

Week #4

Winning The War Between Greed and Generosity!



Spiritual/Financial Growth Tool
Learning to manage what God has entrusted to our care!

Pastor Stan Lubeck
2008

The War Between Greed and Generosity



Day 1

The Background to Jesus Teaching on Greed and Generosity

Luke 12:13 Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." **14** Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or an arbiter between you?" **15** Then He said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." **16** He told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. **17** He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' **18** "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. **19** And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" **20** "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' **21** "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

This passage contains a story about choosing to surrender the security that comes from earning an income, saving it, planning how to use it and wanting to cling to it, rather than building our lives around our confidence in the Lord and His promise to provide. As we deal with this passage, we will find that the words "generosity" and "greed" are very close in meaning. Jesus said that greed was storing up riches for ourselves and generosity is storing up riches for God. In both cases we are storing up. It is the reason for our storing up that differs.

The words generosity and greed are very close in meaning

The setting for our story

In verse 1 of Luke 12 we see that many thousands of people had gathered to hear Jesus. So the warning Jesus gives here is not just to one man but to several thousand people. It can be seen as a general warning.

In verse 13 we read that **"Someone in the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.'"** What we have here is a guy who is upset with his brother and was trying to use the influence of Jesus and the pressure of the crowd to get what he was after. Whether the brother was keeping the entire inheritance for himself or was not giving his brother his full portion, we do not know. All we have is an accusation and the desire for someone to have Jesus help him get what he wants.

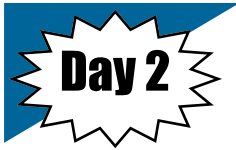
Verse 14 says, **"Jesus replied, 'Man, who appointed Me a judge or an arbiter between you?'"** This comes across sounding kind of harsh. But Jesus realized at least two things that were going on in this instance. The Jews had judges assigned to handle disputes about property. Jesus was saying, "There is a system already established to handle your complaint. Work the system." He determined that he was not going to interfere with the established authorities of His day. Jesus saw to the heart of the matter. Verse 15 shows that He knew this man's motive was greed. He was trying to get Jesus to help him accomplish his greedy goal. Jesus was not about to do that. But He did turn it into a teachable moment for the crowd of people.

From today's lesson what do we learn is the difference between greed and generosity?

Greed is _____

Generosity is _____





Jesus' Teaching on Greed

Luke 12:15 Then He said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Jesus' warning

Jesus first gives the people a warning. He tells them to "Watch out! Be on your guard." This is really a command as well as a warning. But it is a powerful warning. "Watch out!" means to beware, be alert, keep your eyes open. "Be on your guard" means to guard against, to look out for, to take a defensive posture because there are many forms of greed that are going to try to capture your life.

The warning against greed

The word "greed" literally means a desire to have more. Jesus warns the people because there are all kinds of greed and some are not so obvious. There are people who appear to be poverty stricken but are controlled by greed. There are other people who appear wealthy (and thus greedy) who are very generous.

**Greed is the
desire to
have more**

Don't assume you know where a person is until they tell you. Don't be fooled by outward appearances.

What are some of the forms that greed takes?

Coveting— this most often shows itself as:

- ✓ wanting something that belongs to someone else
- ✓ envying what someone else has
- ✓ not being able to be happy for someone who gets something you wish you had
- ✓ figuring out how to "keep up" with others by purchasing:
 - cars
 - vacations
 - a home or vacation home
 - landscaping / pool
 - clothing
 - recreational toys
- ✓ Then when you find out how they got all that "stuff," they are drowning in debt and so are you. Besides that, now you have to maintain all that "stuff" and that costs too.

A craving for possessions— you don't care what somebody else has, you see yourself as the pacesetter. You want to be the one people compare with and envy.

Storing up things for self— clutching or holding onto what you already have. Hanging onto things for no other purpose than to have them.

Neglecting to give to God, or to people in need

Also implied in this verse is the idea, that if we don't guard ourselves, greed becomes the center of our lives. Money starts dictating what consumes our thoughts, our attention, our energies.

Relation to the parable of the soils

In the parable of the soils Jesus compares people's responses to the Word of God to different kinds of soils. He says of the third kind of soil, **Mark 4:18 "Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word, 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful."**

Jesus says riches are deceitful. They will start to make you think that your security is in them. Soon you start to trust in riches instead of trusting in God. Am I building my life around God or the economy, what I can accumulate? Where is my trust and my confidence? This is why we find such strong warnings against greed throughout the New Testament.

Colossians 3:5 "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." Greed causes you to worship and build your life around money instead of worshipping and building your life around God. Avoid greed— it belongs to your old way of life. Get rid of it.

**Riches can
replace Jesus as
my source of
security**

1 Corinthians 5:11 "But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat." Greed is so infectious we are told not to associate with a greedy "brother" lest his greed contaminate us.

**Greed is
idolatry**

Ephesians 5:5 "For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person— such a man is an idolater— has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

Someone who is greedy is a worshipper of money and they won't inherit the kingdom of God.

Henry Ford, who was at one point the richest man in the world, was once asked, "How much is enough?" He replied, "Just a little more than I have." A Roman proverb states: "Money is like salt water. The more you drink, the greater your thirst."

So, Jesus gives a warning against all kinds of greed. Then He sets:

A perspective on life and possessions

In the second part of verse 15, Jesus says, "**a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.**" The purpose of a person's life is not defined by the abundance of what he possesses.

By way of illustration, let's say that Robin made up a batch of chocolate chip cookies. Suppose I ask her, "What's in these cookies? What are they made of?" She might say, "Flour, a little baking soda, honey instead of sugar and a lot of chocolate chips." That is what the cookies *consist* of.

Well, Jesus says that life does not consist of an abundance of possessions. By that, He means that possessions are not what makes a person's life— not the car, the clothing, the home, the amount of income that enables one to travel, take vacations, etc. There is more to life.

Look back through today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more ideas He wants you to understand, learn or apply to your life.

What Scripture or statement spoke to you today?

Rewrite this Scripture or statement into a prayer request to God. _____

How can you apply this Scripture or thought to your life? _____



Day 3

Just What Does Life Consist Of?

We saw yesterday in Luke 12:15b that Jesus said, "**a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.**" Well, then, just what does life consist of?

We are made in the image of God

Genesis 1:27 "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." We reflect that we are made in God's image by our ability to think, to create, and to have relationships, not in the amount of possessions we have.

We are personally crafted by God

Psalm 139:13 "For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. . . 16 All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be."

God made us physically, mentally, emotionally, with our personality, temperaments, talents, etc. He has even crafted a plan for our lives before we were born. God created us with a purpose. That's what life consists of.

God created us with a purpose.

We were made for a relationship with God

John 1:12 "Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." We are born into God's family to have a relationship with Him, not with things.

We are made to live throughout eternity

Matthew 25:46 "Then they (the evil) will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." The physical life is very short in comparison to eternity. The length of this life is like the width of a speck of dust when compared to eternity. Yet our eternal destiny is determined by what we do in the length of that speck. That is why Jesus said, "**Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.**"

We are born to have a relationship with Him and not with things.

Possessions only bring a shallow, short-lived satisfaction for the shortest part of eternity— the part on earth in this body. If we build our eternity around possessions— being rich toward ourselves— we lose it all when this physical life ends. But, if we recognize what life really consists of— growing in my relationship with God and fulfilling His plan and purpose for my life— and build our lives around that, we will have deep contentment now and will live with God forever.

You see, it is what we do with this speck of life on earth that determines all of eternity. Another way of putting it would be to ask, "Do we want an eternal relationship with God or a temporary relationship with things?" Accumulating an abundance of possessions on earth reveals that we consider this phase of eternity to be the most important.

Look back through today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more ideas He wants you to understand, learn or apply to your life.

What Scripture or statement spoke to you today?

Rewrite this Scripture or statement into a prayer request to God.

How can you apply this Scripture or thought to your life? _____

Day 4

Jesus' Illustration of Greed

Recognize that Jesus does not condemn the man in this story for being rich. He had made his money through hard work.

Luke 12:16 He told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop." This man was already rich. For whatever reason, his ground produced a bumper crop. There is nothing to indicate that this man gained his wealth by anything other than hard work.

Verse 17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Having this huge crop caused him some anxiety because he had no place to store it. So he started trying to figure out what to do. We don't know everything that ran through his mind. We don't know if he considered:

- * giving to help the poor
- * giving a rich gift to the Lord
- * making an abundant thank offering to the Lord at the temple

There is no indication that he prayed or sought the Lord as to what He would have him do with his wealth. But we do know his conclusion:

"I will keep it all for myself"

Maybe the barns he had were already full, maybe they just were not big enough to handle the bumper crop, or maybe he wanted to make a display of his great wealth. Whatever his reasoning, he decided not just to add a new barn or barns, but to tear down the ones he already had and build bigger ones.

Verses 18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.'

Go back through the above passage and underline all words having to do with self (I, my, etc.). Notice that he did not see himself as a steward or a manager of God's possessions. He saw himself as the owner.

The Bible tells us that everything belongs to the Lord. He is the owner of everything and we are the managers of His possessions. Scripture tells us that He even gives us the strength, skills and ability to earn wealth. So it all comes from Him.

Verse 19 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." The rich man assumed he had full control over his soul, his life, and his future.



The word "myself" means my soul. There is emotional power in this man's language. It is as if he were giving commands to himself, to his soul. He is inspired and excited about his decision as to what to do with all his wealth. It is as if he is saying: "Soul, you have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Therefore, take life easy, keep on resting. Eat at once, until you are full. Drink your fill. And keep on being merry. You have earned it."

This man's perspective was, "I am in control. I have enough to last me for the rest of my life, and I am going to live my life for my own pleasure." Or maybe he would be like someone today who would say, "I've been so disciplined. I've socked away a lot of money. I am going to retire early, buy myself an RV, and have a good time."

"I am in control."

Is it a sin to plan for retirement? Is it a sin to retire early or to get a RV of some type? We need to ask ourselves, "What is God's purpose for my life?" As we look at ourselves as stewards of God's money and the life He has entrusted to us, we need to consider the following:

How much am I putting away for retirement?

Is what I am putting into retirement decreasing my tithes and offerings to the Lord? If so, it is sin.

Am I planning a lavish retirement for personal pleasure?

If so, it is sin.

"What is God's purpose for my life?"

Should I retire early?

What is my purpose in retiring early?

Is it so I can use my time to be more free to serve the Lord?

Am I retiring so I can live a life of personal pleasure— playing golf every day?

Should I spend my retirement years serving the Lord less or more than I am now?

What is God's purpose for older Christians?

Titus 2:2-5 tells older believers to live godly lives and to help equip the younger people to do the same. Let the younger people benefit from their years of experience in the Lord.

These are not just issues for retired people. They are for each one of us as we set the course for this brief span of life. How are you investing your life— as you see fit or according to God's plan for your life?

Maybe the rich farmer could be compared to the people who have so many possessions they have to rent storage space to keep it all. Or they could be the people who have to sell their home and move up to a bigger one because they have acquired so much stuff that it can no longer fit in their current one. Or they might be the type of people

Wealth is no guarantee of success or happiness.

who, when they get a raise or an inheritance, think only about how they can spend the money on themselves and not about the needs of the poor or of the Kingdom of God.

God's assessment of the rich farmer's decision

Verse 20 "But God said to him, `You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'"

He says, "You fool! You thought you were so wise, so analytical. You had everything planned out. You fool! You thought only of yourself and how to make life as easy as possible for yourself. You have acted like you have ultimate authority over your soul. You laid your plans for this life— this speck in eternity— but you do not have control over the length of your life. Now everything you have stored up for yourself will go to others. And you will pass into eternity totally poverty stricken."

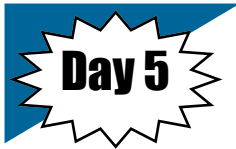
Proverbs 11:4 says, "**Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.**" The "day of wrath" is the day of judgment. This type of man or woman is facing an eternity separated from God in hell forever.

Look back through today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more ideas He wants you to understand, learn or apply to your life.

What Scripture or statement spoke to you today?

Rewrite this Scripture or statement into a prayer request to God. _____

How can you apply this Scripture or thought to your life? _____



Jesus' Conclusion Regarding Greed and Generosity

Luke 12:21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

Illustration

In 1923 at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, eight of the most powerful money magnates in the world gathered for a meeting. If these eight men had combined their resources and assets, they would have controlled more money than the U.S. Treasury.

**These eight men
controlled more money
than the U.S. Treasury.**

In that group was:

Charles Schwab— the president of a steel company

Richard Whitney— the president of the New York Stock Exchange

Arthur Cutton— a wheat speculator

Albert Fall— a presidential cabinet member who had great personal wealth

Jesse Livermore— the greatest bear on Wall Street in his generation

Leon Fraser— the president of the International Bank of Settlements

Ivan Krueger— who headed the largest monopoly

This was quite an impressive list of people, at least from the world's perspective. Listen to the outcome of seven of these eight lives:

Charles Schwab— died penniless

Richard Whitney— served a life sentence in Sing-Sing Prison

Arthur Cutton— became insolvent

Albert Fall— was pardoned from federal prison so he might die at home

Leon Fraser— committed suicide

Jesse Livermore— committed suicide

Ivan Krueger— committed suicide

Seven out of those eight extremely wealthy and powerful men had lives that were disasters before they left planet earth.

1 Timothy 6:9 "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. **10** For 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. **11** "But you, man of God, flee from all this. .

17 "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope

in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."

According to this passage:

1. What type of people fall into temptation? _____

2. Wanting to have money is a root of all kinds of evil.
(Circle the correct answer.) True False

3. What has caused people to wander from the faith?

Have you ever seen this to be true? _____ What specific things caused these people to wander from the faith? _____

4. Why should those who are rich in this present world not put their hope in wealth? _____

Please explain your answer _____

5. Can you name some specific things that God has provided for your enjoyment? _____

Notice in verse 9 that Paul says it is those *who want to get rich*, not those who are rich, that fall into temptation. This is the person whose goal in life is to be rich. It is the *love*, the craving *for money* that is the root of all kinds of evil. There is nothing wrong with wanting money— it is a necessity in our lifestyle. It is when we develop a craving, an *eagerness for money* and the things it can buy, that we get tripped up and can wander from the faith. We should not put our hope in wealth because it *is so uncertain*. One day you may be in possession of it and the next day it may all be gone. Look at the lives of the seven wealthy men from the beginning of today's lesson.

Reverend John Tapp, a Puritan Bible scholar in the 1600's wrote, "Many misers (*greedy, stingy, tight people*) are like the fat hog that is good for nothing till he comes to the knife."

On another occasion he wrote, "Farmers (*men*) sow cheerfully in good ground, and account (*figure*) their seed better in the ground than in the garner (*storage bin*). Can we sow upon a better ground than Jesus Christ? Therefore sow plentifully, and sow cheerfully, for 'God loves a cheerful giver.'"

James 5:2 "Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days."

Are your riches sitting in a storage bin rotting or are you planting that seed in the fertile soil of Jesus Christ, with a desire to reach this entire world with the gospel? Are you giving so poor people can have food, shelter and clothing or are you amassing more and more, placing your confidence in what you can store away? Where are you?

One author, commenting on Jesus' teaching on money, challenges his readers to answer the following questions:

"Do I really believe this? Or do I patronize Christ and 'reinterpret' His plain words as harmless exaggerations? Which is the more foolish dare, daring to live the way the Designer of our lives told us to live. . . or daring to live the opposite way in the hope that He may be wrong and we may be right?"

Which dare are you living? Which challenge are you responding to— to lay up for yourself or to be as rich toward God as you can possibly be? Jesus is calling you to believe Him, to build your life around what it really consists of, not around accumulating possessions.

Look back through today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more ideas He wants you to understand, learn or apply to your life.

What Scripture or statement spoke to you today?

Rewrite this Scripture or statement into a prayer request to God. _____

How can you apply this Scripture or thought to your life? _____





The LIFEhouse Church
4800 Sierra College Blvd, Rocklin, CA 95677
916.652.7216 • www.tlhc.org • tlc@tlhc.org