



GPS GUIDE: JULY 25, 2021

Grow. Pray. Study

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon: Greed

Luke 12: 15-21

15 Then Jesus said to them, "Watch out! Guard yourself against all kinds of greed. After all, one's life isn't determined by one's possessions, even when someone is very wealthy." **16** Then he told them a parable: "A certain rich man's land produced a bountiful crop. **17** He said to himself, What will I do? I have no place to store my harvest! **18** Then he thought, Here's what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. That's where I'll store all my grain and goods. **19** I'll say to myself, You have stored up plenty of goods, enough for several years. Take it easy! Eat, drink, and enjoy yourself. **20** But God said to him, 'Fool, tonight you will die. Now who will get the things you have prepared for yourself?' **21** This is the way it will be for those who hoard things for themselves and aren't rich toward God."

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 Paul wrote to the church:

6 The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. **7** Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. **8** And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

Monday: Read Exodus 20: 1-22

There are three different versions of the Ten Commandments: Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5, and Exodus 34. In Worship and Wonder we call them *the ten best ways to live*. There are four best ways to love God and six best ways to love people. The Ten Commandments aren't moral abstractions, says Chris Hedges. In his book *Losing Moses On The Freeway; The 10 Commandments In America*, he writes, "There is nothing abstract about the commandments to those who know the sting of their violation or have neglected their call." The commandments save us from false covenants and idols that promise so much and deliver so little. The commandments, says Hedges, frame the most important questions we can ask,

like the mystery of good and evil, the meaning of living in community, the nature of integrity, the meaning of fidelity, or the necessity of honesty. In honoring the commandments, we embrace the sanctity of life, the power of love, and their function to bind us together in life-affirming community; and in doing so we live together in a spirit of contentment. When you survey the Ten Commandments are there any of the ways to love God (1-4) that you struggle with? What about the ways to love others (5-10)? How might a commitment to the 10 best ways to live help you feel more content?

Prayer: Draw me ever closer to living in your ways, O God. Amen.

Tuesday: Read 1 Kings 21: 1-21

Sometimes the greedy hoard more than their share out of malice; other times, out of sheer thoughtlessness. The Greek philosopher Plato called justice (dikaiosunē) the supreme virtue. Opposing it stands the vice of pleonexia—always grasping for more, and more than our share, with no regard for anyone but ourselves. Despite the divide of two millennia between Plato and the present day, contemporary people seem instantly to understand what he means. Avarice can lead us to trample justice when we want what rightfully belongs to another, so that we will do anything to get it, even when we don't need it. Some cases—like elbowing out a sibling for the last piece of pizza—may seem run-of-the-mill, but greed can also turn murderous, as the story of Naboth's vineyard illustrates. Have you ever witnessed greed that turned into something more dangerous? Is greed a problem mainly because of what it does to the greedy person (vice) or because of its harm to others (injustice)? What is so bad about greed's internal damage?

Prayer: Help me seek your justice for all as I grow in my understanding that possessing faith in you, O God, is more valuable than all other possessions. Amen.

Wednesday: Read Philippians 4: 10-13

Paul begins this section of his letter to the church in Philippi with an observation about his own life. He has learned to be content in all circumstances, whether good or evil, because he has taken hold of Christ's sustaining power. As far as Paul is concerned, he has learned to be satisfied in whatever circumstance he faces. Paul has learned the secret of contentment, in either good times or bad. And Paul lets us into his secret. How is it that he can be content within the circumstances of life? His answer is simple; he is able to meet the circumstances of life head-on in the strength of Christ. Paul does not depend on his own strength or ability, rather he relies on the sustaining help of Jesus. In Christ he possesses an empowering grace above his own limitations which enables him to face all the circumstances of life - to be strong in the strength of Christ. Paul rests on Christ's word to him - "my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Was there a specific time in your life when you learned to place your trust in Christ's power? Does placing your trust in Jesus help you to

be content with your life's circumstances? What does it look like to be strong in the strength of Christ?

Prayer: May I learn to trust evermore in your power, O Lord, and find my contentment in you. Amen.

Thursday: 1 Timothy 6: 6-19

It is inappropriate to say in a wholesale fashion that early Christians criticized material wealth. Instead, of crucial importance is the attitude of the person owning it. Material wealth can get in the way of putting one's trust in God, and it can be a hindrance to following Jesus (Mark 10:17-22). Yet many of the church ministries and services depend on financial resources of those who are willing to share them. Therefore, those who have riches "are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life" (1 Timothy 6:18-19). The scriptures warn in many places that the love of money and possessions should never take the place of our love for God and our calling to share. We live in a culture that elevates wealth and encourages consumerism. How can your faith guide your purchasing practices? How do you practice generosity through the sharing of your wealth and possessions? Who in your life has been influential in helping form your faithful practice of generosity?

Prayer: Generous God, as I place you first in my life may my generosity increase to the glory of Christ. Amen.

Friday: Read Psalm 34: 1-10

Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. This is what it means to live life in contentment (contentment is one of the holy remedies for the sin of greed). Often, we confuse being content with being happy. A 2014 study revealed that happiness is by and large derived from external factors while contentment is sourced from within. This means that we can learn to be content even when the external factors around us are out of our control. Contentment comes from our relationship to what is going on around us, rather than our reaction to it. It is the peaceful realization that we are whole and complete just as we are, despite the anger, sadness, joy, frustration, and excitement that may come in and out from time to time. How can you practice contentment in your own life? One way that you can do that today is to remember that you were created whole by God who loves you. In the Lord you lack no good thing!

You can read about the 2014 study and some practices to help cultivate contentment at: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_if_you_pursued_contentment_rather_than_happiness

Prayer: May I find myself content in you, O Lord. Amen.

Saturday: Spiritual Activity

Generosity is the second remedy for the sin of Greed. The following prayer for generosity is attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola:

*Lord Jesus, teach me to be generous;
teach me to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor and not to seek reward,
except that of knowing that I do your will. Amen.*

As you pray this prayer today, what kind of generosity do you think the Holy Spirit is at work growing in you? Print a copy of this prayer or re-write it to speak to the kinds of generosity you are working toward and place it in a prominent place as a reminder to continue to grow in generosity.



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