



**Saint John United Methodist Church**  
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**Message for Nov. 24, 2024**  
**"Radical Generosity: Greed"**  
**Speaker: Rev. Dr. Iosmar Alvarez**  
**Scripture: Luke 12:13-15**

### **Luke 12:13-15: The Parable of the Rich Fool**

<sup>13</sup>Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the **inheritance** with me."<sup>14</sup> Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" <sup>15</sup>Then he said to them, "Watch out! **Be on your guard against all kinds of greed**; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

### **Matthew 6:24**

<sup>24</sup>"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money

### **Introduction**

Today, we turn our attention to a significant topic in the life of faith: greed. In **Luke 12:13-15**, Jesus warns us against all kinds of greed, emphasizing the importance of understanding our relationship with wealth and material possessions.

Let's delve into the key principles related to greed, reflecting on how we can live lives that honor God and prioritize what truly matters.

**Greed Word:** In Hebrew, the word for greed can be expressed as "בצע" (betza) or "עמל" (amal), and sometimes related terms like "חמד" (chamad)\*\* which means to covet or desire strongly.

### **Greed in Biblical Concepts**

1. **Covetousness:** Greed is often closely tied to the concept of coveting, which is explicitly addressed in the Tenth Commandment: "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**). This highlights the idea of desiring what others have, which can lead to greed.

2. **Materialism:** The Bible portrays greed as an excessive desire for material wealth and possessions. Jesus taught about the dangers of greed, as illustrated in **Luke 12:15**: "Take



care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

3. Idolatry: In biblical terms, greed can also be seen as a form of idolatry, where the desire for wealth and possessions takes precedence over one's relationship with God.

**Colossians 3:5** states, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry."

4. Destruction: The Bible warns of the destructive consequences of greed. **Proverbs 15:27** says, "The greedy bring ruin to their households, but the one who hates bribes will live." This reflects the idea that greed can lead to moral and material downfall.

5. Generosity: Unlike greed, the Bible frequently emphasizes the importance of generosity and sharing with others. **Proverbs 11:25** says, "A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed." This teaches that true wealth and fulfillment come from giving rather than hoarding.

In summary, greed is viewed in the biblical context as a severe moral failing that leads to various forms of idolatry, discontentment, and destruction. At the same time, generosity is seen as a path to true wealth and spiritual fulfillment.

### **Main Point 1: Being Wealthy is Not Sinful, but Being Greedy Is**

Wealth in itself is not sinful; many biblical figures were wealthy and faithful.

#### **Ecclesiastes 5:18-19 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup>This is what I have observed to be good: that **it is appropriate** for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. <sup>19</sup>Moreover, when **God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them**, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God.

#### **Cultural Philosophy on Wealth: The Law of Attraction**

You may have heard about "The Law of Attraction," which gained popularity through Rhonda Byrne's book and DVD, **The Secret, in 2007**. Byrne, along with various New Age and motivational experts, asserts that we can manifest our desires simply by thinking and asking for them. This idea is controversial in the scientific community as it challenges established scientific principles. Nevertheless, there are numerous testimonials supporting its effectiveness.



If you are a Christian practicing the Law of Attraction or know someone who does, I urge you to consider my perspective. If you are not a Christian and follow this belief, please understand that I do not intend to judge. I believe that seeking the truth will eventually lead you to God, who can provide immense fulfillment, peace, and joy in your life. I hope to offer some insights to clarify this topic.

While the specific steps of the Law of Attraction may differ depending on the book you read, most positive-thinking mentors generally recommend the following steps:

- You must be certain as to what it is you want.
- Then ask the Universe to give it to you.
- Regularly begin to visualize yourself receiving it, holding it, and experiencing what you want.
- Be open to the fact that your answer may come in any form.

My concern is the motivation behind it. We need to be clear on what we want in life and ask God to fulfill it. The significant difference in the Law of Attraction and the message of the Bible is that when you ask for something, you should ask God directly in the context of a personal relationship, as opposed to a cosmic "Universe" force that is somewhere out there.

When we pray, we must trust that He listens and will respond to our requests, though we should avoid fixating on the exact nature of what we desire. This fixation could lead to idolatry. Remembering that God is the ultimate giver and the source of all blessings is essential.

**James 1:16-17** warns us: "Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

While aspects of *The Secret* contain some truth, it is important to note that the authors do not reference the God of the Bible but rather perceive Him as a positive force or energy, lacking a personal connection. If you engage with the Law of Attraction, ensure that you do not lose sight of the true source of life and renewed thinking. Those who distort these biblical principles to create a humanistic doctrine risk becoming oblivious to the deeper truths. They may touch upon God's principles but miss out on His love and power.

Is your wealth free of pain? **Proverb 11:22** (NIV) The **blessing** of the Lord **brings wealth**, without painful toil for it.



Here is a list of wealthy individuals mentioned in the Bible who were also known for their faithfulness to God:

Biblical Principle of Wealth: **Proverbs 19:17** Whoever is kind to the poor **lends to the Lord**, and he will reward them for what they have done.

1. Job: Job is described as very wealthy and righteous. The scripture states, "And Job was the greatest of all the people of the East." (**Job 1:3**) Furthermore, Job's faithfulness is evidenced in his response to his trials: "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face." (**Job 13:15**).

2. Abraham: Abraham is noted for his wealth as well as his faith. The Bible says, "Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold." (**Genesis 13:2**). His faith is highlighted in Genesis 15:6, "And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness."

3. Joseph of Arimathea: He is described as a wealthy man: "Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God." (**Luke 23:50-51**). His faithfulness is shown in his act of providing a tomb for Jesus: "He took it down, wrapped it in linen and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid." (**Luke 23:53**).

4. Lydia: She is described as "a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God" (Acts 16:14). Her generosity is exemplified when she invites Paul and his companions to her home: "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house." (**Acts 16:15**).

5. Aquilas and Priscilla: This couple is noted for their support of Paul, demonstrating their wealth and faith: "After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them." (**Acts 18:1-2**). Their dedication is further highlighted in **Acts 18:26**, where they teach Apollos about God more adequately.

6. Philemon: He is described as a "dear friend and fellow worker" (**Philemon 1**) and the book focuses on his faith: "I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people." (**Philemon 4-5**). His forgiveness of Onesimus showcases his Christian character.

7. Cornelius: Cornelius is depicted as a devout man who prayed regularly and gave to those in need: "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in



need and prayed to God regularly." (**Acts 10:2**). His faith leads to his conversion, marking a significant event in the early Church.

These verses collectively highlight the wealth and faithfulness of each individual, illustrating how they combined their material prosperity with devotion to God.

These individuals exemplify how wealth can be coupled with faithfulness to God, demonstrating generosity, hospitality, and devotion. **Therefore, the real danger lies in greed**—the insatiable desire for more, often at the expense of relationships and character. We must ask ourselves, "Am I relationally rich?" Wealth can create emotional distance, while authentic relationships foster connection and fulfillment.

Wealth and Poverty are more a mindset than a money amount.

**Proverbs 22:2** (NIV).<sup>2</sup> Rich and poor have this in common: **The Lord is the Maker** of them all.

**Jesus said: You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."**  
John 12:4-8

### **What is the purpose of the poor on the earth?**

One of the primary purposes of poverty in this fallen world is to test our hearts on generosity.

### **What is Poverty?**

Generational Poverty: When an individual has been in poverty for two generations, the patterns and habits are different.

- Situational Poverty: Situational poverty is when there is a divorce, death, or illness, and the resources are temporarily reduced, but the mindset remains largely with prosperous norms and values.
- Spiritual Poverty: The lack of the presence of the Holy Spirit in one's life as a result of not having Jesus as Lord and Savior.
- Relational Poverty: The inability to make friends. Socially awkwardness hinders the gospel.
- Emotional Poverty: The inability to relate to people's pain, trials, and emotional distress.



- Physical Poverty: Lack of material possessions.

## **Main Point 2: Generational Giving “Inheritance”**

**James 1:17** tells us that "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights." Recognizing that all we have is graciously received from God helps combat the entitlement and greed that often permeate our minds. As we embrace God's gifts, we become stewards rather than owners.

**As his children, God wants us to think generationally about riches.** Wealth is the accumulation of riches; therefore, a high standard of living and spending is contrary to true wealth.

**Proverbs 13:22-23** (NIV) <sup>22</sup>A good person **leaves an inheritance** for their children's children, but a **sinner's wealth** is stored up for the righteous.

### **Categories of Inheritance from God's Perspective Ecclesiastes 2:26 (NIV)**

<sup>26</sup>To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, **but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God.** This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

- Faith: Present the gospel to your children; God has no grandchildren, only children. We all are called to a personal relationship with Jesus for salvation.
- Values, Family creeds on marriage, work ethic, unity, character, and expected family behavior.
- Relationships. Family, Friends, and Relatives.
- Knowledge, education, personal libraries, etc.
- Memories in the form of pictures, diaries, and personal bibles.
- Financial resources, land, stocks, cash, business, gold, silver, etc

**Proverbs 13:11** Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow. Build generational giving little by little don't rush.

## **Main Point 3: Plan Wisely and Give Joyfully. Generational Planning**

Planning wisely with our resources keeps us from falling into the trap of greed. In a world that pushes consumerism, we must intentionally set our priorities and understand that



material wealth does not equate to personal value. Live simply, knowing that "**More Stuff = More Stress.**" Simplifying our lives can lead to greater peace and purposeful living.

### **Romans 3:17 (NIV)**

<sup>7</sup> Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Romans 13:8 <sup>8</sup> **Let no debt remain outstanding**, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.

**Acts 4:34** reminds us, "There were no needy persons among them." When we give joyfully to those in need, we partner with God's mission in the world. Jesus highlighted the importance of our actions in **Matthew 25:40**, stating, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." There are various types of poverty we need to address: spiritual, relational, emotional, and physical. People are hurting, but there is healing through our generosity.

### **Quote from King Salom**

"Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless".

### **Calls to Action**

1. Reflect on Your Wealth: Consider how you view your wealth. Are you focused on accumulating more, or are you fostering meaningful relationships and acts of service within your community?
2. Re-evaluate Spending Habits: Intentionally cut back on unnecessary expenditures. Create a budget that reflects your values, emphasizing the joy of simplicity over materialism.
3. Commit to Generosity: **Commitment Sunday next week, December 1<sup>st</sup>**. Find a way to give to those in need this week, whether through time, resources, or kindness. Seek out situations to create healing for those affected by the various forms of poverty.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, it is crucial to differentiate between the blessings of wealth and the dangers of greed. By living graciously, planning wisely, simplifying our lives, and engaging in joyful



generosity, we not only enrich our own lives but also impact the lives of those around us. Let us strive to follow Christ's example, prioritizing love and service over accumulation.

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gifts You have bestowed upon us. Help us to guard our hearts against greed, and instead cultivate graciousness, simplicity, and generosity. May we become instruments of Your love in a world that is hurting. Amen.

### **Benediction**

As you go forth from this gathering, may you be filled with gratitude and generosity. May you reflect on the blessings of your life and be empowered to share them with others. Go in peace, living simply and loving deeply, and remember that true wealth is found in relationships, service, and faith. Amen.

### **Research Support:**

Recent statistics indicate a troubling trend among high-income athletes and musicians regarding financial stability after their peak earning years. **Notably, approximately 78% of professional athletes go broke within just three years of retirement**, as highlighted by Craig Brown from NKSFB Sports Business Division in 2022. Similarly, studies show that about 60% of National Basketball Association (NBA) players face financial difficulties within five years post-retirement.

The factors contributing to this financial downfall often include extravagant spending patterns, exacerbated by a sudden influx of wealth, leading to what is known as the "**sudden wealth effect**." Many athletes and musicians live lavishly believing that their earnings will last indefinitely, failing to recognize the necessity of long-term financial planning.

Furthermore, the limited career spans of athletes—usually lasting only 10 to 15 years—combined with injuries and the inability to predictably generate income after retirement contribute significantly to their financial vulnerability. This situation is compounded by a lack of financial literacy and resources, making many young athletes ill-prepared to manage their wealth responsibly.

Additionally, pressures to support family and friends can lead to unsustainable financial commitments, further draining their resources. For instance, former NBA player Antoine Walker faced bankruptcy largely due to his financial support for numerous acquaintances without setting limits. This pattern of financial mismanagement and the need for proper





training in money management underscore the importance of financial literacy as a preventative measure against future financial crises for high-income individuals.

Overall, the combination of inadequate financial education, the pressures of high lifestyles, short earning windows, and the challenges posed by unexpected career-ending injuries reflect a critical need for reform in how financial literacy is integrated into the lives of high-income athletes and musicians. This could empower them to better manage their finances and secure their financial futures.