

We live in a society that is consumed by greed.

Most of the things we do are affected in some way or another by different kinds of greed. Capitalism, the basis of our economic system, works because it takes into account that people will naturally be greedy and want to have more than what they currently have. To balance that, we have our welfare systems to share the benefits of living in Australia with those who would be trampled under in a completely greedy system.

The housing market factors in the greed of people in wanting things that they do not have yet want, and are willing to pay more for. Our financial lending and credit systems are geared around supplying the means for people to have what they currently cannot afford. Our advertising companies are designed to make people want more and more objects.

Larger housing is designed to fit more and more of the extra luxuries and necessities that we keep purchasing, even though the number of people per household is getting less and less.

Relationships are getting more fragile as people are no longer content with simply one person, and are encouraged to greedily lust after others.

Since we believe that Time is Money, and we are greedy for things to come quickly and do not want to wait anymore, the pace of life has heated up, the stresses have grown, and we no longer tolerate even someone driving a bit slower down the street, let alone taking a few days to respond to a phone call or request.

Loyalty to a company is much rarer, as better deals, better pay, better conditions are where the grass is always greener, and we want it now.

Governments have had to limit payouts from insurance claims, and the number of solicitors keeps growing in areas concerned with suing one another where once we would have accepted the problem as being part of life's aches and pains that we have to live with.

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It is not that greed only appeared recently, for there has always been greed. It is more to the point that many kinds of greed have been unbridled and let to run their course without too many checks and balances.

In the 1980's we may well have heard "Greed is Good" and maybe recoiled with shock a bit. But these days we have lost sight of what greed is, because it is so prevalent.

One man among the 1000's who stood on each other's toes listening to Jesus, had a legitimate beef against his brother. He did not think he was being greedy. Rather, he thought his brother was greedy, and so he appealed for justice. He yelled out: *Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.*

Jesus first replied to him saying *Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?* He refused to be drawn into the squabble, but took up the challenge about greed.

He said to the whole crowd: *Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.*

Who was greedy? The man or his brother, or both? Probably both.

*Then he told them a parable: 'The land of a rich man produced abundantly. and he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. and I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.'*

The man in the parable could well have been

someone who lives in your street... except that he grew grain. Do we not live in a society where we want to expand, want to grow, look for that financial nest egg to keep us right for life, whether it is the pink piggy bank that has a mysterious hand slipping a few extra cents in while we putting our spare change into it, or whether it is the real estate deal, or the splurge on the stock exchange, or the dip into Lotto, or the special portfolio that you manage carefully.

Was he a fool because he decided to look after his future? Is this a parable to encourage us to simply live for today and tomorrow can look after itself? No.

The man had made careful plans. He had a bumper crop coming and knew what he needed to do. So what had he forgotten? He forgot to be rich with God. I do not care how clever a person may be. I do not care how rich a person may be, or what they own. If they are not rich toward God, the Bible calls them a fool.

We must be on our guard against all kinds of greed, because greed will swamp out our plans to rely on God. With greed, we look for ways to fulfil every desire here on earth.

The heavenly things become more and more distant as we focus on the here and now, and the immediate future. God is replaced by the desire to have more today or tomorrow. No wonder the New Testament describes greed as being idolatry in Colossians 3:5. As we lose sight of God by focussing on the abundance of our possessions, we then also fail to love our neighbour. We lose sight of God's grace, and consider that what we have is ours just desserts for all we have done, not simply things we are stewards for. So we become less generous, less able to give, we hoard more, we fail to help and we despise those who have less or little, while greedily eyeing off those with more.

Christians are not immune to greed. But not all Christians are greedy. If we realise that greed is a sin which God hates and wants us to not fall into temptation about, and if we encourage each

other not to be greedy, then the accountability that society doesn't give us, we can give each other.

Help each other to resist greed. Pray for each other, and make ourselves accountable to each other, and practise generosity.

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