

GOD AND GREED

IF WE LOOK AT TWO OF THIS MORNING'S READINGS THE WORD OR THE STORY MENTIONS GREED. **"GREED" HAS BEEN DEFINED AS AN INTENSE, SELFISH DESIRE FOR WEALTH OR POSSESSIONS.** THAT DEFINITION CLEARLY SPEAKS TO US THAT **GREED IS NOT JUST ABOUT OR LIMITED TO MONEY.** IN VERSE 15 JESUS SPEAKS TO US - *"Watch out! Guard yourself against **all kinds** of greed"*. THERE ARE OTHER TIMES JESUS SPEAKS SPECIFICALLY ABOUT MONEY WITH THE RICH RULER, CHOOSING BETWEEN MAMMON AND GOD. **WE CAN BE GREEDY IN MORE THINGS THAN MONEY.**

PAUL TELLS THE COLOSSIANS, AND US TOO BY ASSOCIATION, THAT WHEN WE ARE RAISED WITH CHRIST THAT WE SHOULD *"Think about the things above and not things on the earth"* AND HE GOES ON FURTHER TO SAY *"So put to death the parts of your life that belong to the earth"* AND GOES ON TO MENTION **TEN SPECIFIC SINS – FOUR SEXUAL SINS, FIVE ANTI-SOCIAL SINS AND GREED.** THESE ARE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND WHEN WE BECOME A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST'S. NOW THE SINS MENTIONED MAY APPEAR OLD-FASHIONED AND OUT OF DATE, BUT IN PHILLIPS' TRANSLATION *THESE SINS ARE LISTED AS SEXUAL IMMORALITY, DIRTY-MINDEDNESS, UNCONTROLLED PASSION, EVIL DESIRE AND THE LUST FOR OTHER PEOPLES THINGS.* SOUNDS LIKE A VERY UPDATE-TO-DATE LIST OF OUR "PROBLEMS" OR MORE CORRECTLY OUR SINS! GOD KNOWS THE "POWER" OF WORDS AND TODAY IT SEEMS IN OUR CULTURE WORDS DON'T CARRY A MEANING OR ARE USED IMPROPERLY. **WHEN I WAS YOUNG MY PARENTS WOULD TELL ME "DON'T STAY OUT LATE". WELL AFTER A FEW "LATE" ARRIVALS, I SOON DISCOVERED LATE AND MIDNIGHT WERE EXACTLY THE SAME WORD!**

I BELIEVE MANY OF OUR POLITICIANS ARE FINE EXAMPLES OF THIS DISTORTION. WHEN CAUGHT IN A LIE, THEY "MISSPOKE" OR "I DID NOT REALLY MEAN THAT". OUR LANGUAGE HAS BEEN TAKEN TO THE "VOCABULARY LOCKER" AND "BUTCHERED".

WORDS ARE IMPORTANT, BUT WORDS ARE GIVEN "POWER" BY OUR ACTIONS. IF WE SAY SOMETHING AND NEVER ACT ON IT THOSE WORDS CARRY NO MEANING. IN MATTHEW 5:33-37 WITH THE WORDS TRANSLATED BY THE MESSAGE *"And don't say anything you don't mean. This counsel is embedded deep in our traditions. You only make things worse when you lay down a smoke screen of pious talk, saying, 'I'll pray for you,' and never doing it, or saying, 'God be with you,' and not meaning it. You don't make your words true by embellishing them with religious lace. In making your speech sound more religious, it becomes less true. Just say 'yes' and 'no.' When you manipulate words to get your own way, you go wrong."*

THERE IS A SAYING "ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS". THAT SAYING GOES BACK TO THE 1600s. It was first said "And actions are more precious than words" THEN EVOLVED INTO "Actions speak louder than words, and are more to be regarded."

PEOPLE OUT THERE ARE LOOKING AT US AND SEEING IF OUR ACTIONS MATCH OUR WORDS. REMEMBER 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20 *"So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"* AND I MIGHT ADD, **WE DO NOT JUST SPEAK FOR CHRIST, WE ARE ACTING ON HIS BEHALF!!! WHEN WE ARE "CALLED" BY CHRIST, YES WE ARE TO BE DIFFERENT, HOWEVER IN BEING DIFFERENT IT DOES NOT MEAN GOD IS OUT TO SPOIL ALL OUR "FUN".** I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY TIMES I HAVE MADE REFERENCE TO VERSES THAT IT IS GOD'S DESIRE FOR US TO NOT ONLY HAVE WHAT'S GOOD, BUT WHAT IS BEST FOR US!!!!

BEING CALLED TO BE THIS "NEW" CREATURE IN CHRIST IS NOT SOMETHING WE CAN DO BY OURSELVES. (REPEAT) *THIS LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP AND BECOMING MORE CHRIST-LIKE IS NOT A DO-IT-YOURSELF, MAKE-YOURSELF-RIGHT, LIFT-YOURSELF-BY-YOUR-OWN-BOOTSTRAPS RELIGION. IT IS A DISCIPLESHIP OF THE HEART, SURRENDERING TO JESUS IN A RELATIONSHIP.* EARLIER IN THE VERSE IT SAID WE DIED AND OUR LIFE IS WITH CHRIST. THESE ARE HEAVY WORDS! WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? CAN WE TAKE IN THE MEANING OF IT IN ITS ENTIRETY? THIS IS WHERE THE MYSTERY OF OUR FAITH IS PRESENT. **GOD'S WAYS ARE HIGHER THAN OUR WAYS AND NOT OUR WAYS.** WHEN WE HAVE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, THERE IS **TRUST** THAT HE IS LOOKING OUT FOR US AND WILL GET US **THROUGH** THE MOST DIFFICULT TIMES, AND I AM GUESSING THERE ARE MANY OF YOU WHO WOULD STAND UP HERE AND SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT THAT SUBJECT!

NOW ONE OF THE TRAITS OR REALLY "SINS" THAT WE NEED TO "PUT TO DEATH" IS GREED. WE MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO SAY "I'M NOT RICH" SO BEING GREEDY DOES NOT APPLY TO ME, BUT REMEMBER EARLIER IN DEFINING **GREED, IT IS NOT LIMITED TO ONLY MONEY.** JUST BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH MONEY DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN'T HAVE THAT SELFISH DESIRE FOR MONEY. MANY WILL TELL US THAT GREED IS A HUGE PROBLEM IN THIS COUNTRY. THAT DRIVE TO HAVE OR POSSESS MORE THAN THE NEXT PERSON IS RUNNING RAMPANT. LOOK AT SPORTS, NO MATTER WHETHER IT'S A PITCHER IN BASEBALL OR A RUNNING BACK IN FOOTBALL THEY HAVE TO BE THE HIGHEST PAID. AS SOON AS THEY HEAR ABOUT ANOTHER PERSON MAKING MORE MONEY WHO PLAYS THAT POSITION WATCH THE WHINING BEGIN, AND THAT IS WHAT IT IS AND IT'S G-R-E-E-D-Y!!!

NOW HERE IS SOMETHING WE NEED TO BE REMINDED OF FROM TIME TO TIME AND BRINGS PERSPECTIVE.

- If you have had an education and know how to read, then you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read anything at all.*
- If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who won't survive the week.*
- If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.*
- If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change lying in a dish, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.*
- And if you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, You are more blessed than almost three billion people in the world.*

WE ARE BLESSED, WE ARE RICH, EVEN MORE SO BECAUSE WE ARE "RICH" IN JESUS CHRIST!

TODAY'S STORY IS ONLY ONE THAT POINTS OUT TO EACH ONE OF US THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VERSE "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need." BY THE WORDS I HAVE JUST READ **DO WE REALIZE HOW "RICH", HOW BLESSED WE REALLY ARE?**

I HAVE TOLD YOU MANY TIMES WHEN DRIVING ON TRIPS THAT NO MATTER BIG CITY, SMALL TOWN OR OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE YOU CAN ALWAYS SPOT THESE MINI-STORAGE UNITS. HOW IS THAT ANY DIFFERENT THAN THE RICH MAN'S BUILDING BIGGER BARNS? HOW MANY OF US HAVE SPOKEN THE WORDS "I HAVE NO ROOM TO STORE THIS OR THAT" OR I HAVE A BASEMENT OR A CLOSET FULL OF _____". THOSE THINGS ARE DOING NO GOOD, THEY ARE NOT BEING USED FOR THEIR INTENDED PURPOSE.

NOW I AM GOING TO VOICE AN OPINION HERE, AND MANY OF YOU MAY NOT LIKE HEARING THIS. I AM SADDENED THAT CHURCHES HAVE LARGE SUMS OF MONEY, AND THAT IS RELATIVE, TUCKED AWAY. WHAT GOOD IS THAT DOING ANYONE? MONEY IS A VEHICLE WE CAN USE FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS. IT SADDENS ME TOO THAT WE HAVE BUILT THESE HUGE CHURCHES, MAINLY FOR OUR COMFORT, AND IGNORED THOSE WHO NEED OUR HELP. I RAN ACROSS A QUOTE FROM ANDREW MURRAY, PASTOR AND WRITER, "**The world looks at money and its amount, Christ looks at the man and the motive**". THAT QUOTE SUMS UP TODAY'S STORY IN A VERY FEW WORDS.

ONE MORE WORD, **WHY DO WE LIKE THE RICH MAN IN THE STORY ACCUMULATE SO MUCH? DO WE NOT TRUST GOD TO PROVIDE?** LATER ON IN LUKE, JESUS TALKS ABOUT HOW GOD TAKES CARE OF THE BIRDS AND THE BEAUTY OF THE LILIES AND HE WILL TAKE CARE OF US!!!!

GREED AFTER ALL IS ONE OF THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS CONCEIVED BY THE DESERT FATHERS. **OPPOSITE OF THESE SEVEN DEADLY SINS ARE THE SEVEN HEAVENLY VIRTUES. CHARITY BEING THE POLAR OPPOSITE OF GREED. WE ARE BY CHALLENGED, AND BY THE GRACE OF GOD, TO BE DIFFERENT, TO LIVE A LIFE OF SERVICE,** NOT ONE OF GRABBING ALL WE CAN! EVERYTHING WE CAN. ONE VERSE JESUS TALKS OF SELLING OUR POSSESSIONS AND GIVE TO CHARITY. I BELIEVE THAT VERSE DOES NOT TELL US TO GIVE IT ALL AWAY, BUT THAT ANYTHING **WE HAVE WE SHOULD HOLD WITH AN OPEN HAND READY FOR USE.** AFTER ALL IT WAS GIVEN TO US BY GOD IN THE FIRST PLACE. HE IS THE ONE WHO GAVE US LIFE, GAVE US GIFTS AND TALENTS, AND BLESSED US! MURRAY'S WORDS COME BACK TO SPEAK TO US "CHRIST LOOKS AT THE MAN AND THE MOTIVE".

THERE IS A GOOD LESSON IN THE WORDS OF THIS OLD STORY FOR AS IT BEGINS JESUS IS ASKED TO BE A MEDIATOR OF AN INHERITANCE. LIKE I HAVE SAID BEFORE "NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN". **HOW MANY FAMILIES HAVE FOUGHT OVER INHERITANCES?**

IN CLOSING, WE MUST PUT HIM ABOVE THINGS OF THIS WORLD, WE FOOL OURSELVES IF WE THINK WE CAN SERVE MAMMON AND GOD. **WE MUST PUT PEOPLE ABOVE PLEASURE.** THE RICH MAN DIDN'T THINK OF HELPING OTHER WITH HIS SURPLUS, BUT BUILDING BIGGER BARNS AND KEEPING IT ALL. I WOULD VENTURE TO SAY WE CAN ALL GIVE AND SERVE OTHERS MORE THAN WE ARE!!! **JESUS MAKES IT CLEAR. THE GOAL OF WORKING HARD SO YOU CAN QUIT WORKING AND "TAKE YOUR EASE" DOESN'T SIT WELL WITH GOD.**

I WONDER SOMETIMES, IF OUR PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT ISN'T SOMEWHAT OFF BASE. IT MAKES SENSE TO SAVE UP FOR THOSE DAYS WHEN YOU WILL BE TOO OLD OR SICKLY TO WORK ... BUT TO RETIRE JUST SO YOU CAN SIT AROUND ALL DAY "FLIES IN THE FACE" OF EVERYTHING THE BIBLE TEACHES. **GOD INTENDS US TO DO HIS WORK HERE ON EARTH RIGHT UP UNTIL THE MINUTE HE CALLS US INTO ETERNITY.** NOW, RETIREMENT CAN FREE US UP TO FOCUS OUR ENERGIES ON WORK WE ALWAYS WANTED TO DO BUT DIDN'T HAVE TIME FOR WHILE WE WERE EARNING A LIVING FOR OUR FAMILY.

WHEN WE BECOME GREEDY, THE FOCUS IS ON US. WE LEAVE GOD OUT OF THE PICTURE, AND WITH THE FOCUS ON US WE USE WHAT WE HAVE FOR US AS THE RICH MAN DID. THE BIBLICAL "FOOL" IS ONE WHO "In his heart says there is no God" ALL HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED IS BY HIS HAND. LAST, WE ARE IN CONFLICT WITH GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR LIFE.

THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH WEALTH, MUCH IS DONE BY IT. **ABRAHAM, JACOB, DAVID, AND SOLOMON WERE NOT ONLY RICH IN THINGS, BUT “RICH TOWARD GOD – THE MOTIVE IS ALL IMPORTANT!** IT WAS WHEN THEY TURNED FROM GOD AND THEIR HEARTS FOCUSED ON THEMSELVES THAT THINGS TURNED SOUR.

GREED HAS MANY FACES, BUT WHEN WE KEEP OUR EYES ON JESUS CHRIST AND MAINTAIN THAT CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM AND THE WORD AND TRUST IN THE WORDS OF 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9 “*His grace will be all I need*”. AMEN.