

14. Mine, Mine, Mine

There were two greedy brother who owned the town's major businesses. They were rotten and greedy and selfish. But yet they were two elder board members of the town church. A young pastor replaced their church pastoralship due to retirement of the old pastor. Not very long after the young pastor got the position, he started to find out how these two brothers were manipulating the whole town including the church with their mighty bucks. One day, older brother of two had a heart attack and died on the spot. So the other brother came to the pastor and asked him to do a funeral for his brother. He offered \$200,000 for very much needed building fund for a nice eulogy about his brother. The brother said, "I know that my brother was not exactly loved by the town people. I am not asking you to lie, but just say that he was a saint. Then I will donate \$200,000 to the church building fund." The young pastor thought for a moment and agreed to do so. The younger brother wrote him a check of \$200,000 on the spot. As soon as the younger brother left the office, the pastor went over to the bank and cashed it and put it in the church account. On the funeral morning, people were gathered around the casket for the sake of their jobs and businesses. The pastor stood behind the casket and opened up the Bible and started to read it. When he finished it, he started to talk about this dead man. "The man you see in this casket is a wife cheater, terrible father, and a rotten, greedy, selfish corrupted man. But to compare with his brother who is standing over there, he was a saint."

A. THE ROOT OF CORRUPTION

Greed and selfishness is the bottom line of corruption in mankind.

The most current example could be found in Iraq. The Iraqi people were starving and living in literal poverty, Saddam Hussein and his cohorts were in luxury. A warehouse the coalition force found in Barsa city was filled with foods, car batteries, day to day necessities. But the people outside were starving.

California alone produce enough food to feed the entire USA every year. And we send enough food to Africa to feed those hungry nations every year. But why are they still dying in malnutrition? Because of those who are in the authority position are corrupted and dishonest.

This portion of the Scriptures talking about 4th and strongest warning against rich oppressors. Actually this portion should be in the same chapter with Chapter 4, verse 13-16 which we studied last week. The original Scripture was not divided with chapters and verses. Around King James time, they added chapters and verses in the Scripture for the sake of convenience. But sometimes they broke the Scripture portions in wrong way. This is one of them.

James 5:1-6 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

Noticed “*fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter*”? Like dumb cows and pigs, those who are fatten themselves with worldly wealth only without Christ in their hearts, will be ended up in the slaughter house on the Judgement Day.

In Luke 12th chapter, Jesus warns us about every form of greed.

Luke 12:15 And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

B. GREED - THE COMMON DISEASE OF MANKIND

What is GREED? Greed in Greek, “Pleonexia” is “a desire to have more (pleon, ‘more,’ echó, ‘to have’).” It is an insatiable craving that can drive people to self-destruction.

Picture a shipwrecked sailor on a life raft in the middle of an ocean. His terrible thirst impels him to drink the salty sea water, but it only makes him thirstier. This causes him to drink even more, which makes him thirstier still. He consumes more and more of the sea water... until, paradoxically, he becomes dehydrated and dies while he was surrounded by tons of water.

Money and possessions can become toxic substitutes for what will truly satisfy-the pure, living water of Christ. Greed tries to convince us of just the opposite-that life does consists of what we own. The more we own, we think, the happier we will be. It only gives us a false sense of security in this world.

Luke 12:16-20 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’

His bumper crop, success doesn’t necessarily indicated greed. I would say it is blessing from the Lord. Nor when he decides to build bigger barns-he is simply planning ahead. But GREED reveals its treacherous face when the man tells us why he’s building his barns. He intends to hoard his wealth for himself. He’s banking his future on his possessions. A full barn guarantees a full and satisfying life-or so he thinks.

That is why we used to strive to get more money whether it was right and legal way or not. We wanted what we want. If it was necessary to cheat, we cheated. Necessary to rob, we robbed. To steal? We stole. Not just for money, for our own desires, too. It didn’t matter what kinds of desires they are. We wanted something, we would do anything to get what we wanted even if we have to hurt somebody, or ruin their lives, or damage their emotions. Greed and selfishness run side by side.

Commentator William Hendrickson points out this man’s two fatal mistakes.

1) He didn’t understand himself.

He was an expert in growing crops, but he didn’t know anything about growing himself in the Lord. He saturated his body with temporal comforts, while letting his eternal spirit becomes parched for lack of nourishment.

2) He didn't care about others.

Hendrickson notes that, in the Greek, "the words I and MY occur an even dozen times." Not once does the man look toward heaven and give thanks for God's provision or seek the Lord's guidance with how to spend his surplus. Not once does he look toward other people and think of their needs. All he can see is himself. It is all "MINE, MINE, MINE..." Until death strips it all away and leaves the storehouse of his life empty before God.

Barns packed full of grain, or bank accounts full of cash, or safety deposit boxes full of stocks and bonds, or a bunch of surplus stuff you may have in your house while your fellow brothers and sisters are going through tough times, will collapse and rot, but a heart overflowing with love for God and kindness toward other will endure forever.

Does it mean we have obligation to help others in the family of God? What do you think?

I challenge you to seek His Word about giving and helping others. I guarantee you that you would find at least 20 different Scriptures about helping people and giving to the church you go and work for God's kingdom.

C. GREED IN THE MIDST OF POVERTY

OK, we talked about the people who have some extras. What about the people who don't have a whole lot? This is something we need to think about this in practical way.

In this country, you can literally live without working at all. Unlikely, some countries in Africa, I haven't heard people died in America because of they didn't have food to eat. There are many governmental agencies, churches, groups to help needy people. I am not against any one of them. But I don't care much about the welfare system they have now. Because it is more likely hand-outs than encouraging people to be independent from those agencies. I don't have a problem for helping less fortunate people who are going through some tough times. They need all the help they can get. But there are many, many people who prefer not to work. They are the one I don't care to help. They are only using the systems to satisfy their lazy desires. They are selfish, too. Even the Scripture tells us that anyone who are lazy, don't let them eat.

D. THE OWNERSHIP OF OUR WEALTH

We have to define the ownership of the money we have. Everything we have belongs to our God. If we understand this fully and live according to that principle, we wouldn't have a problem with greed.

What is the opposite word of GREED in the Bible? CONTENTMENT.

Phil 4:11-12 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

1 Timothy 6:6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

Let's be grateful for what the Lord provided for us. If the Lord thought we need more, He would provide us more. We don't need to tell Him what to do, when to do, or how to do. For He is faithful.

E. APPLICATIONS

Here are three principals that may help us fend off our real enemy: Greed.

1) When we are blessed with much, give generously.

Does being generous mean that we give everything away? That is stupid. Paul advises that we regularly set aside money to give away as the Lord prosper us.

1 Cor 16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

2) When we plan for the future, think terminally.

Let's ask ourselves what we can take to heaven? The testimonies of the people whose lives we touched with the Gospel, the spiritual riches we built in heaven. If we plan our lives around these things, we know we're making sound investments for the future.

3) Whether you have much or little, hold it loosely.

Let's not put our hope in barns filled with grain. Let's loosen our grip on the things of this world. Instead let's hold on to the Lord, who never lets go of us.