Jesus Speaks About Greed

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[0:00] This morning we are commencing a new sermon series, a short sermon series, five sermons in this series titled Jesus Speaks.! This morning we begin with Jesus Speaks about greed and the next week we will continue with Jesus Speaks about worry.

The following week Jesus Speaks about sin, then Jesus Speaks about grace and we'll close it out with Jesus Speaks. about discipleship.
And so this morning let us hear what the Lord Jesus has to say to us about the issue of greed. And I want to begin by asking you a personal question.
And it's not a question to be answered out loud, just answer it silently in your heart before God. Here's the question. Are you a covetous person?
And I'll ask it in an even more familiar way. Are you a greedy person? Again, just in your heart before the Lord. Whatever the answer is to that question, I want us to evaluate that answer in light of the words of Jesus in this passage that we're about to read.
[1:29] And so if you have not yet done so, please turn your Bible to the Gospel of Luke chapter 12. And I'm going to be reading verses 13 to 21.

If you're using, if you don't have a Bible, we have church Bibles that are slid under the seat in front of you. So feel free to read. So feel free to use that. And it is on page 871.
Page 871. We're going to be reading Luke chapter 12, verses 13 to 21. Please follow along as I read.
I'm reading from the English Standard Version. And he said to them, And he said,
And I will tear down my barns and build big, larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years.
[3:24] Relax. Eat. Drink. Be merry. But God said to him, Fool, this night your soul is required of you.

And the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.
Let's pray together. Father, we bow our hearts this morning. And we ask, O Lord, that you would help us as we hear your word this morning.
Lord, we confess that we are people who have blind spots. We confess, Lord, that we do not see as we ought to see.
And we pray that you would cause us to see as we should concerning ourselves in the context of these words spoken concerning greed.
[4:34] Lord, we need your help. I need your help. We need your help to hear as we should. I need your help to proclaim your word as I should.

And so, Lord, would you pour out abundant grace upon us this morning. And we pray that in the preaching of your word, your name will be glorified and our souls will be edified.
We pray and ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. This passage begins with a surprising request and ends with a surprising response.
And so I've organized the sermon this morning around those two parts of the passage. First, a surprising request.
And second, a surprising response. So first, a surprising request. The request came from a man who was in a very large crowd of people.
[5:45] And this man was in a dispute with his brother over an inheritance. If you look at verse 1 in Luke chapter 12, you will see that Jesus was teaching a massive crowd of people.

Luke says there were thousands of people gathered so much so that they were trampling on one another. This was no small crowd. And Jesus had just taught the crowd about the importance of

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following him and how those who follow him will be persecuted, but how they should not be fearful, how they should not be ashamed to acknowledge him before the world, and that how in the moment of persecution, he will protect and show them what they should say.
And then out of left field, this surprising request comes from this man. The request is off topic. He shouts out to Jesus, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.
And you can imagine that the crowd must have been very quiet as they listened to Jesus. And this man waited for a moment to interject his request, asking Jesus to tell his brother to divide the inheritance with him.
What is clear is this man recognized Jesus as a rabbi, because that's what rabbis did. Rabbis settled disputes. And we're not given the details.
[7:23] We don't know whether this man had a legitimate case or not, or whether he was trying to get something that didn't belong to him. But what we know is that he didn't seem to want to have a fair hearing.

He told Jesus exactly the outcome that he wanted. He said, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. Again, just imagine the scene.
This crowd is filled, no doubt, with strangers. And when you consider the context and the natural reading of this passage, it would appear that his brother was present.
It would make no sense for him to say, Jesus, tell my brother, who isn't here, who is at home somewhere, to divide the inheritance with me.
The more natural reading of the passage is his brother's perhaps standing right on the side of him, and he says, Jesus, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. Or his brother is somewhere in the crowd. That's the natural reading of the passage.
[8:29] I think to read it otherwise would be unnatural to not put the brother in the context. But whether his brother was present or not, that may be debatable, but here's what's not debatable.

This man was willing to lose his brother in order to gain material possessions.
That's not in dispute. Whether his brother was present and hearing it for himself or he was going to hear, boy, you wouldn't believe what your brother did today, he asked Jesus to make you divide the inheritance.
This man was more concerned about material possessions than he was with maintaining a peaceful, brotherly relationship with his brother.
And so it was a surprising request, both in terms of the setting that it was made and also the request itself. But as surprising as the request is, it's not an unusual request.
[9:46] I think we've all lived long enough to know that disputes over inheritances is a long-standing human issue. As long as the human race has been around, there's been these disputes.

I think some of us could remember in this society of ours, in our own context, we could recall, played out in the press, the inheritance disputes with some prominent families in the country whose names would be too embarrassing to mention.
And what is sad is that there are no true winners. Even those who win, lose. Even those who think they've gained something, they've lost something far more important because very rarely are those relationships able to endure such hostility and such acrimony.
Oftentimes they gain wasting assets and they lose relationships with family members. And what is sad is that some do it knowing the outcome.
Some do it knowing that this relationship with my mother or my father or my brother or my sister or my uncle or my aunt, this is not going to endure this dispute.
[11:14] And they willingly pursue it knowing that that relationship is going to be lost. As I was preparing, I thought about this in particular in this context of COVID.

For quite some time now, I have stopped buying the newspapers and I would read the news that I do read online. And several weeks ago, I was quite surprised when I got a copy of a Thursday newspaper in my hand and I was stunned at the size of the obituary.
I was stunned at the amount of funeral homes that have cropped up in the country. I had no idea. And many of them are just related to COVID that for many people is sudden.
And since we know that even before COVID, so many people died without a will. They died intestate. And their assets are all over the place and nothing is decided.

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And what is so sad is that for so many who should be grieving, they are busy spending their emotions on what they can get and trying to protect what they think belongs to them.
[12:33] And some don't even get an opportunity to grieve in a proper manner. And so although this request was surprising in terms of the context and in terms of this man dictating to Jesus the outcome that he wanted, the surprise is not that he was concerned about the inheritance.

That sadly is an ongoing reality of human life. Now surprising as the request was, what is even more surprising is the response.
Yes, the man's request was surprising, but the response of Jesus was even more surprising. And that brings me to my second and final and most important point of this passage.
a surprising response. The response that Jesus gives in answer to this man's request is surprising in three particular ways.
Three somewhat obvious ways. First, Jesus rebukes the man. That's a surprise. He doesn't ask him, okay, let me hear the details. He doesn't say, you know, talk to me after we're done.
[14:01] he rebukes the man. Look at what he says to him again in verse 14. But Jesus said to a man who made me a judge or arbitrator over you.

From these words, we can see that Jesus didn't focus on whether this man had a legitimate claim, the halfiest state, or not.
And in truth, it really didn't matter. And the reason it didn't matter was because even if he had a legitimate claim to that, what was clear was he was putting that at a higher value than he did his relationship with his brother.
And so Jesus says, who made me an arbitrator or a judge over you? And obviously, Jesus saw beyond the surface of what this man was presenting to him.
Certainly, Jesus knew thoughts of people and no doubt would have known the motivation of this man's heart. whether he was entitled to it or not, what was clear was this man was motivated by greed.
[15:24] And Jesus recognized that that was his greater problem. His greater problem was not that he could possibly be losing something that belonged to him.

His greater problem was that his heart was gripped by greed. He was covetous. Jesus saw that he was obsessed with getting an inheritance.
And here he was. Jesus is teaching. Jesus is talking about what it means to follow him. And this man isn't listening. He is there, but he is preoccupied with something else.
His soul is focused on, I want half of that estate. And so what Jesus is saying is going through one ear and out of the next. Christ. And he is willing to bring a private dispute between him and his brother in the public domain, in the presence of a crowd of strangers.
The second surprising response is that although Jesus rebukes the man, he warns the crowd. It's very important to see this.
[16:40] Look again at how Luke records what Jesus says in verse 15. Immediately after rebuking the man in verse 14, we read, and he said to them, not he said to him, he said to them, take care and be on your guard against all covetousness for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

He rebuked the man, but he warned the crowd of which the man was a part. Now, why is it that although the man asked the question that demonstrated his greed, Jesus warned the whole crowd?
I think Jesus warned the crowd because I think they were unaware that greed is a real and present danger that everyone must guard against.
I suspect in that crowd as that man asked the question and got the rebuke from Jesus, they were there saying, I can't believe he did that.
Let me try to illustrate this and as I thought about how I might illustrate what I think was going on in the hearts of the crowd and why Jesus responded this way, the best thing that came to mind was memories of growing up.
[18:16] in a big family of seven kids, you can imagine there was a lot of beating going around. There was hardly a day that someone didn't get beating and sometimes, every now and then, one of us got beaten alone and sometimes I did, sometimes I did, sometimes I did get to watch and I can remember times when one is getting beating, the others are watching and you're kind of watching with glee, you're kind of watching, not even thinking that that could be you tomorrow or that could be you five minutes from now and my mother and my father would say, now you see you

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have yours coming and they will remind you quickly that you're no better, you're not exempt, you can get the very same thing and you realize, yeah, you know, I can and you learn the lesson and I think something like that was going on with this crowd.

I think some were looking at this man and saying, I can't believe he is that greedy that he is bringing this issue, airing his dirty laundry out in public like that.
But the third surprise is this parable that Jesus tells. And Jesus tells the parable really to the crowd including the man, but Jesus has a concern that is greater than just this man and his question that he raises.
And it's a legitimate concern. And so he tells this parable. And the reason he tells this parable is that greed is multifaceted.
God is blind to greed at work in our own life.
[20:18] And so Jesus tells this parable to the whole crowd. I think even for some of us this morning, we may be thinking, I wouldn't fight over any inheritance.

But does that mean that we are free from greed because we won't fight over an inheritance? I want to give us a working definition of greed before we look at the parable.
And here's the definition of greed that we can draw from this particular passage. greed is a selfish desire for more that ignores others and God and is rooted in the fear that we don't have enough now or we won't have enough in the future.
Let me say that again. Greed is a selfish desire for more that ignores others and God and is rooted in the fear that we don't have enough now or we won't have enough in the future.
You see, when we think of greed in this way, I think we're able to see that greed is not just about, for example, fighting over inheritance. Greed is something that is deeper than that.
[22:06] Let me read for you the way the New International Version translates verse 15 of Luke 12.

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.
Notice what Jesus says. He says, you must be on guard against all kinds of greed. Greed comes in varieties. Greed is not monolithic.
Greed is not singular. Greed is broad and varied. And Jesus says, you must be on your guard against all kinds of greed because a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.
Jesus says, be on guard against it. Now, let's look at the parable. In verse 15, we read that the rich man's land produced, in verse 16, sorry, we read that the rich man's land produced an abundant!
[23:28] harvest. Anything wrong with that? No. the abundant harvest was a blessing from God. God owned the land, God owned the seed, God gave the rain, God gave the sunshine, God was the one who caused that harvest to come to this man.

Nothing wrong with that, God blessed him. In verses 17 and 18, we see the rich man pondering over his surprising good fortune. his existing bonds are too small.
He says, what I'm going to do is, I'm planning to rig them down and I'm going to build larger ones so I can store everything. Anything wrong with that? There's nothing wrong with that.
That's good stewardship. If he didn't do that, it would spoil, it would waste. It was a common sense plan to make provision for this excess, for this abundance that God actually blessed him with.
In verse 19, we read of his further plans. With this abundant harvest, he says to himself, and one of the things I want you to realize that's easy to miss in this parable is this man is just thinking.
[24:41] He's not doing anything. He's just thinking about what he's going to do. So in verse 19, his plan is that since he has this abundant harvest that he is going to store up in these barns that he plans to build, he says, I'm going to relax, I'm going to eat, I'm going to drink, and I'm going to be merry.

Anything wrong with that? Well, there are many things that's wrong with that. First, we see that this man was greedy because even before his bountiful harvest, he was a rich man.
and yet when his land produced this abundant harvest, his only thought was for himself. He only thought about himself.
And here's where greed, in terms of when we understand it in the context of this passage, here's where we see greed actually operating in this man's life.
He was a rich man. And yet, in his mind, he didn't think he had enough.

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[26:00] And so when he was blessed, you see his greed coming out in the fact that he ignores others, he doesn't think about God, and his greed is rooted in the fear about the future.

He wants to have what he thinks is never-ending supply of goods. resources stored up so he could relax, he could eat, drink, and be merry.
He's fearful about the future. He's fearful that he doesn't have enough or won't have enough in the future. And it leads him to act in a greedy manner that in a moment where he has the opportunity to be a blessing, instead, he thinks only of himself.
And he doesn't think. about others, and he certainly is not thinking about God. Not thinking about God because he's thinking that he has to make his own way, he has to make his own provision.
He doesn't think about God who blessed him before he got the harvest, and who blessed him in the harvest. He wants to store it all up for himself.
[27:11] But as greedy and as selfish as it is to be rich and have no heart for the poor, that's not what Jesus addresses.

It's easy to come at this from a social point of view and say, this man should have shared what he had, and certainly should have done that, but that's not the focus. that Jesus drives at.
That's not the issue that Jesus drives at. That's not the issue of greed. That's not the danger of greed that we need to guard against.
Jesus addresses the issue that we need to guard against in verse 20. But God said to him, fool, this night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?
What's the point that's being made in that question? The point is that possessions, even abundant possessions, cannot sustain our life.
[28:31] That's what Jesus said earlier in verse 15. One's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. possessions. Possessions cannot sustain our lives.

Life is not made up of how much we have or how little we have. Possessions do not translate into a longer life. We will all die one day, and we will all leave it behind.
And in some cases, people will fight over it, as was the case of this man and his brother. And this is so true to life.
It's easy to miss the point that Jesus makes in this parable. The rich man did not even live to carry out his plans.
Because the one who gives life and who takes it away determined that his days on the earth would end that very night. And what was the point of all the greed?
[29:47] The rich man in this parable ended his life on earth as a poor man. He brought nothing into this world, and he took nothing out of it.

the greatest tragedy is not that this rich man left the earth materially poor. The greatest tragedy is that he left the earth spiritually poor.
God is more. And the same is true for all those who are governed by greed.
That consuming desire to have more, believing that more wealth and more possessions will give us more certainty and more security in life. So much so that we focus all of our energies on this life and have no regard for the life to come.
Here's the reality. Greed is a present danger and temptation for every single one of us. That's why Jesus warned the whole crowd, and that's why we need to be warned this morning.
[30:59] None of us is exempt. To one degree or another, we will face the temptation of greed and even succumb at times to the temptation of greed.

That is rooted in fear that we don't have enough now, rooted in fear we won't have enough later, and we have this self-centered focus on ourselves.
Nothing about others who could use our help, nothing about God who provides all that we need.
And the whole point is that greed is so dangerous, that greed can so consume our hearts, that it will cause us to lose sight of the more important reality, which is not so much what we have in this life, but what we have for the life to come.
Greed is so dangerous that greed, if it engulfs our heart enough, will cause us to focus only on this life and forget the life to come. We don't care about others, we don't care about God.
Greed can do that, brothers and sisters. And none of us is exempt. Think about it. This man is in the presence of Jesus.
[32:20] Jesus is giving the words of life. This man is hearing the words that we are reading this morning. He's not concerned. Anything that's on his mind is half of the inheritance.

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half of the goods. The word of life is preaching life to this man and greed is so engulfed his heart and blinded his eyes that he's more concerned about getting an inheritance that he cannot keep. And if it's sufficient, he will leave for others to fight over. Friends, this is the danger of greed.
And Jesus says, be on your guard for all kinds of greed. He can play it in a lot of different ways. See, when fear grips our hearts, that there won't be enough, now or in the future, we become greedy.
And we see it in different ways. I think you could remember when there was all the shortage in the stores of different things, when they were saying, well, we're not going to have enough of this, enough of that, just to watch people, how they would go, and out of fear, they would hoard things.
[33:43] Not thinking about others. Even some Christians, forgetting that God has promised that he's going to take care of us, that he's never going to leave us, never going to take, never going to leave us alone.

He's going to take care of us. And the moment we forget about others, we forget about God, and we are engulfed in greed, and it can so choke the spiritual life out of our soul.
Friends, this is the danger of greed. This is why Jesus says, you must be on your guard against all kinds of greed. You know, greed could be at work, in your workplace.
greed could cause you to act in a certain way, to try to protect what you think you need to protect. And you do so, even at the expense of others, and indifference to God. We put locks on our doors, we put alarms, on our homes, and that is because crime is an ongoing reality that we always face.
[35:07] We always face the possibility of being a victim against crime, and so we protect against it in an ongoing way. We must do the same with greed. None of us is at the point where we can say, I no longer need to guard against greed.

Jesus says, you are to guard against all kinds of greed. As I said earlier, greed comes in many varieties and many flavors, and Satan knows the flavor that will wake up our appetite.
greed. The man in this parable was overcome with greed, and really there are two men.
There's the man in the parable itself, and there's the man that Jesus addressed earlier. greed.
Friends, we make too much of this life.
We make too much of this life. This life is grief, it is fragile, and it is uncertain. Greed is a universal danger that every single one of us faces.
[36:40] Notice the warning that Jesus gives in verse 21. He says, so it is. So it is. Sorry, so is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.

Again, greed can make us so concerned and preoccupied with acquiring things in this life that it makes us blind and indifferent to the life to come, and we make no preparation for the life to come, to consume with this life.
God is so how do we become rich toward God? How do we avoid being a fool as this man was? Well, obviously, it doesn't mean that we have material wealth because if that were the case, then this man would not be deemed a fool. He would not be condemned in the parable.
Some people think that being rich toward God means that you give to charity and you do good works, and certainly those are good things to do, but they don't make us rich towards God.
[38:15] Being rich toward God means standing before God with a life that meets with his approval. righteousness is that only those persons who have experienced God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ will meet with acceptance before a holy God.

Being found with something that is not their own, being found with a righteousness that does not belong to them, a righteousness of Jesus Christ, it is only then will they be considered rich in God's sight.
And how is that possible? How is it possible for sinners like you and me, sinners who are tempted by greed and sometimes even succumb to greed, God? How is it possible for sinners like us to be accepted before a holy, all-knowing, and all-seeing God?
The truth is we shouldn't be accepted. The truth is we all deserve the wrath of God. Scripture says all of us like sheep have gone astray. All of us have turned to our own way.
The Bible further says there's none righteous, no, not one. No one seeks after God. But the good news of the gospel is that although we deserve to be eternally punished for our sins, the gracious, loving God against whom we have sinned has sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into this world to live a perfect life that we could never live and then to die as a substitute on the cross on behalf of sinners.

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[40:16] Taking our sin, enduring God's wrath for those sins so that God could treat us in a way that we don't deserve to be treated.

He would treat us in the way Jesus deserved to be treated. And so on the basis of that atoning sacrifice that Christ did, that substitutionary death that He underwent, that God forgives, and reconciles men, women, boys, and girls to Himself.
It's what some theologians call the great exchange. He takes our sin and gives us His righteousness. forgiveness. And Jesus did that for every single person who would ever believe, who would ever turn to Him and turn from sin.
Friends, this is what life on this earth is to be about. If we leave this earth without being rich toward God in this way, we leave poor.
We leave poor. We leave materially poor because we brought nothing into this world and it is a certainty we take nothing out of it. And if we leave without Christ, we take nothing into the world to come.
[41:52] and there are so many people, I hear it in increasing measure now, people are making so much of this life and they brag and boast that they're having their best lives now.

And I began to think about that. You realize that if you have your best life now, if you truly have your best life now, you are confessing that you're going to hell. if you have your best life now, it means you're not going to go to heaven because heaven, the life with God that has been promised to all those who belong to him cannot be compared to this life.
It is light years better than this life. And so if we have the best life now, friends, we're dying spiritually poor and bankrupt and we are going to hell.
this life is about hearing the one who has the words of life and seeing this world for what it is. Scripture says that this world and all that it has is passing away and only the one who does the will of God will endure forever, will abide forever.
And so let us hear, brothers and sisters, hear, friends, the words of Jesus. Take heed.
[43:23] Be careful. Be on guard against all kinds of evil. It will, all kinds of greed, I'm sorry, it will so grip our hearts and choke our hearts that we have no regard for God and no regard for others.

God. And so as we leave today, let us remember that greed is a selfish desire for more that ignores others and God and is rooted in the fear that we don't have enough now or we won't have enough in the future.
Brothers and sisters, friends, let's guard against that. Because if we don't guard against that, this will be more vicious than any robber who can come against us.
This will take away from us things far more precious than any robber can take away from us. Because it will rob us of our very souls.
Next Sunday, we're going to continue this passage. Because Jesus is unfinished. He goes on to speak about worry. And what we'll see next Sunday is that worry is the first cousin to greed.
[44:46] Worry and greed are very much related. And when you find one, if you look close enough, you'll see the other lurking close by.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for the gracious and kind warning that you have given to all of us in your word.
That we are to be on guard. We are to take heed against all kinds of greed. I pray, Lord, that you, by the power of your spirit, will convict us where we need to be convicted.
God, where we in any way are motivated by the fear that we don't have enough or we won't have enough. Oh, Lord, may we lay those fears at your feet and may we not allow them to so grip our hearts that we become unmindful of others and indifferent to you.
Lord, do your work in our hearts this morning, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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