



SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Seven Deadly Sins: Greed

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Luke 12: 13-21

Hi and good morning, Church. Today, we will be reading Luke 12:13-21.

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, 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 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, and 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." This is the Word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Great work. Well, good morning, everyone. Happy 11:15. Nobody? Oh golly, that's going to be a long morning. Okay. I need some energy. You know, there's that element, yes, there's that element where you could fake it till you make it-just fake it till you make it, guys. We're talking about greed, your favorite sin. You're super excited about this, okay. So anyway, if you're new my name is Eddie, I'm the lead teaching pastor here with Doxa. Glad you guys could all be here. We just moved to two gatherings, which explains the weird joke I just made about being here at 11:15. So you don't think I'm a total weirdo. I'm going to pray over us and we're going to get right into our message, sound good? All right. Let's do it.

Well, Lord, as we go after something that's so near and dear to a lot of our hearts, Lord, money, possessions, acquiring things, I pray that our hearts and minds are open. I pray that you are

kind to us as we explore this topic. I pray that our spirits are humble as we come to a topic like this. And I do pray for your protection over the words spoken. I pray that the scripture is clear. I pray that your word emanates from the pages and that people's hearts can be changed. We love you and praise you, in Jesus name. Amen.

All right. Greed. The one sin none of us have. I feel like that's great. That's why we start a series like this-about the sin none of us have-because Americans, we love looking at bad stuff. We love looking at sin as long as it's other peoples' sins, right? If you ever go on Twitter, people love to attack other people when they fail. This is great. This is what we're about to do. Maybe there's a few people somewhere really far away that are greedy. Like maybe in the top of all of the biggest buildings in Seattle and Bellevue. Those are the greedy people. Us? We're mostly fine. We've got a normal amount of appetite for stuff, right? Greedy people are up in those big buildings.

I brought a few friends to show you-a couple greedy people. I saw them. I took a picture of them. There's one of them. Look at this greedy scumbag. Look at him, insidious, staring at you, looking down on you like a peon. This is Mr. Burns from the Simpsons if you're like under 30. And look at that greedy wine glass. Who knows how expensive that Woodinville wine is. Look at that. Look at him in his greedy little green robe. He's just a greedy, insidious evil man. And then I also brought another friend of his, boom, look at this guy, swimming in gold. All the kids starving in Africa, all the wars going on, look how much money he could give, not just money, gold, solid gold coins. And he's got 90 feet of depth of gold coins. I mean, nine inches would be great, right? He's got 90 feet! Look at all the jewels.

These are the sort of people we think of when we think of greed, just these greedy, money-hungry, firing people on Christmas Eve sort of mustache-twirling, villains. Greedy. But greed is a sin and it is a prominent one. And in today's culture, again, we don't like to talk about sin unless of course it's not ours, it's someone else's. So when you look about the facts and statistics on consuming in society, though, I do think that there is probably a few more greedy people than we think. Now, of course not us, but others, right? Let's look at a few of these statistics. First, the average household in 2022 has \$155,000 in total debt. That's buying a lot. We owe a lot of money. America and Western Europe account for-just those two regions in the entire world-account for 60% of all private consumer spending with America, being the bulk of that. We spend most of the money and when we buy stuff, what do we do with it?

Well, in America, there is 2.2 billion square-feet of storage space being used in the United States. So we buy so much stuff that when we run out of space in our houses, which by the way, the average square-foot of a house in America is 2100 square feet, we decide that, wait, let's keep it. And we go rent out more square footage, an 8x10 storage facility to store more junk. So not only do we have a lot of junk in our houses and our garages, if you've ever been to my in-law's house you know that garage is packed full of memories. There's also-my wife laughed- there's also storage units for more stuff. We've got all it. And it's not just adults, guys. It's not just adults. Despite having only 3% of the world's children, America's kids have 40% of all the world's toys. You're probably thinking half of those are at my house, right? My kids have

half those toys, right? Like there's toys all over the place. And then perhaps black Friday, the greediest day of the year, the greediest weekend of the year. The amount Americans spend on a single black Friday weekend on average is more than half of the total they give to a church in an entire year.

Greed clearly is about spending, but it's about more than that. It's a matter of our most inward desires and passions. It's almost as if in America, the desire is to somewhat try to make it, try to make society, live the American dream, have a certain amount of money, stocks, vacations, possessions. And then once we acquire those things, we can sort of, you know, feel whole. Relax. Life is sort of though, until we get there, kind of incomplete until we reach that apex version of ourselves. How many of you thought once I get this job, this promotion, I don't know, this certain amount of money in the bank or this spouse, things will finally smooth out and then I can like begin my life. How many of you thought that? The apex version though, that you're hoping for, of yourself that will someday come with that home, that car, that job, that husband, that wife-that person always seems to be at least a few months or a few years out. It's almost as if they keep backing up. It's almost like a future version of oneself is just that-their future.

You see greed isn't just about money. Greed at its core is an internal struggle for meaning and for purpose, not purely an outward struggle of money and possessions. You see this sermon, I think friend is for you. It's easy for all of us to find someone else who's more greedy than us. But if we were to see greed for what it is, an inward struggle for meaning and purpose, and to try to fill a God-shaped hole with stuff, then it's possible all of us have it. A sinner's goal, and by the way, you're a sinner and so am I-a sinner's goal is to try to find value, meaning and fulfillment oftentimes apart from God and we'll pull out all the stops to make that happen. And with greed, we're going to attempt to buy stuff, acquire stuff and desire to acquire stuff in order to sort of make ourselves feel whole. That's the temptation. And apart from God though, the Bible teaches that satisfaction is not possible. And our desire for more will sort of rule over us. That's what the Bible teaches. And unfortunately that will never accomplish what we think our greed seeks to accomplish, which is to have enough and to be enough.

Psychologist, Dr. Neel Burton, a secular psychologist, he says this, "Our culture's emphasis on greed is such that people have become immune to dissatisfaction. Having acquired one thing, they are immediately ready to desire the next thing that might suggest itself. Today, the object of desire is no longer satisfaction, but desire itself." Greed is not just about you having something, it's about you wanting to have it. It's the longing desire to do it.

We find Jesus addressing greed directly in Luke chapter 12. And so if you've got your Bible, hopefully you've got that open. We'll have some of it on the screen for those that are new. And what we find is that Jesus names greed as our most obvious competitor for our soul. And here's what we find in the passage. And this is the kicker. No one, friend, thinks they're greedy. But likely you are. Fun. So let's walk through it. Here's what we're going to learn. What greed is, where it hides and how do we fix it? What's the antidote?

First, what is greed? Now, if you open up a Webster's dictionary, you can go to the Webster's dictionary and open it up, it's going to say something like this: Greed is an excessive pursuit of

material goods. So by that definition, who's greedy? Somebody else, right? I mean "excessive" pursuit? I mean, I'm not excessive in my desires to acquire. I just want a normal amount of awesome stuff, right? Like I'm not asking for way more. I'm not Scrooge McDuck diving into gold coins. I just want the second dishwasher. I just want the new car, the new model. I just want to be able to eat at nice restaurants all the time. It's nothing crazy. It's a normal amount of excess, I mean stuff, right?

Ooh, let's break this definition down. Greed is the selfish, excessive desire for more than is needed, that helps bring purpose to the life of the individual. First, you see in here, desire. Friends, it's not just about having stuff. It's about wanting it. Next thing, "more than is needed." More than is needed. So get this, all humans are created dependent beings. We need one another. We need God. We also need food, shelter, clothing, relationships. We need all of those things. So it's not wrong in a vacuum to consume. It's when you become a consumer and it becomes your identity, and all you can do is consume, that all of a sudden the knob gets turned up and our desire to acquire goes through the roof, right? And then here's the third thing. It helps bring purpose to the life of the individual.

Friends, it's almost impossible to be greedy without it somehow contributing to your purpose and who you are. When your desire to consume overwhelms you, it has everything to do with how you see yourself and what you need to do to satisfy your soul, at least from your perspective. So if you're greedy, you believe that whatever you pursue will essentially bring you some measure of meaning or some measure of happiness. But really greed is a slippery slope. It really is. And maybe you're here and you're like, I still haven't found myself in this. That's totally fine. I think you will by the end. It's a stepped approach.

First, greed in its infancy stage is sort of excessive desire for more than is needed. It starts out like that. Oh man, I feel like all of a sudden I've got 60 plates in my living room. Like I just keep buying Crate and Barrel plates and now I've got so many. Or now this is like the sixth vacation this year. I keep acquiring experiences and possessions. Then it begins to morph into this idea that you can sort of receive your purpose and meaning, like we talked about, and value apart from God. And so now all of a sudden you're starting to acquire things and you're going, actually this game feels a lot better than the game of faith and giving of yourself completely. I feel like this game of acquiring wealth and the climbing the corporate ladder feels a lot more fun and feels often like the purpose of the way I'm supposed to live, right, to make it. I feel like making it feels more fun. But then it evolves again. And eventually in its crown jewel phase, greed leads to complete satisfaction in the pursuit and acquiring of possessions, complete satisfaction.

And therefore, because of that satisfaction, you develop a level of autonomy apart from God. Once you have everything you need, who needs God? I Mean, you have everything you think you need. That's what greed is. And even if you don't have it, I'm going to desire to acquire it and I believe I can because I'm good at it. And so therefore, even if I don't have it, just the pursuit of it makes me happy. And all of a sudden God's over here and what we do is we like our greed sundae. And then in order to make ourselves feel better, we just sort of sprinkle

Christianity sprinkles on it. And so now we sort of look the part. We come to church every now and then. We sort of give a little bit here and there and, and so therefore I can live life as a capitalist or a consumer or a, you know, insert, whatever ideology it is. And I'm no longer even a Christian. And that's how it works. It's insidious. That's the definition.

Let's look at how Jesus handles the situation. Look at verse 13 of our text. Someone in the crowd said to Jesus "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 for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." So judging by Jesus' answer these two men debating sort of over this inheritance, Jesus makes a pretty big jump. He jumps from, hey, can you arbitrate this relationship, we're trying to figure this out, to-you guys are pretty greedy. You guys are coveting. He makes a huge jump. And is that fair of Jesus? Well, Jesus sees the inward heart, right?

So let me read this statement by Jesus again. It says, take care and be on your guard against all covetousness for, listen up, one's life does not consist in the abundance of their stuff. Raise your hand if you disagree with that statement. We all agree. We all know deep down, the most money-hungry person that is in this room or has ever existed knows, well, not everything is about consuming possessions and money, right? No. Do you think that the two guys he was talking to also agree with that statement? They might even go well, yeah, we get that. And yet Jesus answers him with that. He answers him with, hey, your life doesn't consist of your possessions. Which leads me to say, if we all know that, we all know the answer to that question, we all believe Jesus statement, then why do we have kernels and seeds of greed in our lives? If we know it's not all about that, why do we keep pursuing it?

Many of us would say, of course it's not all about the possessions. And yet Jesus continues. Verse 16 he starts telling this parable. It's called the parable of the rich fool, which I feel like is apropos for the Eastside. Verse 16. And he told them a parable saying, "The land of the 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 in all my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, and be merry." ' "

Now, by the way, who talks to himself like this? This is so weird. I will say to my soul, "Soul," right? Like he's got more problems than greed. Now that's clear. This parable though is not about this man's crops. Just like our greed is not about our money and possessions. You see, while the crops aren't the most obvious thing that brings purpose to this man's life, the comfort and lack of anxiety that the crops produce is the issue. In his statement you see it. "Soul," I mean, he's talking to his soul for crying out loud. He's telling his soul, relax. You've got everything you need right here in these barns. Now you can relax, eat, drink, and be merry. It's almost as if, if he didn't have them, he couldn't relax. And we can kind of mock his statement, "soul, eat, drink, and be merry for you have ample goods stored up for yourself." But we kind of are all living for that too. That's sort of the zeitgeist, the spirit of the age of our region.

Every company, when you go to a company, they give you a benefits package. They tell you how much money you make. They tell you how much they're going to pay for your insurance. They tell you how much they're going to contribute to your retirement. Their structure is all about you acquiring possessions and money and wealth. And some of that's to live, and some of that's to spend. Judging by the amount of salaries people earn here, a lot of the time, it's for spending, right? You know what's not in the benefits package? We're going to contribute \$5,000 a month to this church or charity on your behalf. Why isn't that in the benefits package? It could easily be, but it's not. We're going to donate. Two people are going to go to the soup kitchen every month for every hour you work. Not in the benefits package. They don't offer these as benefits unless we all perceive them as benefits. Because that's the taste we want. That's why they offer it, because that's what we are. That's what we long for.

Now is it bad to have money? Is it bad to earn a living or buy a house or have a nice dishwasher? Depends. Depends. Depends on whether or not what you're doing leads to contentment with God and your flourishing, or if it leads to your disconnection from God or your lack of flourishing. It depends. Jesus is calling this out. No one disagrees with this statement. This parable is calling out that these crops have a hold based on what they produce in someone's life. And then we'll do the same thing. When we go, this guy's tearing down barns, how ridiculous—we tear down barns. We just call it moving, getting new jobs, climbing the corporate ladder, moving into different houses, moving our money to this X account, providing this account for this account. We're just shifting things around, watching the stock market, moving to this city for a better job. We build barns. And then what we want to do, or we hope to do, is to kick up our feet. So we can say it's all in order. Isn't that nice.

Nothing wrong with pursuing wealth. Nothing wrong with earning a good living. But when those things become an ultimate thing in your life, then you've got a problem. And here's the kicker. Nobody knows when they become an ultimate thing. That's what makes it scary. There's this wonderful passage Paul tells Timothy in First Timothy 6. I want to read it to you. Pay close attention to this, just check it out. It says this, "But those who desire to be rich, fall into temptation, into a snare" wait, hold on a second, "For those who desire to be rich. For those who desire to be rich," didn't say anything else, that's just what it says..."fall into temptation, into a snare, and into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs."

What I hope this passage communicates to you is the seriousness of where greed leads. And you might say, you know, and I'd say the same thing, of course, money and possessions aren't the most important thing. Of course they're not. And yet the narratives of our lives tell a different story. Absolutely tell a different story. In this section, Paul is warning Timothy that greed is insidious enough and hidden enough in you to cause you to wander away from faith. It's not as if you earn a bunch of money and then you go, you know what? Christ didn't die on the cross. I'm outta here. That's not how it works. It's oh, I got a lot of money. I could buy this. I could buy that. Oh, that house is really great. Oh man, we should get this. We should do that.

Hey, you know, we haven't been to church in a while. Uh, never mind that. Like, I'm here, I'm here, I'm here. I'm here, I'm here.

And all of a sudden it's been six years and you haven't given, you haven't served. You haven't prayed outside of praying for your dinner. You don't have any relationship with God at all, because you were distracted by all your stuff. It says you wander away. It didn't say you just go no, I'm outta here. I'm a Muslim, now I got a lot of money I'm a Muslim. That's not how it works. It's insidious. It's hidden. It's a warning. So you might be at the vacation home with your feet up, funded retirement, and suddenly years go by. Years go by. And you're no longer walking with Jesus at all. But of course you have Christian stickers slapped onto the outside of your life. So when the census comes, you check evangelical and you know, depending on which news outlet you watch, as long as it's mostly Christian, like that's the one you watch. But like nothing about your life looks any different than the average American consumer.

That's the trap of the Eastside. I hope you hear me. It's not, they're going to come take your kids away or Islam's coming, the crusades are restarting. No, no. It's not, oh, sexuality. You know what it is? It's your own heart. It's your own desire for more. The devil doesn't have to pull out all the stops. If he can just get you with a Tesla or a new house. Pretty easy. This is the challenge we all have, guys. The gravitational pull on a region of wealth is strong, very strong. It doesn't matter how much money you have or how little you have. Speaking of which, greed hides in a lot of places. And you might be thinking, you know what, I do believe you. I'm tracking with you. How do I assess this?

Well, let's look at a few places greed might hide in your life. First place. Greed could hide in a lack of money. Many people think because they don't have any money in their bank account then they can't be greedy. Listen, anyone could be greedy. It doesn't mean you're good at it. Okay? You just might be broke. There's greedy people. There's greedy poor, and there's greedy rich. There's greedy middle class. There's all sorts of greed. Greed can manifest all sorts of ways in your lack of money. My favorite is being a mooch. Any mooches in here? Mooches usually raise their hands. You know, I noticed that too. People experiment. Getting other people to pay for your stuff is an absolute art form. It is an absolute art form. It is a behold to watch. I mean, you could have your parents paying for your house for years. You're living off your boyfriend or girlfriend for years. You can get everyone you know to always buy you lunch and dinner. It's amazing. And it's an art form, but it's also a form of greed. Living off of other people, overstaying your welcome is a form of greed and you're relying on their codependency or their fear in telling you that they don't want to do it.

And so you're using them. That's what it is. Maybe you have no money because you spent all your money. So it's not that you have no money that you're poor. It's that you just spend it all. So your greed has sort of led you to poverty. Get rich quick schemes, right? Can't-lose real estate deals. My favorite, the next multi-level marketing essential oils business, whatever it is. Just kidding. Gosh, the oxygen just ran out. I just lost like 30%. People are like I'm outta here, I'm outta here! That's funny. It's so easy to point the finger at the rich person. Proverbs 28 says, "A stingy man hastens after wealth and does not know that poverty will come upon him."

Trying to get rich fast, trying to get rich quick, spending all your money can get you too. Another place where greed might hide is in debt.

Now you might say, I'm not greedy. I'm poor. I have so many payments. I can't afford anything. Why? Have you bought a bunch of stuff you can't afford? Did you buy a car that was too expensive? Did you go to a school you couldn't afford? That's a tough one. Do you have a lot of credit card debt? You have all this stuff that you've purchased and so therefore you have no space in your budget to live your life. You want to live in a bigger house than you can actually afford. You might say, oh, well, no, you don't understand, I mean, I went to the dealership and the nice man, he gave me a line of credit. And it was a lot of credit and he said I could use it all, and so I just did. Not a big deal. That's just how it works. Listen, friends, you don't have to take every dime a creditor extends you. And you might say, well it's not fair. It's Ford. It's Chevy. It's Fannie Mae. It's Freddie Mac. It's visa. It's MasterCard. They're the ones that are greedy. Yeah, maybe, probably. But you know who greedy companies make their money off of? Other greedy people. That's where they make their money. They offer these crazy loans to people that can't afford it yet and are like, I'm going to jump in and I just need the reliable 2022 with 0 miles on it. I just gotta get it. 85,000 dollars, no big deal. You don't have a job, Greg. You need a job first. That's fine. You know, the Lord will take care of me. Yeah, he'll take care of you alright. Then they'll charge 24% interest on your credit card and greed overrides the logic centers in your brain. And that's not a good way to pay something off. And now, listen, we're not talking about extenuating circumstances here with debt. We're not talking about unforeseen hospital bills, all these things. My point is...that if debt is the reason you cannot function in your life, you've exercised greed. That's what I'm trying to tell you.

Okay, last place greed hides. Greed hides in the normative nature of acquiring money and possessions in culture. Here's the deal. Not only is acquiring wealth and possessions normal today. It's the dominant value of our society. I mean, who disagrees with this? Right? This makes greed much harder to spot because greed is seen as good in culture. And so if me acquiring things, reading financial blogs and watching the stock market tells me that that's what everyone else is doing in my life, and if I'm doing it, I'm good-then it's very hard to spot greed. Because we read those and we believe that the purpose of life then is to acquire wealth. So we have this made up order of how we're supposed to spend our money because culture told us what's wise and what's not wise.

Let me tell you, this is a very made-up order just to let you know. If you get your check and you say, here's my check, here's my bonus. First thing I do is I buy this for myself, buy this for myself, pay all the bills I've got to pay. And then if I got anything left, I might serve with that money. That's normal American culture. Who told you or us that funding your 401k or paying down debt is the first thing you should do before ever deciding to give to anything? Who said that? Is that a Christian virtue or an American virtue. We live like Americans with Christian stickers. That's what consumerism does to us. It's normal. Culture exists in an echo chamber of greed. And so certainly serving others with money or giving them our time, you know, into those in need or working extra hours is ridiculous because I've got a job and I got money and I got stock. And all of a sudden busy really means me chasing greed.

Let's go back to verse 18. It says this, And he said, the man in the parable, 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, and 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 towards God. What happens when you die, friends? What happens to you when it's time to trade in your soul? Whether your life's work will be flashed before your eyes and then distilled down and handed to Jesus and he is ready to trade you, what will he see? Satisfying greed is a lot like giving morphine to a burn victim because you can get a high enough dosage of morphine that it can make you euphoric and take away all the sort of pain and sort of remove you from the reality of what's actually going on.

I don't if you've known anyone that's ever done that, but it's a lot like that. It helps them essentially feel euphoria that comes with a medication, but really it stands in contrast to their actual corrupted state where they may be burned and might even be dying. The feelings of acquiring wealth, window-shopping, traveling-they can make you feel as if you're healthy. They can even make you feel euphoric, but it doesn't mean you are healthy. You might be very sick, but greed is a wonderful pain killing drug.

So how do we kill it for good really? That's our point three and here's where we'll sort of end our time. Generosity. Generosity is the antidote degree. Now I feel like as I've preached this before, even this morning, many people will check out right here. They'll check out when you mention the word generosity, because this is where sort of God tells them to give up the thing they've been chasing for their entire lives. And there's a crisis of identity because their identity is maybe not in Jesus, it's in stuff. And so they're unwilling to do it. But just hear out verse 20 again. After you've got your life and you've kicked your feet up, God says, and God said to him, Fool, this night your soul is required of you. The things you have prepared, the house, the accounts, the trips, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasures for himself and is not rich toward God. So you might be enjoying the fruits of your labor. You might be maybe in between churches or maybe you've stepped out of Christianity for the pandemic or you might be on this pursuit towards hitting all your financial goals. And maybe let's say you're living the life, trying to either pay off debt or you're trying to acquire more or you're just on vacation and enjoying the fruits of your labor. And you're doing all these wonderful things. And you've been doing it so much over and over again that six months goes by, and 12 months goes by, and 18 months goes by, and 24 months goes by, and then three, and then four, and then five, and then six, and seven years goes by. And all of a sudden you realize, man, I am not in a Christian community. I have not really talked to anyone about Jesus. I only give on occasion. I don't serve anywhere or anybody. And then the door knocks and it's God. And he says, what are you doing? You fool. Tonight your soul's required of you and all of this stuff you've given your life to-where do you suppose that should go?

My fear is you'll be enjoying the fruits of your labor and Jesus is going to show up and knock on your door. as you're doing the thing that you've worked your entire life for and go, you missed

it. You've given your life over. You've bought into the zeitgeist to the Seattle area. You're on your way to acquiring and desiring and getting and you weren't rich towards God and you weren't rich towards me. That's my fear for you. This breaks my heart because I don't want this for you. I don't want you to stand before Jesus as he comes up and calls oh, you fool. I don't want that for you. The reality though is he says those who are last will be first, and those who are first will be last. Who's first if not the backyard of Amazon and Microsoft. I mean, 1% of 1% in the world! This place. The poorest among us would be an oligarch of wealth, king, queen, 200 years ago, living the way we live.

And how could you go for months disconnected from God, enjoying your life and then barely miss him. And then watch sermons online thinking that that's Christianity? Another lie from the serpent. And then now God shows up and you're not at all prepared. I don't want that for you. Instead, be rich towards God. Rich towards God means having the heart of Jesus when it comes to our wealth and possessions. Give your possessions and your money away to those who need them. Jesus is saying in this parable that you put so much emphasis on something that matters so little and then just like that, your life's over. What do you want me to do with all your stuff? Your kids want it? I mean, listen, folks, for those of you that are older and you know this, your kids don't want your junk. Like your kids don't want it. Like you've got addicts full of stuff. You're like, oh my kids will love this frame of me in 1962. No, they're not. They got 70 of them. They don't need another one. Okay. Then where does it go? Craigslist? The trash?

On the east side, you might say, I can keep all this stuff. You can't keep it. All your Tesla will not fit in your coffin. It will not fit. Jesus spends 25% of his time in the gospels talking about biblical stewardship. That means it's important to him and it matters. And it happens to be our biggest vice. Many of you are here and your faith has struggled. Maybe you've wandered away from the Lord. You wandered away from God. Maybe you're sort of on the outs with him. Might I suggest to you that you're struggling not because you don't have enough, but because you don't give enough. Because you are missing out on the purest form of joy and peace there is—radical, condition less, generosity. Why do I say that? Because the reason why generosity heals greed, and the reason why it heals all covetousness and many other spiritual ailments is because God created us in his image. And God is by nature a giver, a generous giver. God has given us over creation, a world with oxygen, with beauty, with wonder, all these amazing things. He gives us a wonderful place to call home. He gives us an earth that's beautiful. And sometimes yes, we get consumed by it and we forget about him.

But God also gives us our wealth and our possessions, all the things that can control us, he gives to us. He provides those things for us day by day. And yes, sometimes this world is hard and because sinners are sinners, they put themselves before other people. But God also gave one other thing—he gave a way out. You see, not only does he give the earth and financial provision, but he also gives us a gift that we needed most. See friend, because you're a sinner because I'm a sinner we owe a massive debt. And this isn't a debt you could get a lump sum of cash with and sort of pay off. And this debt can't be paid in money. Can't be paid in gold like Scrooge McDuck. It can't be paid in any of that stuff. The debt is owed in blood. The wages of sin is death. But God being rich in mercy decides to give his only son.

Jesus comes down in human form, lives in human history, giving his life as a gift, as an example, a gift as an example. And then he also is so perfect and wonderful that he's killed and executed. But he did resurrect saying, if you believe in me and you cast aside all of the stuff and you take my blood and let it cover you, that will pay your debt. And on the other side in glory, you get your sheet and you look at your debt and you look and you see, oh man, it's blank. Looks like Jesus has you covered. Or you can pay the debt yourself with all your wealth and possessions. But Jesus says, there's nothing you could do with this. When you give, friends, you are living in sync with who God is—a generous give, and you're living out who God's actually made you to be.

This is a challenge for this region. I was talking to a couple people out in the hallway and I'm listening to them talk. And they're sharing their struggle and everyone is doing this. You ever been on the freeway and everyone's driving really fast. Like maybe you're in the beltway. And you're somewhere far and you're driving fast and everyone's going 90 miles an hour. And you're going like, I don't know, 88, 89. You're a little slower. And everyone's going that fast. But then behind you, police officer pulls you over and what's the first thing you say? Everyone was speeding. Why did you pull me over? And he is like, oh weird. You were going with the flow traffic. Yeah. What'd your odometer say? 88. What's the speed limit? Okay.

Just because everyone else is greedy around you doesn't mean you're not greedy. Just because you know more greedy people doesn't mean you're not greedy. Greedy is an attempt to satisfy this gap in our heart for meaning and purpose and value that only the Lord can bring. You can unlock that meaning if you kill the power of your stuff over you, by being generous like our God is. Let's pray.

Jesus, I can feel the hold over our region. I can feel it in my own heart. I feel it in my friends. We long for the spirit of the age sometimes. But you say in Romans 12, that we should not be conformed any longer by the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. So that way when we come out from the covering of spiritual protection with you, in communion, we could step out in the world and see the things that we haven't been able to see and we've been blind to. So Lord, I pray for a transformational renewal of our minds. I pray that this time would spark conversation in each of my friends' hearts on how do I begin this process of putting to death this sin? It will not be easy, but you're an all-powerful God and you can do it. We love you. We pray for you. We pray with you, in Jesus name. Amen.

