

Pastor Greg Briggs, Interim

Sunday, June 17, 2018

1. Prayer and Introduction
 - a. “May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, our rock and redeemer.” Amen. (Psalm 19:14)
 - b. Covetousness vs. contentedness. A spiritual conundrum
 - c. One week break from sermon series, Rev. Phiwa Langeli.
2. Ten commandments sermon series conclusion
 - a. This week, Only 3 verses!
 - b. Don't desire, or covet, your neighbor's house or possessions
 - i. Possessions includes wife and servants, so let's be glad we've moved beyond that idea.
 - c. taking, desiring, neighborliness, and liberation
 - d. Do not desire and try to take your neighbor's
 - i. House
 - ii. wife,
 - iii. male or female servant,
 - iv. ox,
 - v. donkey, or
 - vi. anything else that belongs to your neighbor.
3. Taking
 - a. Easiest to spot – actions. It's external actions
 - i. Just as all of last week's commandments were
 - b. As we discussed in last week's sermon, in our society, where we are so much more interconnected, we can't just look for explicit acts of theft, but also at laws that seek to make it easier to take from our neighbors – in the interest of public domain or profit
 - c. I believe we need to include as something that belongs to our neighbors is their health, which we take away from them like we did in Flint in the effort for a cheaper water system.
4. Desiring -> covetousness
 - a. An inner state of being – a spiritual state
 - i. First of the commandments to focus on what's going on inside us
 - ii. Be as angry as you want, just don't kill. Or lie.
 - b. In discussing spiritual contexts such as this, I find it helpful to use separate, slightly less familiar word to set it apart –
 - i. Not just desire, but Covetousness –
 - ii. Lends spiritual weight and importance to it. Defining what we are called to oppose
 - c. Desire vs. covet
 - i. Desire is such a broad word. And is not always a negative spiritual thing
 - ii. Covetous, spiritual weight
 1. Yearn to own, possess, take away
5. Covetousness, vs. contentedness. A spiritual conundrum
 - a. So, what are we called to have grow within ourselves?
 - b. Two things, contentedness and neighborliness

- i. Do you have enough to support yourself and your family?
 - ii. Do you have enough to give back to God, and God's people?
 - c. This isn't the same as being self-sacrificial, or denying what a person or a community needs.
 - i. This doesn't mean that we aren't aware of how are neighbors are doing, and where their success or lack of success is coming from,
 - ii. Not an argument against fair or just wages and distribution of wealth,
 - d. Focus on centering on needs, versus wants
 - e. Sometimes, we need a reminder of how much we have already
 - i. And I don't just mean this in a spiritual sense but in a practical sense
 - ii. It's the season of garage sales – where we hope other people buy the excess stuff we have accumulated, and don't need.
 - iii. Self-awareness
 - 1. Yesterday, as I was writing this sermon, I did a count. In my house, I had five computers – my personal computer, the church computer, my tablet, and my current as well as my older smart phone.
 - 2. We aren't even going to talk about my crafting supplies. I justify that to myself as a side business. I'll preach on self-delusion another Sunday
6. Neighborliness
 - a. Love your neighbor as yourself.
 - i. Not, "love yourself as you compare to your neighbor"
7. And who is my neighbor?
 - a. Still a question thousand years later
 - b. The Parable of the Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37
 - i. 25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"
 - ii. 26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"
 - iii. 27 He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'[a]; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'[b]"
 - iv. 28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."
 - v. 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"
 - c. Desire! Covetousness
8. Blessed be the Ties that bind
 - a. Again, a reminder of why we follow God, because he freed our ancestors from slavery, and we are to give the same freedom
 - b. Not tie ourselves up again ourselves with Covetousness – loving thyself based on what your neighbor has
 - c. But to be tied to one another – mutual care and concern is what makes this faith workable
9. More than just material, it's mindset
 - a. Life, faith, and needs are not a zero sum game
 - i. Someone else doesn't have to lose for you to succeed
 - ii. One step is to know what you need, versus what you covet

- b. Another spiritual conundrum – not just wealth, but mammon
 - i. No limits to one’s drive to possess more.
 - c. Biologically speaking, we humans don’t have a lot of built in inhibitors
 - i. Animals couldn’t plan more than a meal ahead.
 - ii. Our current struggles with obesity are tied into the poor feedback mechanisms in our bodies to say we have enough
 - iii. Do you remember the first time you said no to dessert or an extra cookie?
 - 1. Parents were our regulating mechanism
 - 2. Had to learn it for ourselves. Not a natural phenomenon
 - d. Same tendency too often exists in our minds, if we don’t work against it.
10. The covetous, mammon centered mindset
- a. Pushes back against contentedness, and neighborliness
 - b. This mindset is so insidious, those that have it project it onto others
 - i. Again, a zero sum game, and everyone else is out to get mine
 - c. It causes people to misuse power and authority, to take teaching of truth and wisdom, like the Bible, and twist them to their own selfish end.
 - i. Do I need to talk about Jeff Sessions misuse of Romans 13?
 - 1. Proof texting
 - 2. Written by people who were not able to create their own laws
 - 3. Now we can – and the hypocrisy of our so called “Christian” nation is exposed
 - 4. America First is the definition of covetous mindset
11. Immigration and children
- a. How you approach this issue reveals your inner mindset
 - b. A contented mindset remembers the truth that there is enough food, water, healthcare, peace, and justice for all, if only we choose to not hoard it all for ourselves
 - i. Poverty exists not because we can’t feed the poor, but because we cannot satisfy the rich. We will never satisfy Mammon.
 - c. A neighborly mindset puts ourselves in the shoes of those who are leaving their home country, and recognizing we’d do the same if our lives and our children’s lives were at risk
 - d. A Christian mindset remembers that our savior, Jesus, was himself a refugee when he was a child, fleeing from a brutal dictator that threatened not just his life, but the lives of many children.
12. Modern spiritual addition – intersectionality
- a. Pride rally yesterday
 - b. Wasn’t just about LGBT issues or successes
 - c. Recognizing that one person, or one identity group can stand alone, but regularly intersects with so many others
 - i. It was about economic issues, immigrant issues, racial issues, disability rights issues
 - d. This is how a spiritual, centered church could never be too gay of a church, or too active a church, or too environmental a church
 - i. One issue flows into another, justice seeks to address every injustice
 - ii. Contentedness and neighborliness call us back into a greater accountability to our neighbors

e. I never heard “gay rights only” or “gays first!” It was a call for equality, for balance.

Readings

Exodus 20:1-2, 17

Then God spoke all these words:

2 I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

17 Do not desire your neighbor's house. Do not desire and try to take your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox, donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.