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# The Ten Commandments: No Coveting

The 10th Commandment, more than any other Commandment, reminds us that God isn't primarily concerned with our outward behavior but rather with the condition of our hearts.

In the book *You Are What You Love*, author James K.A. Smith says the most incisive and heart piercing question Jesus ever asks His followers is the question, "What do you want?". In fact, Smith says that question is the underlying question of the many questions Jesus asked His early disciples in the New Testament, including the famous one He asked Peter: "Do you love me?" This question is heart piercing because our greatest desires and longings reverberate from our hearts and they ultimately reveal what we have "set" our hearts on. Augustine said that his desires (loves) were his weight. Wherever he was carried off to, it was his desires (loves) that were carrying him. So when Jesus asks us this question, He is asking us what have we set our hearts on—the world or Him? In order for us to answer that question honestly, we must look at our greatest desires.

As we come to the final Commandment in the Decalogue, "You shall not covet..." we are presented with that exact same question.

In our sermon we looked at two things: the sin of coveting and our great Hope as lawbreakers.

## Exodus 20:17

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

### I. The sin of coveting

When we look at the original language, we see that the word for "covet" is the same as the morally neutral word, "desire." That is interesting because it tells us that "desire" in and of itself isn't a bad thing. That is good news! God designed good things to be desirable and He created humanity with the capacity to desire them. However, that also shows us how dangerous this sin is because coveting is essentially a misplaced desire. The sin of coveting is a double whammy. Not only do we manifest a heart of ungratefulness towards God for what He HAS given us, but we also commit idolatry (Col. 3:5) because we are believing that if we obtain whatever it is we lack, we will finally be satisfied. Thus when we covet, we not only devalue the blessings of God, but we devalue God Himself.

### II. The Hope of the lawbreaker

- A. The first use of the law is the "mirror." The mirror of the law is very important because it defines sin for us, it shows us how incredibly sinful we are, and it reveals our incapability of saving ourselves. The "mirror" then points us to the Hope of lawbreakers. Moses himself knew that the Law was pointing to a great Hope (Duet. 30:6). As we read the Old and New Testaments, we come to find that the Law was pointing us to something greater than Moses could have ever imagined. As we read the prophets, we are told the Lord would establish a New Covenant. This covenant would be everlasting and would include the law being written on the hearts of His people, the indwelling of His Spirit, and a redemption so great that God Himself would remember our sins no more. Isaiah tells us that this would all be possible because of the Lord's Redeemer whom He called "the Suffering Servant." In the Gospels, we meet the Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ. He is the one who came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill the Law. He lived the life we were supposed to live, He took on the curse we were under, and He paid our debt. After His resurrection and ascension, He then sent His Spirit so that we, though not yet perfect, could live a life pleasing to Him.

- B. How are we to respond to such amazing grace? That is the third use of the Law. Being washed by the blood of Christ, secured in His grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we respond to God by following His commandments. Regarding the 10th Commandment specifically, we are to cultivate a heart of thanksgiving for God, act charitably towards our neighbors, and repent when we fail. However, if we are ever going to be able to do that, we must first cultivate our desire for Jesus. C.S Lewis said that if we are ever going to stop making mud pies in the slum, we have to be able to imagine what is meant by a vacation at the sea. If we are going to find freedom from the things of this world, we must set our gaze upon the eternal riches we have in Christ.

Think about it. The only way that God could command us to not covet was if He could be trusted and relied upon to be the ultimate source of satisfaction. That is what He offers each of us in His Son: true, rich, and eternal satisfaction. Your heart was meant for something great—it was meant to be set on Him.

### Discussion Questions

1. What do the several examples given in Exodus 20:17 tell us about the sin of coveting?
2. What does Jesus' parable in Luke 12:15-21 tell us about the sin of coveting?
3. Why do most people feel the need to hide their sins and act as if they have everything together?
4. Why should "the conviction of sin" be considered a great gift of mercy from the Lord?

### Going Deeper

1. As a Christian, have you developed a "worm theology"? Do you live your life thinking of yourself as a worthless sinner? How does Rom. 8:1-4, 31-35 speak into that?
2. What are some practical ways you can cultivate your desire for Jesus?