

UNEDITED DRAFT

I am excited to be with you today to talk about the most amazing things on the planet: God's revelation to us, which is the Word of God. This is my favorite time of the week, sharing with you the truth of God that changes lives and changes eternities.

I'm also excited today because we are beginning a four week series of messages that I'm calling "Engage." Let me briefly introduce the series and then we'll get to today's part. I called this series "Engage" because all four messages are going to encourage us and remind us that being a follower of Christ is not a spectator sport. Jesus himself said on more than one occasion that it's really not possible to be an arm-chair Christian. In fact, the Bible is really blunt. Now don't get mad at me for saying this, because I'm just repeating what God said. But the person who simply goes to church but then doesn't put into practice what God says is a fool. The person who chooses to passively sit on the bench while others are actively working for Christ are called foolish.

So my challenge for you in this series for each of us to become more active followers of the Lord Jesus. And I want you to become more active both here at church and when you're not here at church. God willing, over the next 4 weeks each and every one of us will honestly evaluate, make some course corrections and ENGAGE. Wherever you're at, whatever you're currently doing, I pray everyone will find new ways to engage for Christ... engage for the Kingdom of God.

Now let's get started. Next week's message is going to be more general and foundational, so maybe I should have started with it. But I decided instead to get the hardest one out of the way first. I'll be honest, what God says to us today most of you don't want to hear. As I studied the Bible text we're about to look at, it was hard for me to hear. I had to stop and honestly evaluate my life and ask some very hard questions. So I expect I'll meet some resistance as I talk about this. All I ask you is to not think about others or compare yourself to others. But instead, let God speak to your heart about this issue that will challenge you.

The question I want you to consider is this: Are you a hoarder? A hoarder is simply someone who accumulates things. Or maybe we could say: things that are extra. Have any of you seen the TV show hoarders? It's a show on A&E, and is available on Netflix. It's about people who are compulsive hoarders who are confronted and helped to get rid of all the extra stuff they have accumulated. The show quickly gets repetitive, because each hoarder's apartment or house is crammed full of stuff. There's so much stuff there's only a path to walk through each room, otherwise stuff is piled everywhere. Then during the course of the show, a psychologist helps the person deal with their obsessive compulsive issues, and a cleaning crew comes in and helps them clear out their stuff.

If you've ever seen that show, then when I ask the question, "Are you a hoarder?" most of you will answer "no!" But remember what I said: Don't compare yourself to others.

God is speaking to you individually today. To answer the question, we need to first answer this question: “What do you do with your extra money?” The way you manage your extra money reflects what is in your heart.

Now you may be thinking, “You’re not talking about me. I don’t have extra money. In fact, most of time you may feel that you have too much month left at the end of the paycheck. Not true. You do have extra. You either consume it now, or you save it to consume it later. If you and your family are living indoors, you all wear clothes and there’s food to put on the table, and you still have money after that, you have extra. You’ve got extra money if you... have a cell phone... went to the movies sometime in the last month... have gone to a restaurant or Starbucks in the last month. In fact, you’ve got extra money... if you eat meat every day... have a television... own a car (that’s an exclusive group in the world - especially if you own more than one car)... if you own a home... have indoor plumbing... have electricity in your home. Have you ever had a garage sale? Extra stuff.

We in the United States are so blessed, our standard of living is so uniformly high across the board that we don’t consider these things extra anymore.

Over the last 30 years, the average square footage of a U.S. home has increased 50% while the average family size has declined by 25%. We have so much stuff that a lot of people don’t have room in their large homes to store all their stuff so they rent storage facilities for the extra extra stuff that doesn’t fit in their homes. In the last 20 years, the total number of square feet for personal storage units in the United States has increased 10 times. I’m not saying there aren’t legitimate uses for storage units, but still... I think this says something about how we hoard.

And here’s something to think about. The size of an average storage unit and its construction materials are roughly equal to an average dwelling for a person in a 3rd world country. Four walls made of cinderblock or tin, tin roof, no indoor plumbing, a couple hundred square feet. We call that a storage facility for our extra, extra stuff. A large chunk of the world’s population calls that home.

All of this to say: we have extra. How do you manage your extra? Are you giving glory to God with the superabundant material blessings God has given you?

Jesus forces us to wrestle with this in the passage before us today. We’re in Luke 12 starting at verse 13. [Luke 12:13-21]

13 Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” 14 Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?”

15 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.”

Now understand the context here. Jesus has just been publicly preaching to a large crowd about some really weighty matters. He’s been warning them about hypocrisy, and foretelling the persecution of his disciples. He told the crowd, don’t be afraid of those that can kill the body, fear him who, after killing the body, has the power to throw you into hell!

And then a couple of men who have worked their way up to Jesus, shoving their way through large crowds, having probably the only opportunity they will ever have to

personally address the Son of God in human flesh, and a man says: “**Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.**” This must have been one of the many moments Jesus wanted to just hit his head against a wall. But instead he makes it a teaching moment. “**Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.**”

Jesus warns sternly about the danger of greed. Greed is a very hard thing to recognize in our lives. It’s very easy to call it something else. Think about the prayers of confession you have ever prayed. You’ve asked God to forgive you for your short temper, hurtful words you said, laziness, not taking care of your body. But how many times have you ever asked God to forgive you because you were greedy? Now many times in your evening prayers have you said, “Heavenly Father, I know I blew it today. You warned me to be on guard against all kinds of greed, but today I gave in. I was greedy when I wanted this or bought that.” Have you ever prayed that?

Practically speaking, all of us would acknowledge, “I know my life does not consist of the abundance of my possessions.” Yet what we desire and covet and crave and buy indicates that we live differently than we think. *This mentality that everything I get is for my consumption now, or my consumption in the future: that’s greed.*

The truth is that greed and covetousness are not sins in our American culture. In fact, they are virtues in our culture. And when everyone thinks the same way, it’s especially hard for us to recognize sin. For us to want more money is American. For us to consume more is American. For us to want the latest and greatest is American. The idea that buying stuff brings happiness is American. And it’s all a lie from Satan.

Jesus says, “Open your eyes and see the truth! Getting more stuff is not a good life.”

And Jesus explains further with a hard hitting parable.

16 And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. [So the man was already rich, and then he got even more. A bumper crop. He got extra extra! Jesus often exaggerates a situation in his parables to make his point clearly.] **17 He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? [I have extra! What shall I do?] I have no place to store my crops.’**

[My barns are full. There is more now than I can even consume *or* store! I have no room. What shall I do?]

18 “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

[Since he has more than he could consume now... he already had all the good things he wanted... he already had the vacation home and the luxury car and trips to Europe. And since his storage for future consumption was also exhausted, what could he do? He’ll build even bigger barns to store his grain.]

19 And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.” ’

[The man was set for life. He had extra for himself for years to come. So he could take care of himself.]

So here we have a man who was rich. He managed his money well. He had lots stored up. He planned for the future. This is the man that every mature American is striving to be. Isn't this the American dream? To be rich enough that you can finally retire, take life easy and enjoy a care-free retirement? If we're honest, don't we have to say, "I hope to be that man someday?" That's what makes the next words especially shocking:

20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'"

21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

Wow. Let's unpack what's happening here, and let God speak a word of conviction into our hearts.

1) This man was clearly concerned about self, but not about God or others. Let me reread the rich man's words to you, but I'll leave some of the words out. The rich man said: "I. My. I. I. My. I. My. My. I. Myself. You (of self.)" 12 times he refers to self. He worshiped an evil trinity and we do to: me, myself and I. Greed. Selfishness. It was all about self. Consume now or save for my future consumption is pure selfishness.

2) Greed and love of money are surface sins. But underneath lies deeper sin and idolatry. This man loved his money because it brought him **security** and it brought him **comfort**. And though not evident here, others love money because it also brings **status**. Listen: God wants us to trust in him and him alone.

* Of course you crave **security**. God says: "Find it in me! I will protect you. I will save you. I give you life.

* You crave **comfort** like the man who was happy to eat, drink and be merry. But God reminds us that comfort in this sinful world is passing [it doesn't last], addicting [you will crave more and more and never be satisfied] and distracting [it draws your attention from what is eternal and real to what is temporary and artificial.] Do you want true comfort in heaven forever, or an imperfect comfort now for a while? Don't seek comfort in money. Find it in God.

* You crave **status**. Many think that lots of money makes them somebody. And without money they're nobody. That's why lots of formerly rich people killed themselves during the Great Recession a few years back. Their money gave them status and identity. God says, no. Our status and identity are found in Christ. In him you are children of God.

I told you this message would hit hard and not be easy. So without thinking of anyone but yourself, consider: are you greedy? Do you love money? Do you trust money for security? Do you crave money for comfort? Do you find your identity and status in money? Have you bought into the American lie that he who dies with the most toys wins?

Then God says to you today: "You fool."

That hurts, doesn't it? It hurt me when I studied this text and prepared for this sermon. How do you respond to God when he calls you a fool?

You humbly get on your knees and you repent. You might say something like, "Lord, I have been a fool for seeking my wealth what can only be found in you. Forgive my greed.

[This might be the first time you've ever prayed that.] Forgive my idolatry in trusting money rather than you. Forgive my covetousness. Forgive my selfishness.

Friends, if you're there, then I have some good news for you. Jesus was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor. Jesus came down from heaven. I hear heaven is a pretty nice neighborhood. An extremely rich gated community. Not everyone can live there. Jesus did. But he gave it up and became man. He lived in poverty for you. He took your spiritual poverty from you. And you're not just poor but in tremendous debt before God. And he took that too. He took it all to the cross, and there he paid with his own valuable, precious, innocent blood on the cross. He gave his life to give you life. He became poor that you might be rich. Not rich with earthly money. It's only paper. But rich with eternal wealth as heirs of the Kingdom of God. You are a filthy rich child of the most high God and your life with him will never end.

So how does this cause you to rethink your wealth? Stop being a hoarder, God says. Be rich toward God. God is calling on you today to "engage." Get off the bench and start serving God with your earthly possessions. Stop viewing wealth selfishly and as if it's all for you to consume, now or later. Instead, honor God with your wealth. Give to God first. Give off the top a percentage to the Lord your God and trust him to meet all your needs.

I'm sure most of you have heard of the book "The Purpose Drive Life." The author is a pastor named Rick Warren. That one book sold over 32 million copies. It's been translated into more languages than any other book except the Bible. Rick Warren has made an unbelievable amount of money from that book. But in 2005 Rick Warren decided to repay his church the salary he had been paid for all 25 years he served as their pastor. He and his wife also decided that they would become reverse tithers. A tithe is giving 10% of your income and living on the rest. They did the opposite. They decided to give away 90% of their income and live on just 10%. In 2004 he gave away \$13 million.

Most of us are not in a position to give away 90% of our income. If you're a single mom working at Walgreens, you can't possibly give 90% away. But what will it look like for you to be rich toward God? No blaming, excusing or comparing yourself to others. You. What will it look like to be rich toward God with your money? Your life does not consist of the abundance of your wealth. So quit living like it does! Decide what percentage you will give to God. Give it off the top. Trust God for comfort, security and status. When you are rich toward God, you will find that you have enough, you will have peace, you will be free.

So my challenge to you is to get off the bench and engage. Come back next week and we'll talk about another way God calls off the bench to engage. Amen.