

(Basics) 61. Selfishness

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon addresses the sin of selfishness, urging Christians to embody unselfishness and compassion in their lives as a reflection of Jesus' teachings.

Duration: 12:48

Scripture: Proverbs 11:25, Matthew 6:33, Luke 10:36, Acts 20:35, Romans 13:8, 1 Timothy 6:17-19, James 1:17

Topics: "Selfishness", "Servant Heart"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the seriousness of sin and its impact on our lives. He compares sin to various physical ailments, stating that sin is worse than sickness, including cancer and leprosy. The preacher then discusses a story from Luke's Gospel about a man who was beaten and left half dead on the road. Religious people, including a priest, ignored him, but an ordinary sinner showed compassion and helped him. The preacher concludes by highlighting the sin of selfishness and the importance of giving and serving others, as exemplified by Jesus' selfless life.

Transcript

About sin, and how serious sin is, more serious than sickness, worse than cancer, leprosy, AIDS, and all put together. And once you understand that, you'll have a great longing to be free from all sin. And we want to turn today to Luke's Gospel, Chapter 10.

The Gospel of Luke, Chapter 10, Jesus spoke a story here. And we want to talk about a man who was beaten up by thieves as he was traveling on a road, and he was lying there half dead. And two religious people, one was a priest, one was sort of an assistant to the priest, came by that road.

And they just walked on the other side of the road and left him there, and went on to the temple to carry on with their religious services. But then, after that, another man came, who was not a priest, who was not even a religious type of person, just an ordinary person, an ordinary sinner. He came, and he had compassion on this poor person, and lifted him up, and bandaged his wounds, and took care of him, and paid for his expenses.

In a little hotel, they put him in, and gave money to the hotel keeper, saying, take care of him, and I'll give you more if you spend more on him. And then Jesus said, which of these three, Luke 10, 36, proved to be a neighbor? It's obvious. Religious people are sometimes very, very selfish.

Jesus spoke here about a sin which is not listed in the Ten Commandments. It's a sin of selfishness. We've been looking in our last two programs about the sins that Jesus hated the most.

What are the sins that Jesus hated the most? We saw, first of all, hypocrisy. And then we saw pride. Today we see another one, selfishness.

Thinking only about ourselves. You know, we can be very, very religious. Religious enough to be a priest, or a bishop, or an archbishop, and still be thoroughly selfish.

Here was a priest who was supposed to be representing God, but all he was interested was in his religious ceremony and not helping a poor person in his need. And when our life is like that, it does not bring us the approval of God. We can be very upright in a whole lot of external things, and we can think that God is very happy with us because we do all those external things so correctly, and we've got a good testimony before men, and the external rituals of our religion we keep very accurately.

Maybe you are even an elder in your church, or a pastor, or whatever it is. But if there is selfishness in your life, I want to tell you, Jesus hates selfishness. He hates a life that is only interested in itself.

Now, we are all born selfish by nature. We're not born thinking about others. Think of little children in our homes when they grow up.

They don't automatically know how to share their toys with others. No, you've got to teach them that. Naturally speaking, they are selfish.

They'll fight for the best toy, and the biggest toy, and the biggest piece of cake in the plate, and things like that. That's their nature. When we grow up, we don't fight in such a crude way for the biggest piece of cake, but we still like it.

Inwardly, we haven't changed. Only our selfishness is now more subtle, and people don't see it so obviously. And we seek it in cleverer ways.

So when we see selfishness as a sin, just like we see hypocrisy and pride as sins, we will realize that Jesus came to save us from our sins. And if Jesus hasn't saved you from selfishness, what type of Savior is He? If He has saved you only from gambling and drunkenness, that's not much of a salvation, because there are a lot of people out in the world who, without Jesus Christ, also do not gamble or drink. So what does it prove? Many Christians are glorying in the fact that they don't commit certain external sins.

But I could show you ten people in the world who don't commit those sins also, who don't have Christ in their life. So what type of salvation has this Christian experienced? That's why we need to see sin the way Jesus defined it. Not just external, but inward primarily.

Hypocrisy, as we saw first. Pride. And here, selfishness.

That means you see a person in need, you can help him, but you are not bothered. You think only of yourself and your family. It could be in relation to salvation.

Oh, I am saved. My family is saved. It doesn't matter if anybody else is saved.

And so I never seek to be a witness for Christ to others. Think of you, my dear friend. You are born again.

You know that there is no way of salvation outside of Jesus Christ. You know that there is no way to go into God's kingdom except by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. You know that being born in a Christian family never takes you into God's kingdom.

You have to repent and accept Christ as your Savior and Lord. And you are saved. Maybe your family members are saved.

Do you have any concern at all for all the other people around you? I am not talking about people 10,000 miles away whom you never meet. I am talking about people you work with. Your neighbors, your relatives, people whom you meet regularly, who are on their way to an eternal hell.

Are you concerned about them? Are you selfish? Selfishness is a sin. To be thinking only in terms of myself. Something is fundamentally wrong if I say I have partaken of God's nature and I am still selfish.

I am just deceiving myself because God's nature is totally unselfish. Why did Jesus come to earth? What do we see in Jesus' life? He was never interested in Himself. He came entirely for the sake of others.

And the reason why many of us Christians are so poor spiritually and not blessed by God as we can be blessed is because this sin clings to us. Jesus said once these words in Acts 20 verse 35 Jesus said It is more blessed to give than to receive. Those are words spoken by Jesus not found in the Gospels but Paul mentions them and mentions it in Acts 20 verse 35 It is more blessed to give than to receive.

The one who is always thinking of receiving is a selfish man. The one who thinks of giving he is a person who is concerned about others. What does he give? He gives to someone in need what he himself has.

It could be material things. It could be spiritual. Supposing I have received something spiritual from God that has radically changed my life.

You know, immediately it places me in debt to everybody else. I have to give it to them what they have in God. Think of another story that Jesus spoke in Luke chapter 16 about the rich man and Lazarus.

There was this rich man who had plenty of everything in this world and who dressed gaily and lived in grand style. And at his gate was his brother. Lazarus was his brother because every one of them those Jews were children of Abraham.

You read later on the rich man saying Father Abraham in verse 24 Luke 16 verse 24 He was a descendant of Abraham and so was Lazarus. In that sense Lazarus was his brother. And he did not care.

He'd go past that gate so many times and see the dogs licking Lazarus's sores and he never helped him one bit. It's just like the priest and the Levite. And finally both of them died.

And Jesus said the rich man went to hell. Why did he go to hell? Maybe he paid his tithes regularly. He still went to hell.

Maybe the great religious leaders of his time the priests and bishops came at his funeral and said he was a great man. But the man himself went to hell. And Lazarus went to heaven.

Why did that rich man go to hell? Because he did not have faith. How do I know he did not have faith? James chapter 2 says if you have faith the proof of it is it will be seen in your works. James chapter 2 it says if you say that you believe in God and you see your brother James 2.15 or sister without clothing and

need of daily food and you just say I praise the Lord, God bless you and you don't give him what is necessary what use is that? James 2.17 such faith is dead.

That's not living faith. Salvation is by faith and that rich man did not have faith. The proof of it was there were no works.

There was no concern for others. What God had given him he thought was his own. It was not his own.

God had given him wealth so that he could help other people who were needy. Do you know that everything we have is given by God and he has given it to us to test us to see whether we will share it with others or just live selfishly ourselves. The same thing applies spiritually.

Whatever God has given me spiritually I am in debt to the rest of the world to share it with them in the circle at least in which I move. Jesus said as I said earlier it is more blessed to give than to receive. Have I received something from God? That's good.

I am blessed. But Jesus said I'll be more blessed if I give to another person what I have received. If I give to another person the message that saved my life, that forgave my sin that brought me to victory or whatever it is.

When I pass it on to another I can experience a greater blessing. So if you want to have a greater blessing, I want to encourage you to listen to this word of Jesus. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Because when you follow that word you will find something you have never experienced so far in your life. The blessing that comes through giving. The Bible says the liberal man shall be made fat and the one who waters others will be watered also himself.

So let's learn to hate the sin of selfishness that Jesus hates and we shall find abundant life.

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