

“Mine!”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

There is something deeply comforting in calling a thing mine that you need. In taking direct ownership over something. When something is mine, I can say how it will be used. I make the rules and decide everything about it. When something is mine, I can use it, store, keep it or give it away. When something is mine, I know that it is there and nothing will take it away from me. When something is mine, it is deeply comforting because we are in control of it.

Not everything I need in life is mine. When something is yours not mine, it is deeply unnerving. When something is yours, I don't get to say how it will be used. You make the rules and decide everything about it, all I can do is comply. When something is yours, I don't get to use it, store it, keep it or give it away. When something is yours, it isn't mine and it is deeply unnerving because I have no control over it at all. It is unnerving because what if I lose access to it, what if I need it and don't have it. It is unnerving because it makes us vulnerable.

When we seek to change those rules, when we want to make what is your mine, when we will do anything and everything to get that control back, we are at the heart of what it means to covet. This isn't some master plan that the biggest villains of our time do, but it is something we see all the time. We see it on the playground, when a child doesn't like the rules of a game. They start a new one that is mine! My rules, my game, my control. We see it in our relationships with one another as we look to the various gifts God has given us. Jobs, spouses, money, or things that aren't ours. Coveting is all over the place.

Tonight, we are continuing our walk through the Book of Exodus as we examine our God and His plan of salvation through the people of Israel and God's wondrous rescue of His people in captivity. So far, God has spoken to Moses through a burning bush, rescued a people through awesome displays of power, lead them in the wilderness providing for the people's needs and now we gather for chapter 20, possibly the most famous chapter of the book where God gives to Moses the 10 commandments.

The giving of the 10 commandments is a pivotal moment in the Bible, because the God of the universe tells His people how they are to act. He tells them what behavior God is pleasing and what behavior is sin. Even today we still teach them to our children. We memorize theses in confirmation, they curb bad behavior, they reflect back at us and show our sinfulness and they even guide us to live a God pleasing life.

As we look over the 10 commandments, we find not one, but two of the commandments dealing with the issue of coveting. Our 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> commandment tell us all about coveting our neighbor's relationships or the things our neighbor has. The

9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> commandment guard our hearts against one of the most destructive behaviors we as humans can engage in - coveting.

To be clear, coveting isn't wanting things. It is natural to want things. I want to have a good job, I want to enjoy life, I want to be happy. These things are not sins, in fact they are righteous and good things to want in life. Coveting on the hand takes these wants out of their proper place and put them above all others. To covet isn't to want, to covet is to want at all costs, to betray everything in order to get what we want. I'll break any commandment, any rule just to make it mine.

Here we see just how dangerous coveting is. First and foremost, we break the first commandment in coveting. We no longer trust God to give us the things we need for life. We no longer look to him for everything. We want it in our control, God isn't giving so I am taking. When we covet something, we wound our relationship with God. Our sin of coveting replaces God with something else. Something rises to the level of God. When we covet things, an idol is born, when we covet relationships an idol is born. In our coveting we break the first commandment, we do not give God the honor he is due and our relationship is wounded.

Coveting also hurts us in our horizontal relationships with one another. We hurt one another by the means which we take it. We can steal, we can fall into lust and adultery, we murder through words or actions. Our coveting destroys relationships as we take what isn't ours, when we take control over what we do not have. Coveting hurts our fellow brothers and sisters. Coveting is dangerous because it destroys relationships both with God and with man. It drives us deeper and deeper into sin.

So how do we deal with this titanic sin of coveting? How do we escape from the warped desires that we would do anything for? How do we deal with our desire to make what is yours mine? How do we confront this sin during this season of Lent?

Paul in our Epistle seems to give us an impossible answer. The opposite of coveting we find in his letter is that of contentment. To defeat coveting, we must learn contentment in life. Being content with the situation that surrounds us is not something we are naturally equipped to do? Especially now in this unknowable future that you and me live in. We can't say what will come tomorrow, in fact the world seems to be changing minute to minute. Every trip to the store feels like a gamble. Will I be able to get what I need? Will going out get me sick? Will my job survive this virus? There is so much unknown, so much uncertainty so much fear and worry ahead of us how can I be content?

This pandemic has taught us the extreme difficulty in being content In an uncertain and unknowable future.

So in the midst of uncertain days, in the fear of what tomorrow will bring, in the anxiety driven existence we live in - how are we content?

As Coveting breaks the first commandment, distrusting God to provide for our daily needs. Content is grounded in trusting God. This is a vulnerable and uneasy place for you and for me to be in because this involves us realizing ultimately who is in control. This is still unnerving for you and for

Trust God to provide - Makes us vulnerable - Where will this come from how will I get this? What if I run short? How can I trust God?

We look and see the one who made us His own. That sought after us despite us being lost in our sin.

A God that suffered all even death on a cross for you and for me. To make us his own children.

Forgiving our coveting, when our desires run away and lead us into Sin he forgives, restores and makes us Children of God.

Our content lies in our trust in God. In uncertainty we look to the firm nature of God's promises to us.

That hunger, illness, death and evil may overtake us in this life - our future is certain So in this every changing world that we live in. As we struggle with the new routines, our isolation, our separation from the ones we love. We can be content.

Being content we can give to others of what we have because we realize it is not ours but rather Gods.

So in these uncertain days we can be content because we have a God who loves us, died for us and has made us children in life eternal.

Amen.