

SEVEN Deadly Sins - #5 GLUTTONY

We've been talking over the last couple of weeks about what are called the *Seven Deadly Sins*. Here they are PRIDE, LUST, GREED, ENVY, SLOTH (Apathy), WRATH (Anger) & GLUTTONY.

Now that list has been around since the Pope Gregory 1st in the sixth century, but people still struggle with those same sins today. How do I know that? There was an internet poll done a few years ago by a Christian organization called Beliefnet. It asked people which of the seven deadly sins they were most guilty of committing. 57,000 people responded.

18% said they were most guilty of PRIDE. 30% said LUST. 7% said GREED. 13% said ENVY. 12% said SLOTH (or APATHY). 7% said WRATH (or ANGER) & 13% said GLUTTONY.

Today we're going to talk about GLUTTONY. OK listen up. I am not going to talk about weight or dieting. I would prefer to live!!! Now weight issues might be part of it, but the issue of GLUTTONY is much bigger than how much someone eats. So have no fear. This message is not sponsored by Weight Watchers!

Here is a very old definition of GLUTTONY. It comes from St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century. ***"Gluttony is an inordinate (or excessive) desire to consume more than what one requires."*** Did you get that? ***"Gluttony is an inordinate (or excessive) desire to consume more than what one requires."***

OK. Here's the difference between GREED and GLUTTONY. GREED is about ACCUMULATING more than you need. GLUTTONY is about CONSUMING more than you need. Gluttony can refer to consuming more money, more material things, more of the world's natural resources, more clothing, more cars, or homes, or food than you can possibly need. You might call it *"excessive materialism."* It is the antithesis – the reverse – of living a simple life.

We have a real problem with excessive materialism in our society, don't we? We have one of the highest standards of living in the whole world but we're never really satisfied. The more we have, the more we want. We think that the secret to finding happiness is to have more "stuff". I read this recently in a magazine.

"The human race – we – are the only animal whose desires increases the more they are fed. Dogs and cats are content with what dogs and cats had a thousand year ago. But not us. People are different. Give them an inch and

they want a foot. Give them a foot and they want a yard. Give them a yard and they want a swimming pool!

How serious a problem is gluttony? Well I think it's summed up in a conversation I overheard recently in Starbucks. As the four people sitting near me sat sipping their \$5.00 Latte's, with their MAC computers opened in front of them, talking about their new cars, new homes, trips abroad, the subject of Canada helping refugees came up. All four became quite indignant and agreed that Canada, which is one of the wealthiest nations in the world, should not be spending any money to help refugees because we need all our money to take care of our own people.

GLUTTONY is alive and well among us. It not only causes us to sin, but it has a devastating impact on millions of people in the world. Here's is an amazing figure from OXFAM. 1% of the world's population now owns half of the world's wealth! Wow. But here's the spiritual problem with GLUTTONY. It promise a lot but it doesn't actually satisfy our own real needs. Listen to Jesus, Luke 12:15 (NIV): **"A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."** Or as the Message translation puts it. **"Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot."**

Gluttony is all about trying to satisfy our life with all of the wrong things. As St. Augustine wrote in the 4th century about God: **"You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until we find our rest in you."** Gluttony – materialism – can never replace God our Creator because we were made for fellowship with him. Let me suggest to you that it may not be an accident that Canadian church attendance has dropped since 1970 as Canadians have become much wealthier and more materialistic. Listen to Jesus again (Matthew 6:24 Msg), **"You can't worship two gods at once. Loving one god, you'll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can't worship God and money both."**

Gluttony is not about stuffing our faces with junk food, it's about stuffing our souls with junk, with stuff that is here today and gone tomorrow. Stuff that impresses the Jones' but not our Creator. Gluttony is the sin that pushes God aside and causes us to chase after poor substitutes that can never really satisfy us. Now we don't always do that intentionally. Sometimes we just take something good that God has given us and we overdo it. We eat too much, drink too much, become workaholics in pursuit of the almighty dollar. We buy into the argument that *"the one who dies with the most toys wins!"* Let me suggest this to you. If you are not satisfied with what you have right

now, how do you know you'll be satisfied if you have more? Isn't satisfaction about a peace of mind, rather than about the sum of your possessions?

Now you'll remember that for every one of the seven deadly sins, Pope Gregory also gave us a list of seven corresponding holy virtue.

PRIDE is counterbalanced by HUMILITY. GREED by GENEROSITY. SLOTH by DILIGENCE. LUST by PURITY And for GLUTTONY the corresponding virtue is MODERATION, or what we might call SELF-CONTROL!

Self-Control. That makes sense, doesn't it? Without self-control you will blow your diet. You will never be able to limit your spending. You will never seek help for an addiction. Did you know that singer/composer Sir Elton John used to be one of the wealthiest people in the world but he went bankrupt because he couldn't keep his gluttony – his obsessive desire for more things – under control?

Remember what Jesus said, **"Life is not defined by how much you have, even if you have a lot."** One of the wealthiest people in the Old Testament, King Solomon, discovered that. Here's his conclusion, Ecclesiastes 2:1-11:

1-3 I said to myself, "Let's go for it—experiment with pleasure, have a good time!" But there was nothing to it, nothing but smoke.

***What do I think of the fun-filled life? Insane! Inane!
My verdict on the pursuit of happiness? Who needs it...?***

***4-8 Oh, I did great things: built houses,
planted vineyards,
designed gardens and parks....***

***I piled up silver and gold,
loot from kings and kingdoms.
I gathered a chorus of singers to entertain me with song,
and—most exquisite of all pleasures—
voluptuous maidens for my bed...***

Everything I wanted I took—I never said no to myself. I gave in to every impulse, held back nothing. I sucked the marrow of pleasure out of every task—my reward to myself for a hard day's work!

11 Then I took a good look at everything I'd done, looked at all the sweat and hard work. But when I looked, I saw nothing but smoke.

Smoke and spitting into the wind. There was nothing to any of it. Nothing.

OK. Replace Solomon's name with the name of countless movie or pop stars or famous people. You know as well as I do that many of them seem to have everything but their lives are also so messed up and tragic that they are mostly role models of what you don't want your life to be like! Let's never forget that the things of life are just that, things. They may fill up our lives for a while but ultimately they can't satisfy our soul in the long term. Only God can do that because as Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NLT) reminds us, only God has ***"has planted eternity in the human heart."*** And God has determined that only Jesus Christ can fill the space he has left. That's why Jesus said, ***"I have come that you may have life and have it to the full."*** (John 10:10)

So as we accept Jesus invitation to the Lord's Table this morning let us remember the life that Jesus offers all of us.

For this is the table,
not of the Church, but of the Lord.
It is made ready for all who love him
And who want to love him more.
This is Jesus invitation.
"Do this is remembrance of me"