investment whose value is incalculable – an investment where moth and rust do not destroy. This is best reflected by Jim Elliot, the martyr missionary, to the Auca Indians. “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”