

Theme: Greed is a disordered love that excessively craves created goods and possessions, desiring them more than the Creator Himself.

I. I Know What Gold Does to Men's Souls

- A. Treasure of the Sierra Madre - 1:00 to end
- B. Powerful movie on greed and its effects
- C. I know what gold does to men's souls - but they don't
- D. Movie traces growth of gold fever greed in Bogart's soul
- E. Seen in many stories - from Gollum's precious to Gordon Gecko's "Greed is good" - greed corrupts
- F. What is greed? How does it work in our soul? How do we fight it?

II. The Problem of Greed

- A. Greed - the love of money (and the things it buys)
Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.... Hebrews 13:5
 - 1. Greed is an inordinate desire for money and wealth
 - 2. Greed is the desire to be rich, the love of money
People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
1 Timothy 6:9-10
 - 3. Greed is not about what we possess, but what possesses us
- B. Greed is the opposite of contentment

Keep your lives free from the love of money and **be content with what you have**... Hebrews 13:5

- 1. Contentment is satisfied with God and His gifts to us
- 2. Greed is at its core discontentment and the desire for more
Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. Ecclesiastes 5:10
- C. Greed looks for satisfaction apart from God
Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, **because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."**
Hebrews 13:5
 - 1. The reason we can be content and not greedy is because God is with us
 - 2. The soul was made for God, and originally knew that to have God is to have everything; but greed eats away at our soul and says that even God is not enough

III. The Root Vice of Greed

- A. Defining greed
Greed is a disordered love that excessively craves created goods and possessions, desiring them more than the Creator Himself.
 - 1. Greed is primarily about an excessive craving
 - a. The Latin word for this vice is avarice; its root means "to crave"
 - b. We need created things to survive - that is not evil
 - c. Greed is when we excessively crave them

- d. Greed is thus a good desire gone bad
- 2. Greed can never be satisfied because it always craves more
 - a. The words of the prospector - I've seen what gold does to men's souls; and they always want to get more
 - b. John D. Rockefeller, richest man in world, when asked how much money is enough? "Just a little bit more."
 - c. Because greed at its core is about excessive craving that can never be satisfied, it motivates the prodigal spending of Gordon Gecko, and the miserliness of Ebenezer Scrooge, the treasure-seeking of both the Pirates of the Caribbean and the Wolf of Wall Street

3. In greed, created goods take the place of the Creator

- a. The problem with greed is not that it desires physical, created things; it is that it desires them more than it should, even more than it desires God Himself.
- b. Avarice is not desire as such for temporal possessions... but the immoderate desire for them; for it is natural to desire external things as means, but avarice makes them into ends, into gods. And when a creature is made into a god, it becomes a devil. (Peter Kreeft)
- c. This is why greed is called idolatry
For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Ephesians 5:5

B. The misplaced identity of greed

I seek to find my identity in money and possessions rather than God Himself.

1. We are created to find our identity in God
2. When created things become our god, we seek our identity in them, rather than the True God
3. Because greed is idolatry, it transforms our souls, for we are formed into the image of whatever we worship, whether that is God or gold.

C. Greed as a root vice - its relation to other sins

1. Greed can strengthen envy, as others have what we want
2. Greed can lead to lying so we get what we want
3. Greed can lead to favoritism - we treat people based on what they can get for us in the future
4. Greed can lead to theft - personal, but also via practices or the passing of laws that unjustly favor us over others (minor prophets railed against this)
5. Greed causes us to view people as objects, and to use them to get the things we crave
The hallmark of well-entrenched greed, then, is a willingness to use people to serve our love for money, rather than the use of money to serve our love for people. - Rebecca DeYoung
6. Greed in society leads us to only value people in terms of how much they contribute - this destroys the culture of life, as the unborn, the poor, the sick, the disabled, the old are seen as not valuable and of less dignity and value than the "productive"
7. Scripture also takes a hard line against greed: there are many more references to money than to sex in the Bible, indicating the frequency and seriousness of human sinfulness in this area. - R. DeYoung

IV. Applying the Word

A. We must cultivate contentment to cut the root of greed

1. Our text contrasted contentment & greed; so does 1 Timothy 6
2. Contentment cuts off the oxygen need to fan greed's flame
3. Practices to cultivate contentment
 - a. Thanksgiving - regularly to God in prayer & others in conversation; live in gratitude
 - b. Sabbath - to rest, worship, and trust God that He provides what we need
 1. Some have made Sabbath a rest so you can produce more in the other six days
 2. Avoid this greedy understanding - worship, rest, trust

B. We must embrace simplicity

1. Simplicity is the ability to live without a constant need to acquire more stuff
2. Simplicity is about an inward detachment from consumerism that enables us to escape the trap of greed
3. "Our enormously productive economy . . . demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction, in consumption.... We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced, and discarded at an ever increasing rate." - Victor Lebow, Retailing Analyst
4. The consumer is schooled in insatiability. He or she

is never to be satisfied-at least, not for long. The consumer is tutored that people basically consist of unmet needs that can be appeased by commodified goods and experiences. Accordingly, the consumer should think first and foremost of himself or herself and meeting his or her felt needs. - Rodney Clapp

5. Practices to embrace simplicity

- a. Fast from our consumer culture for a week
 1. Avoid reading advertisements
 2. Avoid going to the mall
 3. Try to purchase only absolute necessities
- b. Establish set times for this practice - especially around cultural gluts of spending such as holidays

C. We must practice generosity

1. The opposite of greed's desire to get more, is to give more
2. Greed is a deep lie because generosity lies at the heart of the universe, for the Holy Trinity is a community of free giving, not greedy taking
3. Practices to live in generosity
 - a. Giving to the work God in a biblical manner and proportion
 1. The OT principle of tithing - first; significant amount; recognition that God owns all
 2. NT does not command tithing, but the principles are the same
 3. Establishing a pattern of giving to the work of God cuts at the root of greed, and builds a heart of trust in God's provision

b. Give to others

1. This includes giving to those in need
 - the poor
 - those recovering from sickness, childbirth, surgery (MealTrain!)
2. It also includes “random acts of kindness” - just blessing others with gifts
3. Blessing others with things we no longer need or use
4. Generosity’s loose grip makes it easy to give things away. A mark of having a virtue is the way it becomes a natural part of who we are, so that giving is delightful, not an onerous duty or a dull chore. The test of liberality is whether giving things away is easy and enjoyable. - Rebecca DeYoung

D. Closing prayer

Greed

Hebrews 13:5-6

March 11, 2018

Prayer

Genesis 12:2-3

Teaching keywords: Lent; contentment; gratitude & thanksgiving; money & finances; sin; character; sanctification

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Genesis 12:2–3

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” ⁶ So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”