

Don't Trip Over GREED

Ecclesiastes 3:17-26 1 Cor 5:9-11 Luke 12:13-21

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Pastor Dave Bolte



Do you remember when Covid first came to the United States early last year? Remember how there was an *immediate shortage* of hand sanitizer, Clorox wipes, and other cleaners? Remember the story about the brothers in Tennessee who drove over 1,300 miles with a U-Haul truck buying up all the hand sanitizer, Clorox wipes, and other cleaners they could find? Their plan was to resell them on Amazon and EBAY for outrageous prices. For example, they were selling hand sanitizer for \$70/bottle! ***It turned out that they had stockpiled 17,700 bottles of hand sanitizer alone¹!***

That is what greed does . . . it turns you inward: it is utterly selfish, and it thinks only about your own personal gain at the expense of others.

Greed is a serious sin that can tangle you up. It will twist your priorities, and lead you into great shame, despair, and vice.

† Webster's dictionary defines **greed** as *a selfish and excessive desire for more...than is needed*

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/greed>

† A psychologist from the early 1900s said, **greed** is *a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction.*

Erich Fromm

<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/greed.html>

† Jesus simply said that **greed** is an abundance of possessions and ultimately, **idolatry.**



¹ You can read this appalling story of greed at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/technology/coronavirus-purell-wipes-amazon-sellers.html>

Today we heard Jesus teach the **Parable of the Rich Fool**.

Then Jesus said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against **all kinds of greed**; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." 16 And He told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. 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 all **my grain** and **my goods**. 19 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things 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?' **Luke 12:15-20**

The **Parable of the Rich Fool** is all about greed! Note the emphasis on “my”: 4x in 3 verses: **my crops, my barns, my grain, my goods**. He uses his wealth for himself with no thought for God nor other people. He took God's good blessings and turned them into the evil of greed. His intention was to guard his wealth and to be selfish with all he had: **“Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”**

This man lost everything in the end. Doesn't it remind you of these words of Jesus:

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet forfeit his very soul?
Luke 9:25

Money and Possessions are meaningless when death comes. You are one heartbeat away from losing it all. Money and possessions are a great danger for people; *people get tangled up in greed --- the endless accumulation of money and possessions that is never satisfied.* King Solomon, an extremely wealthy man, called it **“chasing after the wind.”** Here is a survey of how the Bible warns us about **Greed**:

Rom 1:28-29 [They have a] **depraved** mind, and do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, **greed** and **depravity**.

1 Timothy 6:9-10 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. 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.

Ephesians 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of **greed**, because these are **improper for God's holy people**.

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your **sinful nature**: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and **greed, which is idolatry**.

Jesus teaches **Greed as Idolatry**: *you cannot serve both God and Money*. The warning is that money or possessions can quickly consume you and become your “god.” Don’t base your life on money or possessions; **Greed** is endless accumulation of these things. **Idolatry** is when your money or possessions consume you. **Greed** is using any of God’s gifts purely selfishly --- without any thought for God or for one’s neighbor.

Don’t get tangled up in greed!

Thankfully, if you do, God in Christ untangles you. Jesus went to Jerusalem to suffer and die to set you free from all sin, including greed and idolatry. Through His forgiveness, your thinking and your attitudes are turned upside down from that of the world. Greed doesn’t drive you; greed doesn’t dominate your thinking; money or possessions don’t consume you.

Jesus teaches you the right use of money and possessions. Jesus teaches us that the proper use of money and possessions involves a **right attitude** and a **generous heart**.

The **right attitude** is contentment; to realize that everything you are and everything you have is a gift from God’s good hand. God’s generosity has given you all that you have. **This Biblical attitude fills you with peace and contentment as you trust God’s care for you day by day.** He will not let you down. An old hymn summarizes it by saying *“He knows my needs and well provides me (I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb, v.1)”*

God did not give you your money and possessions so that they become idols that you worship; but rather to be tools to serve others.

Trust in your Heavenly Father’s care for you; *He has, He is and He will continue to provide for you.* That’s His promise! **The right attitude is contentment; to realize that God is good to you, and His abundant generosity has given you all that you have.**

A **right attitude** will lead to a **generous heart**. Freely you have received, freely you give to others. *Generosity is sign of faith in a generous God.*

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus himself: 'It is more blessed **to give than to receive.**' Acts 20:35

Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way **so that you can be generous on every occasion,** and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 2 Corinthians 9:10-11

Generosity is sign of faith in a generous God. A generous heart realizes that money and possessions are tools to be used to **further God's Kingdom, support your family** and **help other people.**

- ⇒ You give your tithes and offerings to support the work of Christ and further the Kingdom of God;
- ⇒ Your chief vocation is in your home, and your money and possessions support your life together as a family;
- ⇒ You care about other people and you help them. **An old word for generosity is “almsgiving”.** It comes from a Greek word and means “**mercy, pity**” towards someone else. When you give “alms” to someone, you are being merciful, kind, and generous in helping them.

A content and generous heart turns greed upside down; it keeps you focused on other people rather than yourself. A generous heart realizes that money and possessions are gifts to be used to **further God's Kingdom, support your family** and **help other people.**

The warnings about Greed are strong; **Greed is a serious sin that can tangle you up.** No wonder Jesus warns us so emphatically: "**Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.**"

Contentment and generosity is being **“rich towards God.”**
May you always be **“rich towards God!”**

Amen!