



gracefellowship

Blind Spots
July 28, 2019
Greed

:: Proverbs 15:27

27 The greedy bring ruin to their households, but the one who hates bribes will live.

- Pray

What would you be willing to do if offered an insane amount of money? I read a poll a few years ago that presented the following data:

For \$10,000,000...

Would abandon their entire family (25%)

Would abandon their church (25%) Probably don't want to tithe on their money!

Would become a prostitute for a week or more (23%)

Would give up their American citizenship (16%)

Would leave their spouse (16%)

Would withhold testimony and let a murderer go free (10%)

Would kill a stranger (7%)

Would put their children up for adoption (3%)

Last week we began a series talking about spiritual blind spots. In Luke 12 Jesus points out and tells us to guard against some things that can be extremely dangerous to us and cause us a lot of pain if we don't learn to see them and guard against them. Last Sunday we talked about hypocrisy and the danger of believing and behaving differently.

Today we are going to see Jesus have a conversation with a young man and then tell a story about another blind spot we can develop in our lives if we aren't careful.

:: Luke 12:13-21

13 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

14 Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?"

15 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of

greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

In verse 13 a man asks Jesus to tell his brother to split the family inheritance with him. In this day and time the oldest brother in a family got 2/3 of the inheritance, which didn't sit well with the younger brother. He's saying, "My portion isn't enough; I want/deserve more." This young man has overestimated the value of temporal things.

“Here is where the deceptive nature of the heart is such a challenge. We often mask our covetousness by claiming we are on a righteous crusade.”

David Guzik

The young man comes to Jesus wanting him to choose sides. Instead, Jesus sees a problem in this young man's life that many of us deal with and gives us a warning about a blind spot in our lives:

Jesus warns us about the blind spot of greed.

15 Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

Greed is defined as: excessive desire, especially for wealth or possessions.

The danger of greed is it's power to cause us to do unimaginable things to obtain what we want- like I illustrated with the poll earlier. Can you imagine 7 out of 100 people saying they would murder a stranger for \$10 million? That makes a room like this a little more scary doesn't it? Or maybe it should motivate us to get to know people better! If their a stranger they might kill you!

The two that blew me away were that 25% of people would abandon their family for money and 23% would become prostitutes for a week or more! But the truth is, those things happen every day for far less money.

Greed blinds us to the consequences of our ambitions to obtain the things we want.

We don't see the problems right in front of us when our ambitions lead us to make greed driven decisions. It's a blind spot. All we tend to see is what we will gain. We never think of what we will lose.

:: Proverbs 15:27a

27 The greedy bring ruin to their households...

:: Proverbs 28:25

25 The greedy stir up conflict, but those who trust in the Lord will prosper.

Greed is not the route you want to take to prosperity. The fastest way to get what you want may not always be the most life giving. If you have to lie, cheat and steal to obtain all you want out of life, you're not prospering.

If you were here last week I said all through this series Jesus is going to step on

our toes. Just in case you're sitting there this morning thinking to yourself, greed isn't really a problem I deal with; I'm off the hook with this one! Let me read you what God said to Jeremiah said:

:: Jeremiah 6:13

13 "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit."

Here's why this is such an important blind spot for Jesus to bring to our attention and why we have to learn to see it in our lives:

:: Ephesians 5:5

5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person- such a person is an idolater- has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Greed is not something we can just allow to take root in our lives and think everything is going to work out okay in the end! Greed is a killer! This is why Jesus says, "Watch out! Be on your guard..."

You guard yourself when your under attack! Greed attacks our hearts, desiring to pull our affections toward created things rather than the Creator. That's how Paul can say in Ephesians 5 that greedy people are idolaters- we set our worship and affections on whatever it is our greed pulls us toward.

Now, normally when we think of greed, what comes to mind? What are people greedy for? MONEY! John D. Rockefeller, once the wealthiest man in our country was asked in an interview, "How much money is enough?" He replied: "Just a little more!" Money is definitely something we are greedy for, but I want you to notice what Jesus says in Luke 12:15:

Be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

We can be greedy with a lot more than money! What are some other things we can be greedy with?

- Time
- Talents
- Friendships/Relationships
- Love
- Possessions
- Faith
 - The knowledge of God's grace for salvation is the most important thing we have to give away to other people, yet how often do we keep that message to ourselves? Faith that we receive is always faith we should share.

By the way, you don't have to have a lot to be greedy! We can be greedy with very little, just like we can be generous with very little.

Jesus tells us to guard against all kinds of greed because verse 15 wraps up with Him saying, “life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” Remember, the man at the beginning of the passage wanted his brother to divide up the inheritance thinking he would be happier if he had more of the family wealth.

When Jesus says life doesn’t consist in an abundance of possession, the word He uses for “life” is the Greek word “Zoe.” This is a word that describes the quality of one’s life. Jesus is actually telling us the quality of our lives is not wrapped up in how much stuff we have.

Don’t measure your worth by what you own.

When we begin to think of ourselves only as valuable as what we have, who we know, or what we can do, when those things are taken away from us, we think we are worthless. We forget that our worth is in the fact that we are created in the image of God, have been given a relationship with Him through Jesus, and are children of His Kingdom. Measure your worth by whose you are, not what you have!

Let’s look at the story Jesus tells and answer two final questions.

The first question is this:

What does greed produce in us?

1. **Greed causes us to put our focus on temporary things that we can earn or make.**

:: Luke 12:16-21

16 And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.

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 my surplus grain.

19 And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain 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?’

21 “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

I’m assuming none of us have silos filled with corn or grain, so this illustration, at first, might not register with us. Here’s what we have in our context: basements and garages! We had a friend one time whose neighbor would occasionally leave the garage door up and the entire garage, floor to ceiling, front to back was completely full of stuff! Most of it they had not laid eyes on in years!

And when we fill up our basements and garages what do we do? Storage sheds!

Illustration: The self-storage industry in the U.S. is a \$38 billion industry! In 2017 \$4 Billion was spent storing people's possessions! One in 11 Americans pays an average of \$91 per month for their material overflow. If you're in the storage building industry, congratulations! Those things are popping up all over the place. In fact, one article I read this week said investors are seeing malls and large retail spaces that are closing as great places to put climate-controlled storage. U-haul just bought the K-Mart building on Stone Drive for that purpose. Interestingly enough, the places we went shopping to buy all the stuff we have is now being stored back at the building we bought it from in the first place!

I'm not saying it's sinful to have a storage shed! I'm just making a present day connection between what Jesus was talking about and what we have in our current context...don't send me mean emails.

The man in Jesus' story finds himself blessed with an abundant crop and he became laser focused on what it would take to keep it all! Think of the work he had to go through to tear down his current barns and build larger ones. But that's exactly what Jesus said he did. Greed makes us focus on temporary things and how we can keep them.

Illustration: Recently my brother was talking to my nephew about credibility. He told him that the Bible says a good name is better than silver and gold. Then he asked if Ethan knew what that meant- he didn't. So Phil explained, "Your character needs to be trustworthy so people know they can take you at your word. The Bible means that having a good reputation and godly character is more important than having a lot of money." Ethan thought about that for a minute and then said, "I think the Bible may be wrong about that one, Dad!" He followed that up with, "That's just my opinion..." Then I got a phone call from my brother, who said, "You need to hire a really good Children's Pastor because my kids need it badly!"

What does greed produce in us?

1. Greed causes us to put our focus on temporary things that we can earn or make
2. **Greed causes us to always think of ourselves first, while God and other people are afterthoughts.**

Look at verses 17-19 again and pay attention to the personal pronouns- there are 7 in the two verses!

The need of others was never a consideration in this man's mind. He also never stopped to ask God what he should do with the blessings he had been given. God is the giver of all good things. When blessings come our way, we should stop and ask God how He would have us handle the abundance He's given us.

Why does Jesus warn us about the blind spot of greed?

Greed is the enemy of generosity.

Greed causes us to miss opportunities to meet the needs of others because we are too busy keeping everything for ourselves! Jesus points out the blind spot of greed we can develop because He knows it keeps us from being generous toward God and others.

To fight against greed taking root in our hearts we have to learn to be generous.

:: Psalm 112:5

5 Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice.

:: Proverbs 22:9

9 The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.

:: 1 Timothy 6:17-19

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Listen to me: It is not a sin to have money or possessions. It's sinful to be greedy and not be generous out of the blessings God has given you.

Here's the last question:

How do we guard against greed?

1. **See God as the owner and giver of everything.**

When we learn to be dependent on God and recognize that everything belongs to Him, we will have a much better shot at avoiding greediness.

2. **Live with open hands.**

Ask God to give you opportunities to be generous with your time, talent and treasure. Winston Churchill once said, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

3. **Get accountability in community.**

Ask someone you know and trust if they see areas of greed in your life. Ask someone to help you figure out what you could do without in order to be more generous.

4. **Develop humility in every aspect of your life.**

I read a tweet by Jon Acuff this week that said: “The only billionaire I’ve spent a lot of time with would tell strangers he was in “customer service” if they asked what he did and would happily empty the trash at the restaurants he owned. I’m convinced that humility is one of the only ways to survive that amount of power.”

Micah 6:8 says, What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Ask yourself two questions this week:

- What areas of my life are marked by greed?
- What steps do I need to take to guard against the blind spot of greed.

Keep your eyes open- it’s what you don’t see that can really hurt you!

- Pray