

The 10 Commandments: Do Not Covet

Reflect

1. In your childhood, did you ever want something really bad?
2. Is there something your neighbor has that you desire?
3. Have your desires ever got you in trouble?

Read Your Bible

- Deuteronomy 5:21-22
- Luke 12:13-21

Apply God's Word to Your Life

1. Read Exodus 20:17. Compare with Deuteronomy 5:21.
2. What happens to you in mind, body, and soul when covetousness, desire, and greed take a hold?
3. Have you seen a dispute about a will, trust, or estate in your lifetime? Were you part of that dispute? What was at the root of the dispute?
4. How do Jesus' words "life does not consist in an abundance of possessions," speak to you?
5. As you read/hear the story of the rich farmer, how do you see yourself in him?
6. Read Luke 12:22-34.
7. How do hear comfort in these verses?
8. What is a tangible way God's word is calling you to act?

Conclusion

There are two ways the ten commandments are numbered. In the Lutheran tradition, Deuteronomy 5:21 encompasses the ninth and tenth commandments. Both commandments speak to coveting, and in this lesson, we look at both.

The word covet simply means to “yearn” or “desire.” When we covet our hearts are not in rhythm with God’s heart. When we covet, our thanksgiving for God’s provision in our lives becomes muted. When we covet, we begin to lose trust in what God has done and will do. When we covet, we become jealous. It sends us down the slippery slope to steal, scheme, or work against our neighbors.

Jesus speaks into a situation of covetousness, jealousy, and greed. His basic warning is “to be on guard against all kinds of greed.” There is more to life than possessions. We carry the image of God within us; we are called to be imitators of Christ. Instead of coveting, we are to give ourselves away. One of the early Church Fathers, Augustine of Hippo wrote about the rich farmer, “He was planning to fill his soul with excessive and unnecessary feasting and was proudly disregarding all those empty bellies of the poor. He did not realize that the bellies of the poor were much safer storerooms than his barns.”

Pray

Heavenly Father, turn our covetousness into thanksgiving, and may our desire be for you. We praise you for house and home, family, and neighbors, and all we need for daily living. You have provided for us in the past. We trust your provision for tomorrow. Bless our work as we give ourselves away for the sake of your kingdom. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.