

Are You Greedy?

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Parables of Jesus Series

Luke 12.13-21

(*****THE SERMON BASED BIBLE STUDY LOOKS A LITTLE DIFFERENT THIS WEEK*****)

INTERACTING WITH THE SERMON

Luke 12:15-21

¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'

²⁰ "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?'

²¹ "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

Sermon Summary

It is easy to find examples of greed in American culture today, although few people would call it that. Consider for example "extreme couponing" where in the name of saving money with coupons, people hoard hundreds of bottles of soda. Consumerism has taken over the U.S. but the bible would more accurately call it is *greed*. In today's parable, Jesus asks us the question, "Are you greedy?"

It's important to understand that the bible's message concerning money is complex—it's not one simple message! This is why politicians can quote the bible as a way to support their particular economic theory!

When it comes to what the bible teaches about money, we need to hold truths in tension.

1. *Should we plan for the future or just trust God?* The bible teaches both! The wise person works hard and plans for the future, but Jesus also tells us not to worry about the future and trust God, like the birds, to provide for our needs.
2. *Is wealth good or dangerous and deceptive?* Again, the bible teaches both. Wealth is evidence of God's blessing but it is also a dangerous trap that can corrupt and harden our hearts.



3. *Is poverty bad or is it a state of blessedness?* Again, both are true. Poverty can be the result of foolishness—laziness and self-indulgence. But poverty also causes us to be dependant upon God and have great faith.

In the midst of these tensions about what the bible thinks of money, we are warned about greed. It is viewed as a horrible sin. According to church tradition, it is one of the seven deadly sins—sins that can lead to eternal destruction.

Consider these verses:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

*⁹Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men^[a] ¹⁰nor thieves nor the **greedy** nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*

Colossians 3:5

*⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and **greed**, which is idolatry.*

Ephesians 5:5

*⁵For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or **greedy** person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

Romans 1:29

*²⁹They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, **greed** and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice.*

According to the bible, greed is dangerous and deadly, and yet few of us give greed much thought! How many of us have confessed the sin of greed in the past couple days? The past week? That past month? Even the past year?? We live in the ultimate consumer society with massive stores that are open 24/7, 365 days a year. We are marketed to constantly—daily—through the TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, computers, phones, billboards, and yet we don't have a problem with *greed*?? Either we are remarkably holy or entirely deceived. Our consciences are so dulled we don't even realize we struggle with greed!

Acting as the Great Physician, Jesus asks us five questions to help diagnose greed in our lives:

1. **Who do you compare yourself to?**

When it comes to morality, we always compare ourselves to someone who is *worse* than us. "Oh, I don't drink as much as him!" "I haven't slept around as much as her!" But



when it comes to wealth, we always compare ourselves to someone who has *more*. “I’m not rich! I’m not Bill Gates! I’m not Warren Buffet!”

Individuals in America are extremely wealthy as compared with virtually everyone else on our planet. If your family income is \$10,000 a year, you are wealthier than 84% of the world. If it’s \$25,000 you are wealthier than 90%. And if it \$50,000 a year or more, you are wealthier than 99% of the world. The top 5% of India is equal to or *poorer* than the bottom 5% in America! Who do you compare yourself to?

2. Are you *on guard* against greed?

In other words, are you watching out for it in your life? We are told to watch out for a lot of things in the bible—things that are dangerous, that could harm us! For example, we are to watch out for false teachers.

Now what is greed? The word in the original Greek literally means “have more.” Greed is simply a desire to have more, and it can be for anything. Greed is a picture of addiction.

Consider American eating habits—or simply our consumption of pop! Coke used to be sold in little 6 oz. bottles. Now we can get 8 oz. bottles, 12 oz. cans, 16 oz. bottles, 20 oz. bottles or, if that’s not enough, we can get a 64 oz. Big Gulp at 7 eleven that contains 44 teaspoons of sugar! Are we *watching out* for our unchecked desires to *have more*?

3. Do you have storage problems?

Is every closet in your apartment or crawl space in your home stuffed to the brim with things? Is your garage so full of stuff that you must park your car on the street? Do you not know where to put things anymore? Are you considering renting a storage unit to hold all the stuff you can’t fit into your house? And, *are you still running out to the store to buy more*?

4. Do you consider what God thinks about your spending habits?

Do you invite God into your thinking about money—whether you *should* buy something? Whether you really *need* that new thing? Few of us ever stop to consider what God thinks when we go to the store to make a purchase.

5. Do you really think you’ll be happier having more or giving more?

We pay too much attention to the marketers, who convince us that if we just got their product, we’d be happy! Staring at one of the dozens of glossy catalogues companies send to us, filled with pictures of happy people, fool us every time. (In fact, it’s been proven that one sure way to



grow dissatisfied with what you look like, what you have or where you live is to flip through the average sales catalogue or women's magazine!)

In contrast, the bible teaches us that giving is better than getting. Giving is the key to happiness.

Paul says this in Acts 20:

³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Jesus encourages us to become "rich toward God" and we become rich toward God through giving—giving to the things God cares about: Kingdom work at home and abroad and caring for the poor.

A wonderful illustration of becoming rich toward God, and how giving will make us happier than getting is the story of Ebenezer Scrooge in Dickens [A Christmas Carol](#).

At the start of the story, Scrooge is selfish, stingy, greedy and miserable. He never smiles. He is never cheerful, friendly or happy. Encounters with three spirits brings about radical change in Scrooge, and by the end of the story, here is how Dickens describes him:

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms.

*His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him. He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us!
And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One!*



Group Discussion

[Rather than study a different passage in the bible on the topic of greed, this week we are going to examine again this parable and discuss the five "diagnostic" questions Rich asked in his sermon.]

1. Begin by asking first impressions of this week's sermon on greed.

1. What surprised you most in this week's sermon?
2. Were there some things you were taught or had always believed the bible said about money that are inaccurate?
3. What point or points hit you the hardest or were the most convicting?
4. What was your initial take away? What did you feel the Holy Spirit was highlighting for you?

2. Read the parable through out loud.

- What are the obvious points Jesus is making through this story? Sum up the truths illustrated here in your own words.

3. Discuss the 5 questions

First, hand out paper with the five questions written down. Allow people about 15 minutes to quietly, *by themselves*, answer each one. Tell everyone to imagine they are in the doctor's office, and the physician, Jesus, is attempting to diagnose a serious disease. They need to be as honest and transparent as possible.

Then begin discussing the answers.

1. Who do you compare yourself to?

Get specific. When it comes to your clothes, your home, your car, etc. who comes immediately to your mind? Who do you compare yourself with most often? Is it someone you believe has more or less than you?

Note how you feel when you compare yourself. How would you label the feeling?

Think of someone you know who has less than you. How do you feel when you compare yourself with them? Describe.

2. Are you *on guard* against greed?



When do you feel greed rising up in you the most? What activities stir up greed in your heart?

What are some practical things you can do to “nip greed in the bud?” (e.g. toss out all store catalogs; don't go to the mall as a “pass time;” decide what you need to buy before heading off to the store)

3. Do you have storage problems?

Mentally go through your home. Picture each room and each space. List places that are over-crowded with stuff.

Is there a pattern? What kind of stuff do you have the most of?

Take a moment to consider how your house got so overcrowded. What thoughts or heart attitudes led to the accumulation?

4. Do you consider what God thinks about your spending habits?

Imagine Jesus walking through your house with you, looking at all the stuff you've bought. What do you think He would say to you?

Think of the last time you went shopping. To what extent were you mindful of what Jesus might think of your spending? Describe.

Have there been times in your life when you made spending decisions with God's heart in mind? Describe these situations.

5. Do you really think you'll be happier having more or giving more?

Think back over the past week. What things made you the happiest? Did it involve purchasing or acquiring something?

List some specific things you can begin doing that will make you rich towards God.

