

Treasures In Heaven

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 June 2024

Preacher: Ray Sweet

[0 : 0 0] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. And as always, you can check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or you can go to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in as we're going to preach God's Word today. And it really is this simple for us. We want to get into the Word. So most importantly, that Word can get into us and transform our hearts more and more into the image of Christ.

Now, I'll never forget our first full-time ministry outside of Rushville. We lived in a house that belonged to the church and it was right next door. Bethany was a teacher at the time. So normally we would leave the house.

She would leave the house around 6.45-ish in the morning. I would get ready and then I would walk over to the church and work for maybe a few hours. It was a Monday. So I had gone over and I had done a few things.

My normal routine was that I would take my paycheck to the bank. I would run a few errands and then I would come back. Well, I was usually gone, maybe an hour or two at the most.

[1 : 0 5] When I came back home, I went to unlock the door to the parsonage and the glass in the bottom right-hand corner was broke. My first thought was that the cat had knocked down the curtain, that it had shattered the glass.

And I was like, great, the trustees are not going to be happy about this. And then I went inside and I noticed as I walked into the living room that my new TV, my very first flat screen TV was gone.

I don't know why I was so slow to get it, but that's the moment when it finally clicked. We've been robbed. Somebody else was watching my schedule.

So I grabbed a knife out of the kitchen very quickly, started through the house, not sure if someone was still there. Good thing for all involved. They were long gone. But as I walked through, I started to notice a few things missing.

And it became obvious that someone only took what they could carry. And it didn't hurt that we only had been married a short time and we really didn't have very many valuables at all.

[2 : 1 0] In fact, when we turned the claim into insurance, I think they smiled and didn't even question it because it was for something like \$1,200. But the hardest part wasn't the few items that were stolen.

The toughest part was knowing that someone had gone through your stuff. And then for months later, every small noise we heard at night had me up on my feet with a baseball bat in hand.

So, hey, welcome back here to our series over the Ten Commandments. For those who've been with us, isn't it amazing how much more there is to each of these commands than we ever realized?

It's not about checking boxes to show how religious we are, but instead loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And then letting that love transform the way you treat your neighbor.

And do you know what I've discovered in going deeper in this series? I've discovered that I've broken every single commandment many times over. And it's only by the grace of God that you and I can stand here today forgiven and empowered to walk in life and holiness.

[3 : 20] And it may be obvious from how I started this message, but we're going to talk today about commandment number eight that simply says in Exodus 20:15, you shall not steal.

And I think most in their right mind would never break into someone's house, especially when you know it's owned by a church and the pastor probably lives there. I think that may have been why it was most shocking to us living outside of a rural community.

And I realize when we read the words, you shall not steal, our minds have the tendency to go to stories like burglars in your home or someone stealing your car.

We picture the thief with a ski mask at the bank or the movie Ocean's 11 or 12 or 13 or 106. And yeah, that's wrong, right?

But we don't think always about the little things and how they can affect our pursuit of God's heart. Sometimes stealing is so subtle and it starts with a good intention, maybe to borrow something.

[4 : 21] And yet we as children of the king are called to a higher level of integrity in everything we do. See, there's an anonymous quote that says, I want to be so full of Christ that when a mosquito bites me, it flies away singing, there's power in the blood.

And you know what? I want to be so full of Christ that there's godly integrity and a pursuit of holiness in everything I do, even the little things that we can justify or even try to explain away.

Because stealing is stealing, no matter how big or small. And I don't want anything to get in the way of my walk with the Lord. And he makes it abundantly clear that stealing not only hurts others, but it goes against God's heart.

So let's get real practical here. And let's talk about ways that we can steal. And I'm going to actually group these into three categories. But first is possessions.

What do you have that belongs to someone else? How many of us have borrowed a book maybe two years ago or 20 years ago from a friend or a shovel from a neighbor or a dish from your mother-in-law or any of those black FCC church pens?

[5 : 38] It's not intentional, but occasionally Bethany will send me back to church with a bag of 40 to 50 pens and say, Do not bring them home. You are stealing.

Others of you have admitted to accidentally taking church pens as well. So let's just come clean, okay? If that's you, you can put them in a Ziploc bag. You can leave them in the pew. You can leave them at Amy's office door.

If you have one or two of them, then you have our permission just to keep them, enjoy them, be a walking billboard for the church. But on a serious note, it's easy to forget that we borrowed something.

But once you see it, once it's brought back in your mind, then we need to give it back. This past week, God really humbled me pretty good. And it's one of these instances here where when Bethany and I got married, we had moved into the church parsonage that I shared about earlier.

The church was very warm and with generous gifts that they gave us as we got started in our marriage. But one thing we were lacking were good knives for things like cutting potatoes.

[6 : 46] So one day I went over to the church kitchen that rarely got used, and I borrowed a couple knives. There was probably 20 in the drawer. And when we used them, we were like, oh, wow, these are much better than our Walmart specials.

So they just kind of became mainstays in our kitchen with no intention of keeping them long term. And then the day came when we left the church to take a ministry in Tennessee. They got packed up with everything else.

And I remember specifically 330 miles away from Rushville, Indiana, thinking, I know they probably don't miss them, but we need to send these back.

That's the right thing to do. But you guys know how that goes? Sometimes it just never happened. So I thought the same thing again when we moved back to this area three years later, but it didn't get done.

And then I started preparing this message. And I'll tell you, the Holy Spirit just hit me like a ton of bricks. This deep conviction. I felt him saying, enough excuses. At this point, you're stealing.

[7 : 49] So as ridiculous as I may have seemed to the church, I wrote a letter of apology. I put the knives with it and I dropped it off. I go to court on the 27th of this month.

No, I'm just kidding, okay? At least I hope not. So what do we say in the legal realm here in America? We say possession is nine-tenths of the law.

We see value put on what belongs to individuals in Scripture as well. Now, we know that it all belongs to God and we're called to be good stewards, but we also see value placed on the possessions that people have been entrusted with.

And if we look at Proverbs 10, verse 2, it says, ill-gotten treasures have no lasting value, but righteousness delivers from death. So, if any possessions have gone past the normal borrowing range, or maybe even something that you actually have stolen, make it right.

And trust me, the Holy Spirit will bring things to your mind. Don't ignore it like I did for way too long. Now, here's the second thing. So first is possessions. Second is we can easily steal when it comes to work or work-related things.

[9 : 01] So let me ask you this. Do you ever fudge a little on your mileage at work or the hours that you've worked? Were you supposed to take an hour for lunch, but you took an extra 20 minutes and thought, you know what, it's no big deal.

I give this company more time than I should. Now, if that's the agreement with your employer to give and take like that, then great. You're following the protocol. But if it's not, then that can be a form of stealing.

Do you take certain things from the workplace without permission? Because, ah, who cares? Everybody else does it. That company isn't hurting for money anyways. But that's not the point. Godly integrity, honoring Christ is the point.

See, in what I do in ministry, there's too much plagiarism. There's too much copyright infringement that happens. I remember preaching at a church years ago. And they told me the story of a previous pastor there who left his sermon notes behind one Sunday.

And they still had the website on it where he downloaded his sermon from. And then he preached it as his own without ever giving credit. That's called theft.

[10 : 10] That's also why in every message I preach on a Sunday morning, you'll hear me give credit to a Bible scholar for maybe a quote that I use. Even in this series, I've been pretty straightforward here that there have been three main resources that I've used to help me prepare.

Two books, one by Alistair Begg, another by Kevin DeYoung. You've seen me quote them. And then on the more practical side, I've been listening to messages by Chip Ingram. And I want to give credit to them for helping me wrap my head around these commandments.

But I'm still preparing each message the old-fashioned way while getting my hands dirty, as you would say, and studying out the passage. But I realize in our church family that we have white-collar and blue-collar workers.

So this can look a little different depending on your work setting. I can speak more from a white-collar side, even though I was raised very blue-collar. Maybe you work in a factory.

Maybe you do some sort of construction. Or you're a mechanic. You know how easy it is to grab onto a tool and make it your own. Or fudge those hours.

[11 : 19] And then you think about this from maybe the employer side. Some of you listening, you're the boss. You're the business owner, right? So let me ask you this. Do you charge a fair wage?

Do you pay your employees like you should? Do you report everything to the IRS the way that it's been mandated? Man, I'm going to get myself beat up after church, aren't I?

But listen, this stuff matters to God. So be a man of integrity. Be a woman of integrity. And you watch how God will bless you for it.

And then the third category is money. Money or resources. However you want to put that. But it's easy to borrow cash from a friend or a relative.

And then seven years later, that debt is still outstanding. And when you're at a family get-together, there's a reason that Uncle Tony is scowling at you when he passes the mashed potatoes because it's his money and he wants it now.

[12 : 15] Or what about when we go to do our taxes? Oh, did he really just go there? Yeah, I did. Are we accurate on how we report everything?

Do we fudge the numbers to get the bigger tax refund? Do we justify it by talking about how corrupt our government can be? And I pay way too much anyways.

And yet, what does God's Word teach in Romans 13, 7? Give to everyone what you owe them. If you owe taxes, pay taxes. If revenue, then revenue.

If respect, then respect. If honor, then honor. We even see in the book of Mark, some religious leaders come to Jesus and they're trying to trap him in his words, which never seemed to go well for them.

But they ask him if they should have to pay a certain tax to Caesar. And if you understand the context of that time in history, the Romans took over a lot of people.

[13 : 11] So the Jewish people were under their thumb and the Jewish people hated them for it. And so they're asking, should we have to pay this tax to Caesar? And here's what Jesus simply says.

He says, give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what belongs to God. So that's twice now, especially when it comes to taxes, that we're taught to have the most utmost integrity with how we deal with our money, with how we pay taxes to authority.

What about this one? In Malachi, Malachi chapter 3, starting in verse 8. God says to his people, the Israelites, he says, will a mere mortal rob God?

And yet you rob me. But you ask, how are we robbing you? And listen to what God says, in tithes and offerings. Now, just in case you're kind of new to all of this, a tithe is 10% of everything God has entrusted to us that we give back off the top from our resources, that we give back to God to show our trust and dependency on him.

An offering, and by the way, a tithe goes to the storehouse. It goes to your local church. And then offerings are anything above and beyond that, that go to maybe somewhere where God places a need on your heart.

[14 : 32] Maybe something you're passionate about. And that can go in the church or it can go outside the church. Now, a lot of people will say, well, you know, we see tithing under the Old Testament law, but we don't see tithing talked about specifically in the New Testament.

Well, listen, actually tithing was before the law was given. It was during the law. And then we see in the New Testament, they talk about giving proportionally. So while it doesn't specifically mention the word tithe, we see even from this study of the Ten Commandments that when Jesus would talk about one of the commandments, he didn't take away from it.

He added more onto it. He made it harder. And so if anything, God is not going to lessen what he expects from us. If anything, he's going to expect more. So I think a tithe is a great starting point in your walk with Jesus.

And here's what verse nine says. You are under a curse. So this is God talking to the Israelites, your whole nation, because you are robbing me, bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. He's talking about the temple or the church that there may be food in my house.

Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not. I love this promise. See if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

[15 : 51] What an amazing promise. But at the same time, this can be one of the most terrifying or one of the most liberating passages, depending on where you stand in obedience to God's teaching on stewardship.

But he makes it clear that the Israelites were stealing when they withheld their giving from him. And I believe that applies completely to us today. You know, statistics that Christians, statistics show that Christians on average give three percent of their income back to the Lord.

And God, not me, but God calls that stealing in this passage we just read. And more than it being about money, it's about trusting God. It's about being a faithful manager of his resources.

See, I wanted to take these first several minutes of this message and simply move our minds beyond seeing theft as just a carjacker or a bank robber and help us to see that theft can be so many things that maybe we do every day.

It can be deception. It can be fraud. It can be all kinds of things. They've even become some of these things in our minds even become acceptable. in our culture. And now that we have this idea of how easy it is to steal in some form or fashion, let's kind of talk about the root of it all.

[17 : 14] Because if we don't deal with the heart issues behind it, then it won't change. If we don't truly repent before God and make it right to those who we've stolen from, then we'll struggle to walk in the power, grace, life, and freedom that we've been called to in Christ.

So let's talk about a couple roots of theft. And let's replace greed, which is one of those. Let's replace greed with contentment.

Let's replace greed with contentment. So why would we steal? Why would we even risk it? Honestly, it's because of greed. This desire to get something for nothing.

So let me ask you this. How many of you have ever sat through a timeshare presentation? Awful, right? Why would we ever endure that high-pressure sales pitch when most of us didn't really intend to buy the timeshare in the first place?

Why did we do it? To get free stuff, right? \$100 to this restaurant. Tickets to that show for free. A free stay at that resort. Now, how many of you wish that you wouldn't have sat through one?

[18 : 23] Yeah, I'm one of those people. It's not worth it. I remember Bethany and I did this, and the guy who gave us the sales pitch was a big dude. He starts off with kind of this bully tactic, trying to tell us not to lead him on if we're not really interested in buying a timeshare.

And then, because we were in our mid-20s at the time, he starts to make some assumptions, starts to assume that we're partiers. And he goes into buddy mode, talking about getting drunk and falling off a golf cart and how cool that was.

And then he asked me what I did for a living. And so I told him. And it's amazing how he went from a drunken stupor into full-blown child-of-God mode, talking about going to church and how his pastor mentors him and the calling God has on his life.

And it was a miracle, guys, how he changed in that 30 minutes. But Bethany and I walked out of that presentation saying, never again. If we can't afford it on our own, then we'll do without.

And that's one lesson that we've tried to teach our kids. It's okay if you like this toy, if you enjoy collecting those Pokemon cards, but be careful. You can get caught up in thinking that this is going to satisfy.

[19 : 35] And this pursuit of more, more, more can be dangerous. And greed is one reason why we find ourselves lowering our standards and stealing. And yet I like how Hebrews 13.5 says, keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.

Because God has said, never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. You know, just about a week and a half ago, we lost a dear friend from our church family named Merrill Smith.

And anyone who knew him would tell you that he didn't care about material things. In fact, he drove that same white 90s F-250 diesel everywhere he went for over 20 years when he could have gotten himself a nicer truck years earlier.

But he didn't care. He was content. It got him from point A to point B. And stuff didn't matter to him unless he was giving it to other people who were in need.

One of the most giving people I've ever met. Very generous man who taught us a lot about finding our contentment in Christ and not in having more and getting it for nothing.

[20 : 44] So we must start at the root and see if there's any greed there. Because it's easy to think if I can just get a nicer car, then I'll be satisfied. If I can just get that four bedroom, two bath house with the pool in the back, then life will be great.

And what happens? We get it and it doesn't satisfy. That which was once fancy starts to become the norm. And we start to see others who have more and bigger and newer and nicer.

And that greed takes over. And so we get that and then it's still not enough. Instead, we're called to choose to find our contentment.

Not in that stuff, but in Christ. Realizing it only comes in walking with Jesus and living out His purpose over my life. And then second, we see this root of laziness.

So let's replace laziness with hard work. Chip Ingram shared a good illustration that I could relate to pretty well. Do you remember gym class as a kid where the teacher would say, hey, everybody's got to run, I don't know, 20 laps around the outside of the basketball lines, right?

[21 : 54] And he's right there and he's got the whistle in his mouth and he's making sure nobody's inside the lines. And then he quietly steps out for a moment. But it wasn't so quietly because all the kids noticed.

And kids start to round those corners and run inside the lines a bit, save a few steps. And then after about five minutes of the teacher being gone, kids get real comfortable. And before you know it, everybody's running in a circle in the middle of the court, okay?

Some of you can relate to that. Now listen, there are so many born again Bible-believing Christians who are running circles in the middle when it comes to their integrity.

When it comes to fibbing on the truth. When it comes to getting things by cutting corners. When it comes to stealing. And yet the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul put it like this in Ephesians 4.28.

Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work. Doing something useful with their own hands that they may have something to share with those in need.

[22 : 56] And so not only do you stop, but you need to be generous and be someone who can give back to others as well. So I couldn't help but think of a friend of mine when I heard that, who I went to Bible college with.

I played basketball. He was a little younger, so I think we played together for like two years. But he was really good. Crazy athlete. He led the nation in our division.

Led the nation in steals like at least two or three of his four years. Something like that. I think he averaged like four to five steals a game, which is nuts. But he really struggled in the classroom.

He had some learning disabilities. He could literally, people say this, but he could literally say it. He would read a chapter and not remember a thing about what he read. So he set out on a journey to figure this out.

He discovered that he was dyslexic. He sought out some help from others, some strategies. And he started to find his own way to learn. And I think he graduated with a 3.0 because he worked his tail off going the extra mile constantly.

[24 : 03] And while he didn't feel called to full-time ministry, I can tell you that he is a fantastic, godly lay leader in his church. I think he's an elder, but I'm not for sure on that.

But he's also an award-winning photographer, getting invited to resort locations to teach seminars on photography. Why? Because when he could have cheated to get by, when he could have cut corners, when he could have made excuses, he refused to do it.

And he worked hard. And it served him well in every part of his life. So we see that often at the root of stealing is greed and laziness.

You could even say pride. So think about it. There's always a new Ponzi scheme. The police are always warning citizens against a new creative scam to empty your bank account. Why is that the case?

Because greed and laziness, because pride, because so many haven't found contentment in Christ and learned how to work hard to honor him.

[25 : 04] So now that we kind of have a decent picture of what stealing can look like and how we can often explain it away, now that we know the root causes, what's the big picture? What's the solution?

And I think it's this simple. Here's what Jesus says in Matthew 6, starting in verse 19. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and vermin, another word for pests of some sort, where moths and vermin destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moths and vermin do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

You know, there was a pilot who usually flew a similar route. And as they flew over this one certain part in the Appalachians, he would always stare very intently.

And his young co-pilot had picked this up from a few flights. And he finally asked him, he said, what's so interesting to you about that spot? You stare at it so much when we fly by.

[26 : 13] And the pilot said, well, do you see that stream right down there? And the guy said, yeah. He said, when I was a kid, I used to sit down there on a log and fish. And every time a plane flew over, I would look up and wish that I were flying.

He said, now I look down and wish that I were fishing. You know, guys, the grass can always look a little greener on the other side. And yet I once heard someone say that the grass is greener only where you water it.

See, the heart of this commandment, do not steal. The heart is that true satisfaction isn't found in stuff and going against the heart of God to get it.

True joy, true hope, true contentment, those things are found in a close relationship with your Savior, Jesus, as his grace covers you and your desire to live like him propels you.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we just thank you so much for these words of life that you have spoken and explained into our hearts today.

[27 : 20] Father, I just thank you for your leading on this message. And I just pray that we will take a deep look at our hearts. Holy Spirit, we give you permission to convict us and show us if there are any areas that we need to repent of and that we need to make right.

So Father, thank you that you call us to holiness. Thank you that you call us to godly, biblical integrity. And I just pray that as the body of Christ, we will stop looking like the world and that we will start looking like people who truly have been changed by the grace of God.

So thank you for these words today. We pray all of it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, hey, thank you for tuning in today. I just want to give you this quick invitation.

Once again, my name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. Check us out at FCCGreensburg.com. But hey, I just wanted to give you an invitation. If you have faith questions, if you want to talk about surrendering your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we would love to come alongside you.

Here's a couple ways you can reach out to us. You can call the church office Monday through Thursday from 8 to 430. You can call us. That is 812-663-8488.

[28 : 38] That's 812-663-8488. Or you can just go ahead and email me at ray at FCCGreensburg.com. Hey, thank you so much for tuning in today.

And we pray that you have a great week.