

Further reflection and discussion material

Idols of our day – “GREED”

Introduction:

How am I rich toward God? This is the key question that derives from the passage of scripture that is under consideration – how you and I answer this question will be quite different and the flow on implication are potentially life changing. At the same time, this material will develop the theme of ‘Greed as idolatry’ more generally and open us up to some practical considerations.

Opening consideration:

1. If possible, use the following link to find Bob Dylans presentation of “you gotta serve somebody”, listen and reflect on the words and consider what the spirit of God may be prompting you about or directing you toward.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CwHby-YTNo>

It has been said by a number of pastoral leaders that we as disciples of Jesus often find it hard to see our own greed – rarely do people seek out pastors to discuss their sin of Greed!

- Do you readily see greed in others?
- What about yourself – now or in the past?

“Be on your guard against all kinds of greed” (vs 15)

The very clear expectation in this verse is the reality that we must be on our guard against all kinds of greed BECAUSE greed is couching at the door of you very existence.

By way of association – take a look at Luke 19:1 ff. Here we are introduced to another young rich jewish man.

- Tax collectors are by definition, people who betray their heritage (associating with the enemy) and live outside of any positive relational network within the Israelite community. Zacchaeus has made at least two profoundly significant decisions in his life; first a decision to sacrifice everything for money, and second, a decision to step away from such a lifestyle because of his encountering Jesus.
- Do you think Zacchaeus realised what he was giving up when he became a Tax Collector?

Luke 12 and the parable of the rich man building bigger barns.

In the sermon last Sunday, Drew mentioned that the key thing to note about the actions of the rich man is that he made the decision to store up for himself, riches beyond what he would need.

Verse 17-19: The man was in a position to make a choice concerning what to do with all the surplus grain he had accumulated.

- What choice did he make?
- Looking at vs 17-19, what are the factors that he appears to have considered and the mini decisions he made along the way?
- By making these decisions, what has he rejected?
- Brian Rosner demonstrates from an examination of cultural and textural evidence of the day, that first century Christians and Jews understood the greedy to be “those with a strong desire to acquire and keep for themselves more and more money and possessions, because they *love, trust* and *obey* wealth, rather than God”

- Thinking again about vs 17-19, what of the above concern of Rosner' do you see displayed in this story?

Verse 20-21: Looking closely at this verse, there is no evidence that God is punishing the man; rather God is addressing the man and declaring that his time is up, his life on earth is finished and all he has is no longer of any value to him – “who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”. In the story, God is questioning the motivation of the man, and in so doing he declares that the mans thinking is foolish and wasteful. And verse 21 clarifies that in the eyes of God the father (and Jesus the Son), an individual is either rich toward God or downright foolish.

- What does “This is how it will be...” mean in the context of the whole encounter? (Hint – its more than simply what is said by God in verse 20) Jot down your thoughts and discuss with others.

Going Further

Read the following texts and record your reflections on what is being said about Greed as idolatry.

- Col 3:1-5
- Matt 6:19, 33
- 1 Tim 6:10-11

Practical application

- In the sermon on Sunday, Drew mentioned that *‘the solution to tight fistedness – saying ‘Its mine’, is not just redoubled effort to be more like Jesus Christ, good though this is. No, the solution is captured when we gain a deeper understanding of what Christ did on the Cross’*. See 2 Corinthians 8:9 and reflect more on what is being revealed in this verse.
- Spending time celebrating what Christ has done on the cross and considering implications for how we remain true to Christ as we seek true happiness, is crucial if we are to see the idol of greed displaced in our lives.
 - Every idol system has, at its core, a works-salvation orientation and this needs to be replaced, not simply removed.
 - Revisit the three aspects of Greed that Rosner identified and think about what such an attitude actually does to ones reliance on the cross of Christ for salvation.
 - Lovers of money
 - Trusters of money
 - Obedient to money (slaves of money)
 - “Jesus gave up his treasure in order to make you his treasure and he invites you to invest your treasure in the hearts and lives of those who need to know Jesus” – if this is the story of the gospel, how much ought this captivate our attention and propel us to generosity so that we invest in gospel work that ultimately God will use for his redemptive purposes.

How are you rich toward God?