

Good morning and welcome to Fellowship Dallas. We're glad that you're here to worship with us today. My name is Randy and I'm one of the pastors here. Thank you so much for being here this morning.

In 2003, an album dropped that launched the career of a new artist. The album shot to number one on the charts and would be the best selling album of the entire year. Not only was it the number one album of the year, it also contained the number one single of the year. And since its release 13 years ago, it has sold over 12 million copies.

The album is called *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* and features the artistry of Curtis Jackson, better known as rapper 50 Cent. The album tells a little bit about Jackson's story, how he grew up in Queens and survived the streets before turning to music.

Since that album, 50 Cent has gone on to sell another 20 million rap albums and is one of the best selling rap artists of all time. Not only is 50 Cent a best-selling artist, he leveraged his wealth to begin a series of other companies including a record label, publishing company, film production company and he owned a large stake in ViataminWater. He's made an incredible amount of business deals, made 100s of millions of dollars in the process, and he even moved into a luxurious Connecticut mansion formerly owned by Mike Tyson. Oh, by the way, a year ago, he filed for bankruptcy.

Now, I need to be honest, outside of the hit single from the album, I haven't ever really listened to it. I bring all of this up because I found the title of his album quite interesting. Not only did this title encapsulate 50 Cent's approach to life, but also to a large extent I think it encapsulates our entire society. In a country that is divided on so many things, I feel like most of America agrees, money is good.

*Get Rich or Die Tryin'*. That's it, isn't it? That's the USA. It's the picture of the inner-city kid selling drugs and turning to music or athletics, looking for any opportunity to strike it rich. But it's also the picture of the guy in the suit killing himself working 80-hour weeks just trying to make partner. It's the picture of the young couple buying a house they can't afford just so they can have something nice. It's the picture of a bunch of people camped out in long lines around an Apple Store for days to grab the latest iPhone. It's the picture of the average American family consistently looking across the street so they can keep up with the Joneses. It's the picture of debt. It's the picture of stress. It's the picture of anxiety. It's the picture of *greed*. It's the picture of the United States, and I do believe it's the picture of Dallas. *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*.

This past spring, we went through a series in Ephesians looking at the armor of God and we spoke about what it looks like to prepare ourselves for spiritual battle. As we came to the end of the series and we began to talk about what we would preach on through the summer, Gary mentioned something that became the focus for the series we're in now. He said that it's not enough just to prepare for the spiritual battle; we need to talk about how to put sin to death. We welcome people from all points on their spiritual journey who are interested in what Jesus has to say about life – but make no mistake – at Fellowship Dallas,

we want everyone to know that Jesus took a stand against sin. It is His desire that sin be put to death. What does it look like to put sin to death?

In this series, called the seven deadly virtues, we're not only talking about the seven deadly sins, we're also focusing on the virtues that we need to cultivate in our lives if we're going to put those sins to death. Gary began by speaking about vainglory and then he spoke about envy. Last week, Richard spoke about anger. But we also mentioned the importance of cultivating virtues to combat the sin. To battle vainglory, we must cultivate humility. To battle envy, we must cultivate love. To battle unhealthy anger, we must cultivate patience. Today, we will add to the list. Because it's not enough to put on the armor of God for the spiritual battle if we're going to continue to indulge in our sinful desires. It would be like an Olympic athlete who works out for 8 hours every day for years, but wakes up every morning and instead of eating Wheaties smokes cigarettes and eats little chocolate donuts.

So today, we're going to talk about greed. And I think today is a perfect time to talk about greed for two big reasons:

1. **We're not begging you for money.** We've been so vocal about gratitude to God around here lately. Since the end of June, I don't know if a Sunday has gone by where we haven't thanked God for our debt being paid off. We are debt-free! This doesn't mean that we should all stop giving, but I'm not preaching about greed today because I'm about to beg you for money.
2. **You're praying about how you should serve your church.** The second reason it's good that we're talking about greed today is because we should all be considering how we invest ourselves and today's scripture will be helpful as we think through what it means to serve our church in a meaningful way.

Now, Greed is an interesting sin because it may be the deadly sin that people are least aware of in their lives. I mean, if you took a poll of everyone in this room on the way in and asked, "Are you greedy? At all? Like, even just a little?" Most everyone here would say, "Me? No. You might be thinking about that guy over there." We look at our lives and we begin to tell ourselves, "I do enough. I give my time. I give my money. I have plenty of charitable deductions on my 1040 each year. No way am I greedy." Really?

Why don't we press pause here and stop to define what I mean by greed. Let's define greed. But before we talk about what greed *is*, let's talk about what greed *isn't*. Jared C. Wilson, in his book *Seven Daily Sins* goes about this well. He says that first of all, greed is *not* the same thing as ambition. Greed is not working hard to save money. It is okay to want to work hard to achieve a goal. It is okay to want to get that promotion. It is okay to have aspirations of being the CEO one day. All of that is fine. Greed is *not* ambition. Do you see ambition in the life of Christ? Sure – Go into all the world, making disciples! Is that not an ambitious goal? And the disciples and the apostles take Him up on it. (So should we!) It is not greedy to work hard to save money.

What is more, saving money or investing money wisely is *not* greed. It is not greedy to prudently plan for the future. As long as you realize that what you're storing up for yourself is temporary and not meant to be our source of hope, it's not greedy to save. There are

proverbs and parables about this. You may have heard the parables of Jesus that instruct us to invest our talents wisely. Certainly, that applies to all areas of our life – our time, our finances, our things – anything in life we might consider an asset. It is not greedy to invest.

It is not greedy to simply want certain things. Perhaps you want a new watch. Or maybe you want to upgrade your smartphone. It is not greedy to merely want certain things, but there's a caveat here. You have to want the thing without obsessing over it or being upset if you don't get it. So it's one thing to want a watch and another thing to have your heart set on it. It's one thing to want to upgrade your smartphone and another thing if the store is out of inventory and you *can't even*.

So greed is not ambition, it is not greedy to invest wisely, it not greedy to want something as long as you're not obsessing and finally, it is not greedy to have wealth. It isn't greedy to be wealthy. Most people think greed is a rich people problem, but it's completely possible to be greedy and live in poverty. We know this because the Bible speaks of wealth as a blessing and a product of hard work. But I must say this: having wealth complicates things. Wealth complicates things. I've said it before and I'll say it again, "Mo' money, mo' problems." In fact, being wealthy can be dangerous. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus says "It will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven!" (Mt 19:23). That seems pretty dangerous to me. Having wealth isn't greed, but it definitely complicates things.

And here's the really bad news. You're all rich. You're all rich. Ok maybe not *all* of you, but most all of you. I don't care if your bank account says billions, millions, thousands, or hundreds. You're rich. Do you own a car? You're doing better than about 85% of the world. You're rich. Do you have a place to call home? Tell that to the millions of displaced refugees around the world. You're rich. When you go to the faucet and turn it on, does drinkable water come out? Sounds rich to me. Oh, you have a toilet? And it flushes? Rich. "But Randy, when I go to the grocery store, I have to pay with food stamps." Did you say grocery store? Rich. We live in the richest democratic nation in the history of the world. We. Are. Rich.

One of the problems here is that we have a local perception of rich. When I ask you if you're rich, you're likely to compare yourself to the people in the Park Cities, not in the Sudan. Even if you live in the Park Cities, there's likely someone you have in mind when I say the word "rich." When I ask you if you're independently wealthy, you think of Mark Cuban and not Mother Teresa. When I ask you if you have wealth, you think of the car you want to upgrade to instead of the car that 85% of the world does not have. We have a local perception of rich.

So when I read the words of Jesus and he says, "It will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven," I get nervous. Because he's talking to me. And pretty much every single person in this room. In fact, when the word greedy pops up, it's best to begin with the assumption that you *are* greedy, and work your way from there instead of beginning with the assumption that you're never greedy and trying to force me to prove otherwise. Begin with the assumption that the temptation to be greedy is all around you. It is on your television. In your magazines. On your internet. In your newspaper. It is at the ballgame. It's in the grocery store. It's on the radio and it's always in the back of your mind. And it echoes,

“Come to me. Spend your money. You *neeeeeeed* this. You can’t live without what I have. Yes. Spend. Indulge. Have. Treat yo’self.”

So what is greed? Well, Jared defines greed as this: “Greed is *loving* money and/or possessions.” That’s it. Greed is *loving* money and/or possessions. When your heart is set on something that is not God. You’re being greedy. In this world, we are to love two things and two things only. We are to love God. And we are to love others. That’s it. But as soon as we begin to love things or money, itself. That’s greed.

Jesus helps us define greed in Luke’s gospel through a parable. If you have your Bible, turn with me to Luke 12. In the middle of this chapter, we see Jesus directly address the topic of greed. Let’s read, beginning in verse 13. We’ll read verses 13-21. Luke writes, “Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, **[covetousness is another word for greed!]** for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Greed is foolishness. It is an idol. But remember – we said that there’s nothing wrong with saving or investing wisely. That’s not greed. So what went wrong with the rich man here? Look again at verse 21. “So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” Lays up treasure for himself *AND* is not rich toward God. There are two things required there to make one greedy. 1. Saving up earthly riches. *AND* 2. Not being eternally rich. Did you catch that? It is possible to be rich toward God!

We hear Jesus say this in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew he says, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:20-21). We can be rich toward God. How do we do that?

Let’s turn to 1 Timothy 6. In Paul’s first letter to Timothy, we discover the antidote to greed. And it’s this antidote to greed that helps us store up treasure in heaven. The antidote to greed is *generosity*. Look for it in this passage. We’ll read vv. 17-19. 1 Timothy, chapter six, beginning in verse 17, “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”

Do you see what Paul says, here, to Timothy? He wants Timothy to tell them two things:

1. **Hope in God alone.** The rich people need to divert any hope they have in their money or in their wealth and place it instead in God. Why? Because earthly riches are uncertain. The stock market goes up and the stock market goes down. Houses are built and houses burn down. Emergency funds grow and emergency funds get depleted. Riches are uncertain, but God? He's the surest investment you'll ever make. He is *always* generous. He is always ready to share. "For God so loved the world, He *gave*." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I *give* to you." "Every good and perfect gift comes down from [God] the Father of Lights."

Earthly riches are uncertain, but God richly provides us with everything. His riches never fail. The first thing Paul tells Timothy to share with the rich people is to place their hope in our generous God instead of money. This is a demonstration of why money complicates things and can be so dangerous. It's because wealth lures us into thinking that security, comfort and wellbeing are found in it. Don't get me wrong, money can bring contentment, but it is only temporary and cannot hold the weight of our hope.

2. The second thing Paul tells Timothy to challenge the rich in his congregation is to **Be generous**. Be generous. He tells them to look to God and then follow in His footsteps. And how does Paul characterize God here? As good, generous and sharing. We must be rich in good works. Paul explains what he means. We need to be generous and share. Faith without works is *dead*. We don't do good works to achieve our salvation, we do good works out of an overflow of our salvation. We cannot get to heaven by doing good works, but we show the world where we're headed by doing them.

Good works isn't the *ticket* to your destination, it is the luggage you're carrying around, showing everyone where you're headed. If you're going to the beach, you've got on a tank top and a swimsuit. If you're going skiing, you've got on gloves and ski goggles. If you're going to Texas in August, you've got a bad travel agent.

Your ticket to heaven is God's grace through your faith. But it's your good works that shows everyone around you where you're headed. What kind of baggage are you carrying around? Are you rich in good works? Do you share? Are you generous?

So what is my encouragement to you after reading this passage? "Be rich in good works. Be generous, thus storing up treasure for themselves for the future." What is my encouragement to you? **Get Rich or Die Tryin'**. Church, you've got to get rich or die tryin'. Are you generous? Do you help other people out because of your taxes or because they are people? When you look at your resources is your first impulse how you should spend them or how you can help someone? Do you go to your church or do you serve your church?

One of our elders, Bob Gray, shared with me this simple truth earlier this week. You've *never* met an unhappy generous person. Never. You've never met an unhappy generous person. Think about it. Who is the most generous person you've ever met. Who is it? And when I say generous, I don't just mean with their pocketbook, but with their heart. Who is

the most generous person you've ever met? How would you describe him? How would you characterize her? Were they unhappy? I doubt it. Were they angry? I doubt it. Were they envious? I doubt it. Were they lazy? I doubt it. Were they humble? Probably. Loving? Of course. Patient? Highly likely.

So here's what I want you to do right now. Grab a piece of paper. It could be your worship guide. You could jot this down on your phone. But find somewhere to write some things down. Maybe you can text yourself. If you absolutely have to, you can use a Connect Card or a Prayer Card. But I want you to make a list right now. I'll tell you what to write down:

1. First of all. Write down your greatest strength. What is your greatest strength?
2. Next, write down your top three greatest physical assets.
3. Now, write down your top one or two strongest earthly relationships.

Now, I want you to look at your list. Look at those things. These are some of the most important things in the world to you. And every single one of these things is something that God has generously given to you. Whether it's a strength, part of your wealth, or a relationship, it is a gift from God. But he did not give us these things to hoard. He did not give us these things to store away forever. Everything He so generously gave us is meant to be a tool for us to love Him and to love others while on this earth. Everything. Everything He has given us is something that is meant to be shared. Shared not just with your loved ones, but with your co-workers. With your neighbors. With strangers. And certainly, with your church.

This week, I really want you to pray every day and ask God how He is calling you to use the things He has given you for His glory and for the sake of others. We KNOW He is calling you to be rich in good works – it's right there in the Bible – we KNOW He is calling you to be generous. It's not a question of "if," but a question of "how." What I don't know is *how* He is calling you. That's between you and Him. How is God calling you to use these things for His glory? So, that's your prayer list for this week. We have a prayer guide on the back of the worship guide – you should use that, too. I hear the guy who writes those is one of the most wonderful people you've ever met. I hear he also has some pride issues he needs to work through. But you should pray this week. Because church, you've got to get rich or die tryin'.

[for 11:00 service]

Perhaps, there is not greater act of generosity than to give your life over to something. And today, we have three individuals who have given their life to Christ. And they are here to publicly proclaim their faith through baptism. So Jason, why don' you come on out. Baptism candidates, stand now . . .

[/11:00 Service]

Over the next months, you're going to start hearing a phrase over and over again. It's our new mission statement. At Fellowship Dallas we are calling each other to live out our God-given purpose in Christ every day. We are calling each other to live out their God-given purpose in Christ every day. It is our desire that every person who walks into this church will learn that God has called him or her to something. That every person would begin to understand his or her calling. That they would grow passionate about their calling. But that

Deadly Virtues  
Get Rich or Die Tryin

1 Timothy 6:17-19

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Randy Thompson

cannot happen – we will not be able to call each other to our God-given purpose in Christ – if people do not feel welcome here. They are not likely to stick around if they do not feel their children or students are being cared for. They are not likely to stick around if they do not feel welcomed here. And they're definitely not likely to stick around if the sound or lights don't work right in here. If you call Fellowship your church home, please take some time, even just a minute or two, and look over that insert, if you haven't, and you can take it to the middle of the concourse or downstairs in the Hub. If you want to fill it out, but you have some questions, please stop by the concourse and don't leave here without all of the information you need.