

Tenth River -- Covetousness

by Martin Knapp

The sermon warns against the dangers of Covetousness, emphasizing its spiritual implications and the need for divine intervention to overcome it.

Scripture: Exodus 20:17, Joshua 7:21, Proverbs 28:22, Ecclesiastes 5:10, Malachi 3:9, Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 3:5, 1 Timothy 6:9

Topics: "Covetousness", "Idolatry"

Description

Martin Knapp delivers a powerful sermon on the sin of covetousness, emphasizing how it is an inordinate desire to possess what belongs to others, leading to various destructive behaviors and consequences. Through a conversation with a young boy named Willie, the sermon explores biblical examples of coveting, such as Achan, Judas, Ananias, and Sapphira, highlighting the severe punishments they faced. The sermon warns against the dangers of covetousness, describing it as a popular sin that robs God of His rights and leads to idolatry and selfishness. It stresses the importance of shunning covetousness and embracing God's salvation and liberality instead.

Transcript

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's." -- Ex.xx, 17.

Covetousness is an inordinate desire to possess. Let us imagine that we are talking to a little boy by the name of Willie, and that he tells us what he knows about Covetousness.

"Willie, what do you think it means to Covet?"

"It means to want things that belong to other people, which you know you should not have."

"Please illustrate what you mean."

"If papa should give me and each of my brothers and sisters an apple, and I should want, not only my apple, but also to take the ones my brothers and sisters have, that would be Coveting. Or, if I became dissatisfied with my father or mother, and would want the father or mother of a playmate, that would be Coveting them."

"Would it not be Coveting if you should wish to dispossess any of your neighbors of their houses or lands, or anything else they have?"

"It certainly would."

"Can you tell me of any instance in the Bible of people that have Coveted?"

"Yes; the story of Achan, in Joshua vii, 21. He Coveted the golden wedge and Babylonish garment, and was the cause of Israel's defeat at Ai, and was stoned to death for this sin.

"Can you think of any instance in the New Testament?"

"Judas, who betrayed our Savior for thirty pieces of silver, and Ananias and Sapphira, who Coveted the property which they had promised to God. It seems to me the punishment of these three persons is an awful warning to all who would follow in their footsteps."

"Can you think of anything God has said about it?"

"Yes; in Ecclesiastes v, 10, He says, 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase.' He says it leads to 'many foolish and hurtful lusts,' which drown men in perdition (I Tim. vi, 9). It leads to lying (see 2 Kings V, 22-25). Prov. i, 8, 19, shows it leads to murder and deception; Josh. vii, 21, to stealing; Prov. xxviii, 22, to poverty; I Tim. vi, 10, to misery; Psalm x, 3, declares that 'the covetous renounceth God;' and Eph. v, 5, and Col. iii, 5, declare that it is idolatry."

"Very well answered; and, in view of these answers, I trust that you and all who read this book may shun it as you would a rattlesnake."

As we have seen, in God's sight it is just as wicked as any other sin, and more to be feared, as it is more popular and less warned against.

It is one of the nicest-painted and most inviting Sin-boats in the mighty Fleet which is fighting King Immanuel and robbing Him of His rights, and peopling damnation by hundreds.

It is patronized by the rich and the learned, by lords and kings, as well as by multitudes in humbler walks of life.

One of the greatest perils of its passengers is that they are satisfied with it, and hence disdain the Life-boat which the King of Heaven sends to their relief.

Like all other sins, it is rooted in selfishness.

It is the worship of self, which is idolatry.

It is a gilded, popular sin, little feared, and seldom shunned.

It is a River whose surface sparkles, but which is wide and deep; its currents rapid and deceptive, its whirlpools swift and sure. More people are probably borne down on its treacherous tides than of any other Stream which flows into the River of Death.

It is as natural to the unrenewed heart as breathing, and finds expression in the following ways:

By an intense desire to be rich.

By love of earthly gain.

By slowness to give.

By stinginess and penuriousness.

By unlawful desire for that which belongs to another.

It often leads to Sabbath-breaking.

Also to stealing, murder, cheating, and overreaching in business for purposes of gain.

Saloons and brothels are kept at its command.

To accomplish its selfish ends it defies God and tramples on the rights of man.

It is like the consumption, in that its victims often think they are well when they are upon the very brink of death.

It makes a man like a sponge, always absorbing, but never giving, or like a person who is always eating, but never satisfied, and who dies in the midst of plenty. I knew a rich man, a Church member, who gave but one dollar per year for missions, and feared that he would die in the poorhouse.

All of its victims belong to the family of Achan, Judas, and Ananias, and it loses none of its hideousness when, as in their cases, it is screened by a cloak of profession of piety.

The Holy Spirit convicts of its danger. Jesus provides a way of escape, and God waits to welcome and save from it all who will accept of His great salvation.

It is a heart-sin, and nothing but the Blood of Jesus can wash it away. At conversion it is renounced and suppressed, but, like a caged tiger, will often growl and struggle to escape. When the soul is baptized with the Holy Spirit, and moves up on Holiness Heights (see Chart), then Covetousness, by God's power, is all removed, and Heaven-born Liberality and Perfect Love reign in its stead.

BEWARE OF COVETOUSNESS

Selected

A man once told me how much money he had cleared the year before, and how much he was clearing that present year, and it was in advance. Some time afterwards -- he had likely forgotten that circumstance -- he said to me, "I can not give as much this year to the Church as last year." The more he got, the less he had for the Lord. The following spring, in a bad deal, he lost one hundred dollars or more. No one can "rob God in tithes and offerings," and not pay the penalty sooner or later. Beware of Covetousness!"

"They that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition." -- 1 Tim. vi, 9.

WHAT IT COST.

Biblical Illustrator.

"How much is that estate worth?" said one friend to another as they passed a beautiful mansion and extensive and highly-cultivated grounds. "I do not know how much it is worth," was the reply; "but I know what it cost its owner." "How much?" "His soul," was the startling reply; and then he proceeded to narrate how exclusively the owner had lived for one object -- to build himself a home on earth, utterly careless of the home on high, and had died impenitent and suddenly.

STOLEN TREASURE

Christian Alliance

It is said that an eagle, in search of prey, snatched a lamb from a sacrificial altar. She had scarcely borne it to the nest before it was in flames, and her young were burned to ashes. A coal, unseen, had been taken with the stolen flesh, and God punished the sacrilege with its own fruits. So many a home, many a business, many a family, has been cursed by God's stolen treasures, and might hear Him saying, if they had ears to hear:

"Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob Me, even this whole nation. Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." -- Mal. iii, 9, 10.

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