

Concept of temptation tolstoy's short story how much land does a man need

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Leo Tolstoy

Leo Tolstoy, a Russian writer, wrote a short story called "How Much Land Does a Man Need" later in his life. The short story is an allegory that was published in 1886. Pakhom, who is a land-hungry peasant, stands for unrestrained greed for land. Tolstoy believed that private ownership of land was wrong and evil later on in his life. This story represents his beliefs of the evils of private ownership of land. "How Much Land Does a Man Need" realistically describes Russian peasant life, but also incorporates elements of the supernatural into its story. It is a tale about a man who is seduced by the works of Satan and is known as a Faust legend. Pakhom has fallen into the trap of the devil and exclaims, "If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the devil himself" (Tolstoy 959). When Pakhom says this, the devil overhears this and claims, "We will have a tussle. I'll give you land enough; and by means of that land I will get you into my power." (Tolstoy 959). In order to tempt the greedy Pakhom with more land than he needs, the Devil disguises himself as a wandering peasant, a land dealer (tradesman), and a Bashkir chief.

Pakhom is initially tempted when the Devil appears in the guise of a wandering peasant from beyond the Volga River. Pakhom saw a peasant in the village and invited him in his house for supper. There, the peasant said many people were settling in parts of Volga and that the land was very good there. Pakhom thought to himself that he should sell his current land and buy a homestead down there, "I will sell my land and my homestead here, and with the money I will start afresh over there and get everything new. In this crowded place one is always having trouble." The devil tempts Pakhom

by exclaiming that the land in Volga is much better than his current land, even though he is perfectly fine and comfortable where he is currently. This is the Devil's first disguise to trick Pakhom into his evil works.

Pakhom is tempted again when the Devil appears in the guise of a passing land dealer from the land of the Bashkirs, who stops at Pakhom's cabin to get feed for his horses. One day, a land dealer passed by Pakhom's house and Pakhom talked with him and enjoyed tea. The dealer said he is from the land of the Bashkirs, where he bought thirteen thousand acres of land for a very low cost. The man said that all someone needs to do is make friends with the chiefs, and the chiefs would give out land to their new friends.

Pakhom asked the man how to get there, and Pakhom left his wife and traveled to the land of the Bashkirs. Pakhom exclaims, " There now, with my one thousand rubles, why should I get only thirteen hundred acres, and saddle myself with a debt besides? If I take it out there, I can get more than ten times as much for the money." Pakhom has fallen into the Devil's trap and is becoming more land-greedy even though he doesn't really need more land.

Pakhom's final temptation occurs when the Devil appears in the guise of the Bashkir chief, who accepts Pakhom's expensive gifts of his best dressing-gown and five pounds of tea. When he arrived at the land of the Bashkirs, Pakhom was greeted with kindness and shared his gifts of tea and other food with the Bashkirs. Pakhom then told them that he is only interested in acquiring some of their land, and the chiefs of the Bashkirs told him that because Pakhom gave them gifts, he could have some of their land for free.

Pakhom says, " What pleases me best here, is your land. Our land is crowded and the soil is exhausted; but you have plenty of land and it is good land. I never saw the like of it" Once again, Pakhom falls victim to the guise of the Devil and his temptations further lead him into wanting more and more land.

The disturbing nightmare should have been a warning to Pakhom that he is being seduced by three faces of the Devil, who is appealing to Pakhom's greed for land. First, Pakhom meets a wandering peasant who says the land is much better in Volga, and Pakom falls victim to this temptation. Next, Pakhom meets a land dealer who tells him of beautiful land in the Bashkirs. Pakhom travels to the land of the Bashkirs and once again falls victim to the Devil. Lastly, when Pakhom encounters the chiefs of the Bashkirs, he presents them with gifts and the chiefs tell him to choose any section of land he would like. For the third time, Pakhom is seduced by the Devil's temptations into getting more and more land that he really does not need at all.