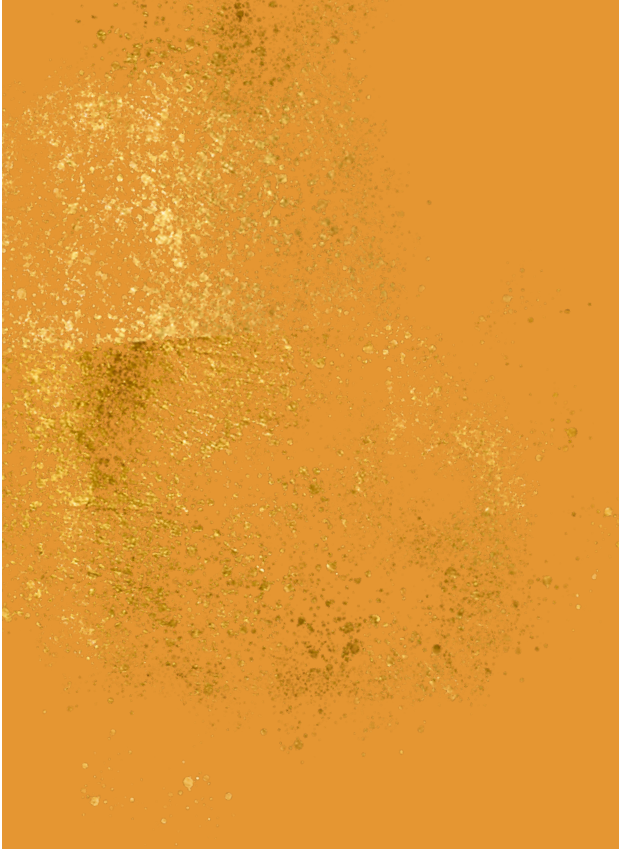


GLITTERING ILLUSIONS

Avarice





Avarice

SCRIPTURE

Galatians 5:1, 19-25 + Luke 6:43-45

Avarice is the “excessive love or desire for money or any possession money can buy.”

THOMAS AQUINAS

The deeper problem of avarice, however, is not how much we acquire or own. It’s “the inner condition of the heart [which] gives rise to greed’s outer manifestations....” At the heart of the illusion is where we look for provision, security, and happiness—an “overattachment to things” and the self-sufficiency they seemingly offer, allowing us to deny our need for God. “We find it much easier to acquire the means to provide for ourselves than to trust God to provide.”

We need not own a lot to be caught up in avarice. Our attachment to a single possession may hold the same power as an obsession with a growing stock portfolio, or we may be consumed by things we *could* someday possess—drawn in by advertising’s false claims about what satisfies. Avarice is ultimately about what possessions represent: our desire for security, control, and protection from fear, need, or worry.

Pastor Jack Roeda describes the glittering illusions as a “tilt of the heart” away from God. When avarice clouds our view, we begin to see ourselves as owners rather than recipients of God’s good gifts, growing blind or hard-hearted toward those in need. Our desire for more robs us both of experiencing God as our gracious provider and of using His gifts for the good of others.

So how do we tilt our hearts away from the false security of possessions and back toward the face of a gracious God who satisfies our deep need for what is truly good?

Practice

GIVING + GRATITUDE
SILENCE + SOLITUDE

GIVING + GRATITUDE

“Our regular practice of giving cultivates freedom and inscribes dependence on God in our hearts.”

This week, observe, welcome, and name (OWN) with the Lord what lifts for you as you consider the following questions:

What is my picture of a secure and comfortable life? Am I more likely to *over-save* or to *over-spend* to protect my security and comfort? What desires or fears drive my saving or my spending?

What is regularly informing me of what I “need” and what is “mine?” Am I listening to narratives which increase my desire to acquire more or diminish the value of others? How can I remove or limit that exposure?

What has been entrusted to me by God or shared with me by others? Take your time to notice and give thanks for His abundant provision.

Ask Him: What do I truly need, what can I share, and who should I share with? Notice any resistance to giving away what you possess. Why might you find it difficult to be generous?

A simple idea: Whenever you determine something you need, practice Richard Foster’s “Pray. Wait. Give. Thank God.” **Pray** about whether you actually need it and ask God to provide it. **Wait** a week or two. If God provides it, **give** away what you would have spent; if not, reevaluate and purchase it if still needed. Whatever the outcome, **thank God** for His provision.

SILENCE + SOLITUDE

As you sit in silence with the Lord this week, invite Him to help you examine your attachment to possessions through a simple “Palms Up, Palms Down” exercise:

Sit comfortably with your hands in your lap, palms up. Imagine your possessions beginning to pile up in your hands. Feel the weight of holding them all. Notice if anything “glitters” and draws your attention—the things most valuable to you.

Turn your palms down, relinquishing ownership of all that you hold. Notice if your hands want to grasp tightly to anything, resisting as you hand over ownership to God. Take as long as you need to fully release everything to Him.

When your hands feel free of all you were holding, turn your palms up again. Ask God to fill your hands with what He has for you today. He may speak to your fear, remind you of your identity, or reveal desires hidden beneath your attachment to possessions. Allow Him to surprise you and receive whatever gift of love He offers.

REVIEW THE PRACTICES



Continue returning to the practices that help tilt your heart back toward God. This week, also consider meditating on: Matthew 6:19-34, Luke 12:22-34 Hebrews 13:5-6, Psalm 104

Pastoral Word

+ NEXT STEPS

The original word for mercy, *misericordia*, points to the gift of one's own heart being pierced, or moved, by the suffering or need of another. We have all needed mercy extended to us, and we are so grateful that God has met us! Henri Nouwen writes that we can "befriend our own individual brokenness and then place it under the blessing of God." As we receive God's mercy for ourselves, our hearts become more able to recognize the needs of others and extend that same mercy to them.

Avarice turns our hearts inward toward securing what we need; mercy turns our hearts outward toward the needs of others. Jesus describes this kind of mercy in Matthew's Gospel: "When I was hungry you gave me something to eat. When I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger, you invited me in. When I needed clothes, you clothed me. When I was sick you looked after me, and when I was in prison you came to visit me."

How have you experienced Jesus' mercy, and how might He be inviting you to extend it to others?

We best learn not simply from experience, but from reflecting on our experiences. Without judgment, consider: How have you experienced avarice and mercy? How has that shaped you? Is that impact something you hope to pass down to future generations? Spend some time with the Holy Spirit, asking Him to bring His discernment and mercy to your story and show you His way forward.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Do you have a trusted friend you can share with?
- Attend our Journey of Generosity Retreat October 17.
- Attend our Generational Healing Service November 15.
- Consider meeting with a Spiritual Director.
- Schedule a session with our Care and Prayer team using the QR code.





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