

**“Greedy for God”**  
Message by DD Adams  
Providence Kemptown UMC  
11<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
July 31, 2016

Today’s gospel lesson is taken from the book of Luke, chapter 12, verses 13 through 21. I’ll be reading from the *Common English Bible*. Someone from the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus said to him, “Man, who appointed me as judge or referee between you and your brother?”

Then Jesus said to them, “Watch out! Guard yourself against all kinds of greed. After all, one’s life isn’t determined by one’s possessions, even when someone is very wealthy.” Then he told them a parable: “A certain rich man’s land produced a bountiful crop. He said to himself, What will I do? I have no place to store my harvest!

Then he thought, here’s what I’ll do. I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. That’s where I’ll store all my grain and goods. I’ll say to myself, You have stored up plenty of goods, enough for several years. Take it easy! Eat, drink, and enjoy yourself. But God said to him, ‘Fool, tonight you will die. Now who will get the things you have prepared for yourself?’ This is the way it will be for those who hoard things for themselves and aren’t rich toward God.” This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Last week we talked about praying for God’s kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. That’s a big request, but we have a big God, and that’s one of the things God says to pray about. God’s kingdom actually becomes a part of who we are. It takes up residence within us as we seek and ask God to consume more of us.

The result is *seeing* the Kingdom of God in our midst—things like peace, justice, and freedom flow out from us.

In the passage read, we learned about a man who wanted his older brother to divide his inheritance with him. He asked Jesus to take his side, but Jesus refused, but he did give some advice. He said, “Watch out! Guard yourself against all kinds of greed. After all, one’s life isn’t determined by one’s possessions, even when someone is very wealthy.”

Jesus told a parable about a rich man who tore down his barns to build larger ones. He had so much abundance he decided his only responsibility was to store his bountiful harvest for the future and relax. He’s thinking that the good life is the only thing that’s set before him. He’s got it made, but in reality, this man didn’t know he was bankrupt—spiritually bankrupt that is.

Money and possessions can be very addictive. They can turn our hearts in a dangerous direction. We can become too anchored in the world, rather than in God’s kingdom. Jesus didn’t say anything was wrong with wealth and possessions. It’s when we want in excessive, to have more than we need, and we’re never satisfied. That’s when it’s problematic. We can be greedy for a lot of things. Food, sex, position, power, drugs and alcohol, real estate. Proverbs 6:16 lists greed as one of seven *deadly* sins—as they’re referred to—but why is greed so deadly?

If anyone has endured any kind of addiction and lived through it to tell, they know about the captivity it brings and the freedom it steals from your life; it’s deadly. It controls everything, consumes your thoughts and motivations, and distracts your heart from what is truly valuable.

St. John Cassian, a Christian monk who practiced severe self-discipline and abstained from all indulgences had this to say about greed. “When money increases, the frenzy of covetousness intensifies.” Now that makes no sense at all, in fact, it should be the very opposite.

Some addictions are more deceptive and capable of disillusioning us more than others. Some are legal, some are more accepted, but all of them are ravenous, and they become idols in our lives. Wall Street tells us that wanting more and more is a good thing, but Rome fell partly due to its greedy practices. We see this in America today. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening, and the economic inequalities continue to increase. Let's look at this passage from the other side—in contrast to greed.

The opposite of greed is generosity. It's a virtue—a strength that comes from God. It lives inside you and is expressed outwardly—same as the kingdom of God. But it may not be our inclination to give if we figure we still need something in life. Or more of something. Kingdom principles can seem quite backwards to us and upside down—or so it seems. It just doesn't make sense what God says sometimes! It's not really how we think at all!

For example, Jesus said that in God's kingdom the first will be last and the last will be first (Matt. 20:16). Or this. Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant (Matt. 20:26). Or how 'bout this. It's better to give than to receive. Or this thought. Why on God's earth would someone share what they have when what they have is almost nothing? Yet the poor are the biggest givers!

The Bible says to be rich toward God, to give and it shall be given to you, and to seek first the kingdom of God. The title of this message is "Greedy for God;" this seems backwards and upside down. The term "greedy" is negative, but if it's a greed for wanting more of what God wants for us, than that's good.

Only people of faith will walk by faith, and I guess that's what we mean when we say the kingdom of God is upside down. Giving and sharing becomes a walk of faith. It doesn't come naturally to us. It makes no sense to our earthly self to hear God say store up for yourselves treasure in heaven because this treasure

won't rust, or break, or be destroyed by moths. Someone who's praying to lead a godly life in Christ Jesus will strive to be "rich toward God."

Verse 21 is key. God speaks and says, "'Fool, tonight you will die. Now who will get the things you have prepared for yourself?' This is the way it will be for those who hoard things for themselves and aren't rich toward God." When we're striving to be rich toward God we're acting on faith and believing God's word about sharing with others. We decide it's much more profitable to lay up treasure in heaven. We're truly saving for the future—ours and our children.

When we're striving to be rich toward God our primary purpose is to worship God with our whole self because we're made *for* God—not for our self. It's not our agenda; it's Gods. We most assuredly have problems in our lives, weaknesses, and struggles with our Christian character at times—welcome to the human race—but at the end of the day, we know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that God is our eternal reward and our greatest treasure.

When we value what God says, we use what God has given us and strive to be good stewards of that. Jesus called the rich farmer in the parable a fool. So why do *you* think Jesus said that? Let's pray. God, you have blessed us beyond measure and are our most valuable treasure. Help us to be thoughtful about what we're consumed with and to avoid loving the stuff we gather around us more than we value you. Help us understand that security and safety lies only in you. Help us to be a blessing to others in need, and may your generosity transform toward us cause us to be more generous with others. Amen.