

“The 10th Commandment – You Shall Not Covet”

James 4 : 1 – 4; Romans 13: 8 -10; Philippians 4: 10 – 13; **Luke 12: 13 – 34; (Sermon)**

The 10th Commandment is; **“*You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.*”** (Exodus 20:17)

The dictionary defines covetousness this way; *“to covet is a longing to possess something that belongs to another person. - an unreasonably, or unlawful desire to possess something.”*

Covetousness is not a word we use very often.

Today we use other words like; desire, crave, want, wish.

Instead of saying *“I covet that ...”*

We say *“If only I had that, then I would be happy.”* Or *“I want that so bad.”*

We all want things to a degree, but that does not make us greedy, envious, or covetous.

Covetousness is an inordinate desire for something bigger or newer than a serviceable item that we already have.

We covet when having something becomes more important than our relationship with The Lord.

Coveting is not ambition.

Ambition is a positive quality.

The Bible teaches that we are to invest the time, the talents, and the money God has entrusted to us to advance The Kingdom of God.

In The Parable of The Stewards (Matthew 25:14-30) Jesus commended the steward who invested his master’s money and produced a yield.

But in that same parable Jesus condemned the steward who did nothing with the money he had been given.

Jesus called the man who lacked ambition, ***“wicked and lazy.”***

Before we get into the application of the 10th Commandment I want to point out several things about this commandment.

The command not to covet occurs two times in this commandment.

This double negative is only found in the 10th Commandment.

In Hebrew something is repeated for emphasis and it stresses the need for our compliance with this commandment.

And the word neighbor is used three times in this commandment.

Commandments 5 – 9 deal with external actions where as The 10th Commandment deals with our internal desires and emotions.

Coveting is an invisible sin.

Notice the things that God told the Israelites that they were not to covet. God said; ***“You shall not covet your neighbors house...”***

Have you thought; *“Life would be good if I could live in a house like that.”*

Then God said; ***“you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.”***

Do you ever compare your spouse with the someone else’s spouse and think *“I wish I could trade places with them”*

Then God said; ***“you shall not covet his male servant or his female servant...”*** “

Today’s parallel would be envious of someone who has people working for them.

Then God says; ***“his ox or his donkey“***.

Today’s modern equivalent would be; *“If only I could have that car or that pickup truck.”*

And then God concluded by saying, ***“or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”***

This could be a person’s appearance, clothes, position, money, or their circumstances.

You see covetousness comes after we see that someone has something bigger, better, or newer than we have.

For example; you are offered a job and you agree to be paid \$12 / hour.

You like your job and are grateful to have that job.

Then you found out that a co-worker doing the same job is being paid \$15 / hour.

Then you are no longer content with your job.

You are jealous and you do not like your job anymore.

That is covetousness.

The root cause of covetousness is greed and self-centeredness.

Covetousness is when we see something that we do not have.

Covetousness is how we think about things and covetousness is a condition of our heart.

The reason God holds us accountable for covetousness is because covetousness is a matter of our free will and choices that He gives us.

Remember God told Adam and Eve they could eat from all the trees in the garden except from The Tree Of The Knowledge Of Good And Evil.

But Satan convinced Eve that she needed the one and only thing that God had forbidden (Genesis 3)

In Luke 12:15 a man in the crowd interrupted Jesus by saying; ***“Teacher tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”***

Jesus used this opportunity to teaching about greed and covetousness.

This man’s mind was preoccupied with money and property and getting his fair share.

We all need to ask ourselves are we more concerned about worldly things or spiritual things.

The parable in Luke 12: 16 – 21 is a continuation of Jesus’ teaching on covetousness and greed.

The man in this parable was more concerned about his physical comfort and his future physical life than he was with his spiritual life.

But God said to this man, ***“You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared? So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”***

This is a very sobering parable because this man looks like many people today chasing the great American dream.

Many people in America say; *“ I am going to work for several more years and then I should have the house and cars paid off. Since I have a decent retirement package I am going to retire, travel, and really enjoy life.”*

Sounds a lot like *“I’m going build bigger barns and store up a bunch that will carry me through for many years.”*

We are guilty of covetousness when our plans for the future are purely self-centered and do not include serving The Lord and our plans do not include helping others.

God’s word to us today challenges us to examine our plans for the future.

Is our priority amassing material things for ourselves?

Or is our priority to use our God given abilities and resources to furthering The Kingdom Of God and to help those people who are in need.

In verses 22-32 Jesus said why we should not be worried about money and material possessions because Jesus plainly says if we put God first in our life God will provide for all of our needs.

It is not that we are not to be concerned about money but we are not to get stressed out about money?

Then in verse 33 Jesus tells his disciples to do the opposite of what the rich man in the parable did.

“Sell your possessions and give to the poor; Provide for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.”

Jesus is not commanding us to sell everything and give the money to the poor.

But what Jesus is telling us that we need to be very generous givers when we have more than we need and there are people around us who are in need.

When you invest in furthering God’s Kingdom on earth and helping those people in need you are storing up treasure in heaven.

And then in verse 34 Jesus said; ***“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***

Next we need to look at some consequences of covetousness.

The Apostle James tells us there is violence, riots, divorces and broken relationships because of covetousness and greed.

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures”.
(James 4: 1 – 3)

And James 3:16 says; ***“For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”***

Coveting not only destroys our relationship with other people, coveting also destroys us.

King Saul destroyed himself with covetousness.

At first David and King Saul were good friends.

David was King Saul’s armor bearer and David played his harp to sooth Saul’s troubled spirit.

But after David killed Goliath Saul became jealous of David’s popularity when the women danced and sang; ***“Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten of thousands.”*** (1st Samuel 18:7)

From that day on Saul despised David and Saul tried to kill David several times, because Saul coveted the higher praise that David was receiving.

1st Timothy 6:9 -10 tells us that coveting also destroys our relationship with God.

“Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 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.

Now we need to look at the cure for covetousness.

First we need to pray that God will open our spiritual eyes and to expose any covetousness in our heart.

Then we need to trust The Lord.

Psalm 23:1 says; ***“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”***

Then in Psalm 34: 8 – 10 we read another one of God’s wonderful promises; ***“O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! O fear the Lord, you His saints; For to those who fear Him there is no want. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; But they who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing.”***

When we put The Lord first in our life and trust Him we will not want for any good thing.

The question is; *“do we really believe God’s promises?”*

When we look at what other people have we can respond in one of two ways.

We can either be jealous of what they have or we can be joyous for what they have.

Romans 12:15 says; ***“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”***

Mourning with someone is not difficult, but rejoicing with someone who gets something you want is more difficult for us.

But if you love someone you will be glad for what they have.

You cannot covet what someone else has and love them at the same time. Luke 12:15 says; ***“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”***

Jesus is telling us: The quantity of things we have has nothing to do with the quality of our life.”

Covetousness is the sign of an ungrateful heart.

Instead of coveting someone’s house, be grateful that you have a house.

Instead of coveting after another person’s spouse, be grateful for your spouse.

Instead of coveting another person's car, be grateful that you have a car.

When you covet what someone else has, you are telling God that you are not grateful for what God has given to you.

Before we ask God for more we need to thank Him for what we already have.

The reason The Apostle Paul could say “*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*” (Philippians 4:11) was Paul had a close personal relationship with The Lord, Paul knew The Lord was in control of every circumstance, and Paul trusted The Lord to be with him, to provide for Him, and to protect him.

Covetousness is a sin because it is the evidence of an ungrateful heart.

Coveting destroys our relationship with other people, our relationship with God, and coveting destroys us.

AMEN