

## **“GREED and ENVY”**

**March 31, 2019**

**1 Timothy 6:10; Matthew 20:1-16 (Message)**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

**It is very difficult to talk about greed and envy  
as being separate sins  
because they travel in pairs.**

**Usually where you find one,  
the other is also present.**

**So, let me tackle greed first.**

### **GREED**

**The “Gilligan’s Island” character who personifies greed is -  
- of course, Thurston Howell.**

**Thurston Howell's favorite color was green.**

**Why?**

**Because Green is the color of money.**

**Mr. Howell’s excessive desire for money  
was an obsession that made him greedy.**

**After all, money was what made him strong;  
the more he had, the stronger he was.**

**However, on the island,**

**Mr. Howell was rendered weak and powerless.**

**The power he could purchase in society  
was non-existent on the island.**

**Mr. Howell, stranded with bags of money  
had nothing to spend it on.  
Suddenly, his money couldn't buy everything -  
- especially a one way ticket home.**

**DEFINITION:**

**Greed is the obsessive desire for material wealth or gain;  
it is Desire that has run amuck and out of control -  
- resulting in an insatiable and obsessive desire  
for wealth and/or power.**

**Leo Tolstoy wrote a story about a greedy farmer.**

**A peasant farmer was not satisfied with the small farm he owned.  
He wanted more!**

**One day, someone made him an offer:  
for 1,000 rubles  
he could buy all the land he could walk around in one day.**

**The only condition to the offer  
was the farmer had to be back at the starting point  
before sundown.**

**At the crack of dawn the next morning,  
the farmer was up and walking at a fast pace.**

**By noon, he was growing tired  
but he was determined to keep going  
to cover more and more ground.**

**By late afternoon,**

**the farmer realized that his greed  
had taken him far from the starting point.**

**He quickened his pace and headed back for the starting point,  
knowing that if he didn't make it back by sundown  
he would lose the opportunity to increase his land.**

**As the sun got lower and lower  
the farmer began to run.**

**As the sun began to dip into the horizon,  
the farmer came into sight of the finish line.**

**Gasping for breath,  
legs feeling like lead,  
heart pounding  
he called on the last of his strength  
and staggered across the finish line just in time.**

**Unfortunately, he had so overextended himself  
that his heart simply gave out.  
And he died.**

**Later, his servants dug a grave for him.  
As is tradition,  
his grave was not much over six feet long and three feet wide.**

**Tolstoy titled that story:  
“How Much Land Does a Dead Man Need?”**

**This story leads us to ask ourselves -  
- just how much do we need?  
- just how much is enough?**

**Although the answer to that question  
may seem to be highly individualistic,  
when greed reaches unhealthy proportions  
it becomes a disease -  
- one which separates us from God  
- one which calls for immediate treatment!**

**ATTITUDE:**

**Greed breeds and increases  
as we become more and more materialistic.**

**When we begin to define ourselves  
by what we have – by our possessions  
we have lost sight of what we were created to be.**

**And our lives become dominated to the point  
that greed determines which house we buy  
and which vehicle we drive.**

**We tend to be chronically dissatisfied with ourselves.  
We compare themselves with the lush, brilliant imagery  
on TV and emerge as failures.**

**We become like greyhounds -  
chasing a metal rabbit we will never catch.**

**Paul, the apostle, recognized the impact greed has upon our attitude.  
Paul went so far as to say that  
“. . . the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some  
people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and  
pierced themselves with many griefs. 1 Timothy 6:10**

**Paul was pointing to an aspect of greed**

**which we never really consider -**

**- greed is a theological distortion which separates us from God!**

**As people become more and more infatuated with possessions -**

**- with the pursuit of riches and luxury -**

**- they begin to lose their focus -**

**- and God gets shoved farther and farther out of their lives.**

**And the door is thrown wide open for the sin of Envy!**

### **ENVY:**

**"God's kingdom is like an estate manager who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. They agreed on a wage of a dollar a day, and went to work. "Later, about nine o'clock, the manager saw some other men hanging around the town square unemployed. He told them to go to work in his vineyard and he would pay them a fair wage. They went.**

**He did the same thing at noon, and again at three o'clock. At five o'clock he went back and found still others standing around. He said, 'Why are you standing around all day doing nothing?'**

**They said, 'Because no one hired us.'**

**He told them to go to work in his vineyard.**

**When the day's work was over, the owner of the vineyard instructed his foreman, 'Call the workers in and pay them their wages. Start with the last hired and go on to the first.'**

**Those hired at five o'clock came up and were each given a dollar. When those who were hired first saw that, they assumed they would get far more. But they got the same, each of them one dollar. Taking the dollar, they groused angrily to the manager, 'These last workers put in only one easy hour, and you just made them equal to us, who slaved all day under a scorching sun.'**

**He replied to the one speaking for the rest, 'Friend, I haven't**

**been unfair. We agreed on the wage of a dollar, didn't we? So take it and go. I decided to give to the one who came last the same as you. Can't I do what I want with my own money? Are you going to get stingy because I am generous?'           Matthew 20:1-16 (Message)**

**DEFINITION:**

**Envy is the feeling of jealousy and dislike towards someone else because they have a power, money or possessions we want.**

**It begins when we think someone has an advantage or possession we do not have -  
It can be anything from material things to social status.**

**And before you start making excuses, saying: "I wish I had that . . . whatever it is . . . and that person had a better one" is still envy!**

**Pastor and columnist Doug Giles said:**

**Because [envy] doesn't get the National Enquirer's attention like the more juicy transgressions, we tend to see it as less naughty. But be not deceived, my brethren: this sin is a double meat whopper of deft disaster once it sticks its talons into a person, or a party, or a religion, or a nation.**

**And the Gilligan's Island character who personifies envy?  
None other than Mary Ann!**

**Sweet, innocent Mary Ann!  
Who would suspect her to be guilty of one of the worse sins?!?  
The same sin that caused the Fall of Adam and Eve  
because they envied God!**

**Deep within Mary Ann's heart  
was a longing to be as beautiful and sexy as Ginger -  
- as smart as the Professor  
- and as rich as Mr. Howell.**

**Although Mary Ann seldom acted on her envy,  
the viciousness of envy is  
it causes the love of neighbor  
to be replaced by love of possessions;  
we desire *things* at the expense of *people*.**

**Now, let me point out there is a big difference  
between "envy" and "aspiration."**

**A person who "aspires" to something  
is willing to work toward and make personal sacrifices  
for the object of his/her desire.**

**A person who "envies" someone  
resents that person having something better or more desirous  
and wishes to possess what the other person has.**

**Envy is always a directed emotion:  
it is always directed towards someone -  
- without a target, without a victim, envy cannot exist.**

**ILLUS:**

**Want to see uncensored envy in action?  
Watch seagulls!**

**Some years ago, Gail and I met our son and daughter in Boston,  
we headed for Revere Beach - north of Boston -**

**the home of Kelly's Roast Beef.  
Kelly's is famous for lobster rolls.**

**Since Kelly's is located right across the street from the beach,  
there are benches and tables right on the beach  
where you can sit and enjoy your meal.**

**Did I mention the benches and tables  
are closely guarded by packs of seagulls?**

**Those seagulls want your food so badly,  
they will literally swoop down and steal your food  
right off your lap!**

**And then the fight REALLY begins!  
They scream and curse each other -  
- well, I don't exactly *spe*ak fluent seagull,  
but I'm pretty sure that's what they're saying -  
and try their best to take food away from one another!**

**That's what envy does to us -  
- turns us into screaming, cursing, stealing seagulls!**

### **UNIVERSALITY OF ENVY:**

**Did you know that virtually all people,  
including the most primitive,  
in every known tribe, society, race and language,  
have found it necessary to have a word  
equivalent to the word "envy!"**

**That's how universal "envy" truly is!  
It has infected everyone - everywhere!**

**Just as we are created with free will,  
we are created with the capacity to envy.  
It occurs as soon as two individuals  
become capable of mutual comparison.**

**This urge to compare ourselves to others  
is the fertile ground which gives birth to our sinful nature.**

**There doesn't seem to be any boundaries to contain envy -  
- it seems envy will push us to any act to satisfy our longing.**

### **NEW TESTAMENT ENVY:**

**Which brings us to the second scripture for today.**

**Those who had worked the longest  
and had received the same amount of wages -  
- wished they had known they could have gotten full wages  
for only an hour's worth of work!**

**Even though they were paid a fair wage -  
- the wage they agreed to - they were resentful!**

**Go ahead, call it injustice . . .  
. . . say that it is not fair that some worked the full day  
and others only worked an hour . . .  
yet they both received the same pay.  
In your heart you know better!  
It is envy!  
Pure and simple!**

### **EVILS OF ENVY:**

**The real evil of envy is  
it is based on a world of OUR creation -**

- ordered the way **WE** think it should be ordered -
- with all the cards stacked in **OUR** favor!

It is based on *wishful* thinking . . . not on reality.

God has made us *what* we are  
and placed us *where* we are.

Envy is a sign we think God made a mistake.

**God created a world in which we are expected to love one another -  
Envy pits the have-nots against those who have in abundance.**

**Envy sees other people as competitors for prominence  
instead of companions in progress.**

**Envy creates hell in the human heart.**

**It allows for no satisfaction, no security, no peace -  
- only the constant discontent of selfish desire.**

**It is both a deadly sin and a miserable punishment.**

**CONCLUSION:**

**One last example; this time it is an example of greed and envy  
in an unexpected place.**

**First United Methodist Church in Van, Texas  
discovered oil beneath their property -  
- actually, beneath their parking lot.**

**Smack in the middle of their parking lot,  
they drilled the well,  
and brought in a well that produces  
a considerable amount of oil.**

**The first thing the membership of that Church did  
was to *close* the membership rolls!**

**In order to preserve the royalties for themselves,  
they voted to no longer accept new members!**

**And they were methodically trying to cull  
inactive members so there were fewer folks  
to share the royalty checks!**

**The bishop had a few things to say about *that*!**

**It is love - and ONLY love -  
which has the power to make us content with what we *have*  
and discontent with what we *are*.**

**Love calls us to always be content with what we *have*,  
but never be content with what we *are*.**

**And one of the characteristics of envy and greed  
is that we simply cannot love a person whom we envy!  
And we cannot love that person  
and harbor greed in our hearts.**

**Like the Sirens of Greek mythology,  
Greed and envy weave a hypnotic spell over us  
which prevents us from being what God intends us to be;  
we are to be generous, giving people,  
people concerned about the poor among us.**

**The more closely tied to our possessions we become  
the fewer risks we are willing to take  
for fear we might lose something.**

**The fewer risks we are willing to take  
the more our service to God and to others diminishes  
until we simply serve ourselves!**

**And then a very odd thing happens . . . When we become so self-  
centered we think others should serve us!**

**And that, my beloved brothers and sisters  
is a slippery road to Hell.**

**In the first Harry Potter book,  
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone,  
there is a bank called "Gringotts"  
which is run by - and guarded by - goblins**

**A sign which hangs over the door to that bank  
reads like a warning against the sin of greed.**

**It says:**

**Enter stranger and take heed  
Of what await the sin of greed  
For those who take but do not earn  
Must pay dearly in their turn  
So if you seek beneath our floors  
A treasure that was never yours  
Thief you have been warned, beware  
Of finding more than treasure there!**

**Let that be our final thought on greed . . .  
. . . We have been warned . . .  
. . . beware . . .**

**For if we pursue earthly treasure in a greedy or envious way . . .  
. . . we will find more than treasure!**

**PRAYER:**

**Loving God, help us order our lives in such a way that greed and envy are not part of us. Replace whatever greed and envy we have with a spirit of love and generosity and satisfaction with what we have.**