

Theme: Sloth is a disordered love that that does not desire God, His works, or the vocations He has given me, but finds them boring, refusing the effort to love and serve God and others..

I. Intro - Video Spoof of 7 Deadly Sins - Sloth!

- A. This video is funny - and true! (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJ1oRqIDall>)
- B. Sloth - is that really a big deal?
- C. We misunderstand what the ancients meant by 'sloth'
- D. What is it really? Why is it a big deal?

II. The Problem of Sloth

- A. Sloth - the misunderstood vice
 - 1. Most of us think of sloth as "laziness" - dictionary actually has this as first definition
 - 2. The animal named 'sloth' - he is lazy, but cute & fun
 - 3. Zootopia - all DMV workers are sloths!
 - 4. But this is not what sloth originally referred to!
 - 5. What are the characteristics of sloth (biblical sluggard)?
- B. The symptoms and root of real sloth
 - 1. Excuses are a symptom of sloth
The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets!" Proverbs 26:13
 - a. Can't go out to work; a lion might run up and eat me!
 - b. Excuses avoid the real labor or pursuit of something

- 2. Laziness is a symptom of sloth
As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed. Proverbs 26:14
 - a. This is why sluggard make excuses - laziness
 - b. This is a picture of ultimate laziness
 - c. The sluggard/slothful won't even get out of bed
 - d. But this is not the real root os sloth!
- 3. A lack of desire is the root of sloth
The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth. Proverbs 26:15
 - a. The slothful can't even muster enough desire to raise food to their mouth
 - b. Vivid picture of root issue in sloth - lack of desire
 - c. This is the real root of sloth - an utter lack of desire

III. The Root Vice of Sloth

- A. Sloth - acedia (ἀκηδία) - lack of care; indifference; then melancholy
 - 1. Used only a few times in LXX - really developed among Greek desert fathers
 - 2. Evagrius - noonday demon; made monks lethargic in prayer; wishing to be somewhere else, doing anything else
 - 3. Dorothy Sayers - It is the sin which believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, loves nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing. lives for nothing, and only remains alive because there is nothing it would die for.

B. Understanding sloth

Sloth is a disordered love that does not desire God, His works, or the vocations He has given me, but finds them boring, refusing the effort to love and serve God and others.

1. Sloth begins with a lack of desire for God, His works, and His calling in our lives
2. Rather than sensing wonder as we behold God, His creation, and His work, sloth finds all of this boring, preferring ephemeral novel trivialities to weighty eternal realities.
3. We sing “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all” - but sloth simply yawns and looks for some trifle to distract it from boredom with God and His Gospel.
4. Sloth is unique among the root vices
 - a. Sloth is a sin of omission rather than a sin of commission - it is about what we are not doing (desiring God) rather than what we are doing
 - b. Sloth is a lack of passion, where as the other vices are passion directed at the wrong things or too great a passion directed at the right things
5. Sloth undermines our attempts to cut the other root vices and practice virtues - that would be too much work, and nothing is that important.

Since sloth is right in the middle of the seven deadly sins, it is their hinge point – it makes the other six sins possible. By dethroning God and enthroning ourselves, we can be absorbed in greed, gluttony, and lust, or whatever else our hearts desire. Sloth, in other words, makes a self-centered, hedonistic life possible - David Naugle

- a. Since God, His work, and my callings are boring, I can simply turn in on my own self, as the rigor required to truly pursue God and my vocations is not worth the effort

- b. A slothful soul can not grow in sanctification

6. This is why sloth can often lead to laziness and even melancholy - nothing is worth passion or effort, so I slouch into a lazy stupor, lacking passion and zeal for life

C. Sloth and misplaced identity

I find God, His works, and the vocations he has given me boring, and seek to find my identity in restless leisure apart from God.

1. Instead of knowing I was created to glorify and enjoy God forever, and that He is my rest, I seek my meaning and rest apart from God.
2. This also includes my vocations - the callings God has given me (Christian, family, job, serving neighbors, etc.) Sloth drains my passions for vocations as well, and seeks meaning and rest apart from my vocations, which now seem boring.

D. The sinful fruits of sloth

1. I have come to see sloth as a major “gateway vice”
2. Sloth undermines true worship, and the practice of spiritual disciplines to know God and grow in faith - making excuses for why we can't (lion in streets!)
3. Sloth misses or despises God's ordinary work in the world rather than seeing it and being grateful
4. The boredom of sloth can lead us to waste time on trivial things (social media, constant news/politics, tabloids, etc.) rather than investing in meaningful things and people.

5. Sloth takes the path of least resistance - it will take trivial entertainment over seeking God; false leisure over true rest; silly dreams over daily vocation; junk food over a five star meal - because they require so little of us. But this leaves us feeling hollowed out rather than fulfilled.
6. Sloth can lead to the embrace of other sins simply in the hope that they will make one feel alive again.
7. Because of the need for novelty, sloth can undermine long-lasting relationships.
8. It can lead one to embrace adultery simply for the thrill of the new - it made me feel alive again is the cry of the slothful who have given in to other sins.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Renew a passionate love for God

1. At its core sloth is boredom and lack of passion about God and His works
2. Laziness is actually a symptom of sloth - not the disease itself
3. Practices to renew our passion for God
 - a. Daily practice of spiritual disciplines - to behold and draw near to God
 - b. A true weekly Sabbath of rest and focus on God (not just the cultural 'weekend')
 - c. Fast from trivial pursuits that waste my time and dull my longing for God
4. As you faithfully do these things God will restore and renew your passion for Him - the practice will form desire

B. Develop diligence in your vocational callings

1. We all have vocations from God - the specific tasks and responsibilities given to us by God, through which God works to serve our neighbors
2. These include being a Christian, husband/wife/parent/grandparent; job; civic roles, etc.
3. God calls for us to diligently work in each of these areas - they are how we serve Him, and how He serves others through us
4. The slothful are always "someplace else" - never giving themselves to the task God has for them right now in front of them
5. Practices to develop diligence in our callings
 - a. Do my work as for the Lord; I am serving Him
 - b. Remember that my labor for God will be rewarded
 - c. Every day remind yourself of this fact!

C. The Table of Renewal

1. This Table is given to renew our vision of God, His glory, and His amazing work in our behalf
2. This Table is given to renew our hunger for God, and to help us turn from the soul-numbing "junk food" the world offers
3. Come - confess sloth; renew your hunger and passion!

Sloth

Proverbs 26:13-16
March 4, 2018

Communion
Psalm 90:16-17

Teaching keywords: Lent; calling and work; passion for Christ; sabbath and rest; sin; character; sanctification

O God, show your deeds to us your servants, your splendor to our children. ¹⁷ May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; may God establish the work of our hands for us — yes, may He establish the work of our hands, giving us joy in Himself and all He calls us to do. Psalms 90:16–17 paraphrase

The sluggard says, “There is a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets!” ¹⁴ As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed. ¹⁵ The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.
Proverbs 26:13–15