

PP 360° Giving: Give Inward and Overcome the Power of Coveting

Text **Luke 12:22-34**

1/17-18, 2015

Last week we saw that we need to give upward, and God will enrich us in every way, so we can be even more generous for the kingdom of God

Listen to this email that I share by permission...*I get paid every two weeks, so I put in my offering every other Sunday. My company altered our pay day, so this past Friday was supposed to be a full pay day, and it was not. This left us short for the week, but despite this, my wife wrote our giving check today, trusting our God would provide. I decided to start my spring cleaning a little early today, instead of going skiing with some friends. I was going through some old birthday cards at the bottom of a dresser drawer, and found \$20 more than what we gave today! Since I've started volunteering at one of our ministries, you can guess where that is headed!*

We simply cannot out-give God!

It is all His, and the surpassing grace of God is ready to help us become generous givers, giving as He directs, uniquely, decisively, freely and cheerfully

Some of the greatest joys in my life have been experienced when my heart is freed from anxiety over money in order to give as God directed

Today, God's Word will help us to give inward and overcome the power of coveting

Look with me at **Luke 12:1**, and notice that there is a crowd of many thousands gathered to hear and see Jesus, but **'He began to say to His disciples first...'** (verse 1)

Suddenly, a man from that huge crowd comes to Him saying, **'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.'** **12:13**

'Teacher' is the word for Rabbi, and they routinely arbitrated civil and family disputes

But Jesus is looking deep into this man's heart and says to all who hear, **"Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."** **Luke 12:15**

He just diagnosed the man's heart: he was coveting

Coveting is a serious heart issue, debilitating in fact, paralyzing us from generous giving

He needed a heart transplant and friends, that is the way of the gospel in our lives, as *it gives us the 'want to do' before the 'what to do'*

PP 1-The symptoms of a coveting heart (12:16-21)

PP a. Selfishness

"And He told them a parable, saying, 'The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself...'"

Notice that the farmer was already rich, but then had a bumper crop

But with that increase, he took counsel with himself

Denise and I recently had an unexpected increase, and we agreed to pray individually about where God wanted us to give, and then get together to decide

We came back together Friday and I suggested splitting the amount up between a ministry and a missionary, and how incredible it was that she had been thinking the exact same thing

But the farmer in this story only took counsel with himself

I've never met a generous person who refuses counsel from others, or a stingy person who welcomes it

This man's impulse was to accumulate, rather than share, he invited no one to speak into his plan
We are allowed to listen to his self-counsel: *'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...'*

Notice how many times the words 'I' and 'my' occur!

But selfish people not only think to themselves, they speak to themselves

"And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" **12:19**

Our self-talk is our heart-talk, and he believed that he now had enough to determine his future!

Friends, who holds you accountable to how you spend your money?

Who is helping you see selfishness and pushing you beyond your comfort zone with giving?

Couples, do you have an amount, hopefully low, that neither can spend above without approval

They counter this advice with *We're pretty good with our money, we trust each other*

The most common answer in married couples, is no, and no one holds them accountable with \$

Accountability is not about distrust, it is about pushing each other to give more wisely and give more abundantly for the glory of God

Selfish people live self-directed lives: *"So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."* **Luke 12:21**

Money is managed in only two directions: *'for himself'* and *'toward God'*

Christian, the bible is very clear that it is not wrong to have money or possessions

PP *"You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may confirm His covenant that He swore to your fathers, as it is this day."* **Deut. 8:18**

PP *"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."* **1 Timothy 6:17**

Job, Abraham, Boaz and Solomon and many other saints of God had great wealth

Money and possessions are not evil, and having them is not wrong, but loving them and trusting in them for happiness and security is

The rich toward God are generous givers who do not lay up treasure for themselves

PP b. Anxiety

Notice that Jesus turns back to His disciples: *"And He said to His disciples"* **12:22**

Transformation and change can happen only after we get to the heart and look up to God

Until that occurs, we are in behavior management, the best we can offer are coping strategies

The gospel aims deeply and vertically, to change us from the inside out, to give us the 'want to do' before He gives us the 'what to do'

'Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.' **12:22**

'anxious' means to be torn apart, and *'worried'* in verse 29 means to be held in suspense

The word anxious was used to describe a ship being tossed about in a storm

Our word 'worry' vividly comes from an old British meaning to strangle

PP *"Worry doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow it empties today of its strength."*

Corrie Ten Boom

Coveting has a root system...anxiety!

Anxiety is the fear of the future and coveting is the ship-tossed heart trying to relieve that fear

The coveting heart is a system of idolatry revealing a problem with trusting God

And it's not just the rich and famous who have the potential to covet

Do you know people who have so much that they have to park outside their own stuffed garages?

Coveting is the opposite of generosity, it stores rather than gives, accumulates versus shares

And in a very subtle way, coveting begins to view wants as if they are needs

PP Mark Twain defined 'civilization' as *"a limitless multiplication of unnecessary necessities"*

That is more profound than it might seem: *coveting makes our wants seem like needs*

It is built on the lie that the thing is necessary to life, and that is the first sin in human history

Coveting is deception, something the farmer learned too late: ***"But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'"*** 12:20

PP 2-Jesus gives us the way to overcome a coveting heart (12:22-35)

PP a. *Know your God's love*

"Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!" 12:24

PP *'Consider'* means to observe fully, to contemplate, to really pay attention to something

The Apostle Paul put the same thing this way:

PP ***"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth...Put to death therefore covetousness, which is idolatry."***

Colossians 3:1-2, 5

Set your minds, seek the things...the battle to overcome coveting starts in our minds

The surpassing power of grace, the gospel, aims to replace lies with truth

Pay attention to how God cares for even *'ravens'*, unclean birds in the OT, forbidden for food

They don't sow, reap or store like squirrels, or ants yet God takes care of these insignificant birds

PP ***"Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God for help, and wander about for lack of food?"*** Job 38:41

Christian, know this truth: ***"Of how much more value are you than the birds!"*** Luke 12:24

Overcome coveting with truth, you are so valuable to God and He will care for you!

Even more, Jesus tells them to pay attention to the lilies, which is a generic term for flowers

They don't make themselves beautiful, God does it, but why?

They are just going to be plucked, dried and used for cooking fires

God takes the time to make beautiful flowers even though their lives are short with limited use

'How much more will He clothe you' Christian, who have been saved for eternal glory

With surgical precision, the scalpel of Christ cuts to the root of coveting: ***'O you of little faith'***

Those who do not give generously and instead live for this life, storing, amassing...well, they have a faith problem and they cannot experience contentment and peace

“And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?” Luke 12:25-26

PP *Worrying is like a rocking chair; a whole lot of motion but you’re not getting anywhere*

It is sobering for Christians to hear this, but a covetous heart does not trust God!

Are you struggling with an anxious, worrying heart that produces coveting?

PP Then look into your heart through the lens of the gospel, and answer these two questions:

*What needs has God not met in your life?

*What idol can truly satisfy you?

PP b. *Live for the right kingdom*

Fear for a believer is a belief system built on a lie!

What can possibly happen to us that is not authored by God’s sovereign hand?

What is it we truly need that He will not provide?

I received another email this week that I share with permission: *My husband’s income recently took a big hit by about \$200/week, having lost part of his route due to a store closing. We keep saying we are waiting to see what God has planned and how he will provide but saying and doing are two different things. Our daily prayer has been for God to provide, show us how we need to view our new situation and to live in a way so family sees us Glorifying God. We received good news today. Come February, my husband will pick up a major store. We are giving God the praise for our quick answer and looking forward to our next challenge but our trust is in Him.*

Christian, why do we tear ourselves apart with worry, and hoard and store?

This is the way the world lives: ***‘all the nations of the world seek after these things’***

We must be different, trusting that our ***‘Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.’ 30-31***

PP What is the kingdom of God? *It’s the invisible realm of God’s loving rule that is made visible through the church, as we live in such a way that exercises faith, obedience and love*

Church, we are charged with bringing God’s kingdom to this world, and we must live in a way that is distinct from the world

God says, I will take care of what you need from the world so focus on building My kingdom

Not preoccupied with pursuing barns and storehouses of stuff, but ready to share it all!

Knowing God’s great love for us and trusting in His promise to care, and captivated by the glory of the kingdom of God, our hearts fill with the power to overcome coveting and become generous givers

PP *The gospel of grace makes the ‘want to do’ precede the ‘what to do’*

The ‘want to do’ is a desire to give our lives for the kingdom of God absolutely trusting our King

The ‘what to do’ is ***“Sell your possessions, and give to the needy.”***

Most of us do not take this seriously enough!!

When you hear about a need, pray, and consider selling something you own and meet the need

Not getting rid of half-broken stuff we don’t like anymore, thinking we’re showing love

But giving sacrificially, giving of our best, sharing lovingly with those in need all around us

You want contentment like never before? Then trust God and generously give!

The 'what to do' is to ***“Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.”*** **12:33**

This simply and gloriously means to shift your investment to the kingdom of God
I heard of a wealthy man who upon request was buried sitting behind the wheel of his Cadillac
That car is there, but now rusting and rotting, it made only as far as a deeply dug grave
Our hearts will follow what we treasure, ***“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*** **Luke 12:34**

If you have \$1000 cash you are bringing home from the bank, you are going to put it in the most secure place you can, making sure it is safe, checking it repeatedly to allay concern

If you have your little children with you going through an airport, you will be hyper vigilant, keeping your eyes on them making sure they're with you and safe at all times

What we treasure most, has our time, attention, efforts and hearts

If we focus on true treasures in God's kingdom, our hearts will detach from the ones on earth

Money, big houses, luxury cars, fancy clothes will not hold claim over our hearts

Give inward, to the heart, and overcome the power of coveting!

Amen?

Pray

Should a Christian have a retirement plan?

If your picture of retirement is like the farmer in this sermon, a life of ease and lounge, then you are neither biblical in your thinking nor likely to be long for this world

But as it often is with the gospel, the answer must be directed inward toward the heart

Retirement is an opportunity to serve the Lord in ways you couldn't before being constrained in your line of work

Saving allows us to retire into what is often a greater time of serving in God's kingdom without being a burden on others, or God's church

Solomon uses ants to show us the wisdom in saving for times of leanness

Joseph was praised for his prudence in preparing Egypt for 7 years of famine

The one who plans poorly becomes a burden on family, society and the church

There are five questions to courageously ask yourself, and to invite accountability for:

**Are my retirement savings eliminating my need for retirement trusting?*

**Have I willingly yielded my retirement savings to God's discretion?*

**Am I leaning away from a fat retirement account toward immediate generosity?*

**Am I doing what I can to provide for my family and not be a financial burden on them, my society or my church?*

**Is it within my plan to financially assist the elderly poor in their retirement?*

And finally, one encouragement to offer:

**Aim for a zero sum death-Earn all you can, give wisely all you can, go into eternity holding onto nothing*