

## Only The Good Stuff

The billboard towers above the highway touting its message, "Only the Good Stuff." That's not only the advertising claim--it's the name of the company as well. That's a fascinating claim, especially considering it comes from a company selling antiques. One thing all antiques have in common--someone no longer wanted them. They ceased being "good" for their owner. Weighed in the balances, they were no longer wanted.

Many years ago, I heard the phrase, "one man's junk is another man's treasure." This certainly applies to antiques. Yet, it also applies to many other things of perceived value. Not everyone agrees on the "value" of something. So-called "Depression Ware" was actually an inexpensive "prize" in laundry detergent. Some "valuable" antiques were actually cheap and common items in their day. Some expensive items have not held their "value" in any secondary markets. One episode of "Antiques Roadshow" will leave you marveling AND scratching your head. "Value" is relative.

It was no different when Jesus walked the dusty roads of the region of Galilee. People, too, were given a "perceived value," which followed them everywhere they went. Jesus bucked this system of assigning values. He cared for those who were outcast, forgotten, and shunned. He touched the "untouchable," healed the "un-healable," loved the "unlovable," forgave the "unforgivable." Then He ultimately gave His life for everyone, regardless of perceived value, including the very ones who were responsible for His crucifixion. God's idea of "the good stuff" is apparently very different from mankind's.

The extremely rare 1982 World's Fair "astronaut" PEZ dispenser sold in 2006 for over \$32,000. A silver soup tureen from 1733 (yes, that's a soup bowl for a table) is valued at \$10 million. The most expensive comic book (The Amazing Spider Man) comes in at \$40,000. A pair of Levi's jeans is valued at \$60,000. The most expensive album (similar to a CD for those of you too young to have ever touched "vinyl") is from John Lennon--only \$525,000. The Honus Wagner baseball card hit a price of \$1.2 million, while a mistaken-colored Swedish postage stamp comes in at \$2.3 million. A slightly damaged Matchbox car hit \$500,000. A 16-bit SEGA Genesis video entertainment system went for \$1899, a GI-JOE action figure for \$3995, and a Cabbage Patch doll for \$2000. Yes, in our world, "value" is relative.

Aren't you glad that God has a different view? His assignment of "value" for each of us was His Only Begotten Son. It has nothing to do with how the world around us sets our "value." It's based on Him, and Him alone. His mercy is not conditional on how much we may "deserve" it. His grace isn't based on any "value added" to His team. From the very beginning of the story of mankind, it's difficult to fathom why God didn't just start over (many times). Tellingly, however, He didn't. Instead, He has been demonstrating His "human-value-system" since time began. We matter to God--inexplicably, but undeniably.

The next time you look in the mirror and the Enemy tries to blind you into seeing a cheap, used-up, common, and irrelevant piece of junk, remind him that God has declared with a mighty voice and a crashing roll of thunder from an old rugged cross, "My child, you're mine, and I only have the BEST STUFF!" Take that, you \$32,000 PEZ dispenser!