

## Deuteronomy 5:21 – Life is a treasure hunt – Sermon Tregear 3.7.2022

You heard Forest Gump say at the beginning of the movie, “Mamma always said, Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you’re gonna get.” Well today we have another word about life. You might have noticed that the sermon title is “Life is a treasure hunt”. Listen in carefully and see if you can work out why I said this.

We’ve come to the last commandment. Does that mean it’s the least important? It’s the 10<sup>th</sup>. Well, I think it might be the second most important. It’s like the bookend – supporting all things in between them. We probably don’t understand what it means because we are desensitized to what it means. We use other words for covet – desire, envy, crave, yearn. Every one of these words is the name of a perfume today. Desire by Dunhill, Envy by Gucci, Crave by Calvin Klein and Yearn by Victoria’s Secret. Our culture has done a good job of desensitizing us to the meaning of this commandment

So what is this commandment? Well, let’s look at the 2 words that clue us into the meaning of the commandment; *Covet* and *desire*. In Septuagint the Greek word is *eputhemia* – this means more than “desire”, more like “overdesire” or “over the top affection”, “much too much affection”) or a craving that’s uncontrollable. In our Bibles this word is frequently translated “lust” – mainly had negative sexual connotations; but the word also is translated “longed for”. It means a deep all-consuming, life-controlling inordinate desire for something. And it’s not always a negative word – Jesus says, “I eagerly desire...to eat the Passover with you” – this isn’t a bad thing; in 1 Peter – angels “**long**” to look into these things. It’s the desire of the angels to understand and know the Gospel in greater depth – that’s a good thing. So it all depends on the object of your desire; and the object will determine if

it's a good or bad desire. So the question is – why are the things in our text wrong things to desire? A few of these things are not quite in our sphere of thinking. We get the meaning of wives and houses but I certainly don't think, "Oh, if only I had Bob's ox or Andrew's donkey. Maybe if I was on a farm I might but not here in Mt Drnitt. All of these things listed, they are about a person's status – their status in the community.

Where are the Israelites standing as these words are being spoken – they're standing on the threshold of the Promised Land and they have nothing – no land, no houses, no mules, nothing at this point in the story. Yet God knows what they will soon want and he knows what that wanting will lead to. Without a wife you couldn't produce sons, to work the land with the ox and mule; sons to carry on the family name and grow the wealth of the family and so grow the status of the family in that community. At the end of the day this commandment is telling us something simple. To want anything that would define the status in the community; to want anything that if only I had this thing, making this thing my treasure, then everyone would know that I'm somebody – that's what the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is prohibiting.

It's difficult for us today. Our consumer culture is designed and organised to entice our desire for all the wrong things. Advertisers try to convince us that this or that food, drink, show, car, vacation is desirable to make us happy. In the past some Christians described the seven deadly sins: coveting, envy, sloth, lust, anger, vanity or pride, gluttony. This was supposed to be a warning for us. But today they've now been given a positive spin. As Ferdinand Mount has pointed out: "Covetousness has been rebranded as retail therapy, sloth as downtime, lust is exploring your sexuality, anger is opening up your feelings, vanity is looking good " because you're worth it" and gluttony is the religion of foodies."

What Christians once saw as deadly desires are now the very things that make the world go round

One person who understands this 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is Sarah Jessica Parker. Back a few years ago she did a new perfume commercial for a perfume called Covet. So the ad is at night in Paris, intriguing music; Jessica Parker pulls up in her limousine outside the store – we hear a voice inside her head - there it was staring at me I had to have it. So SJP gets out of the car, goes to the window put her hands on the glass and you see her eyes – she’s lusting after this perfume. She kicks the glass 3x breaks the glass puts her hand inside to grab the perfume; police show up, they handcuff her, and she’s saying Mister Monsieur just one spritz. They take her to jail and there she is behind bars and she says, “I had to have it.” You see, SJP understands the depth of the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment and she understand that breaking the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment leads to breaking others. So if you steal you’ve already broken the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment by wanting whatever you stole way too much; when someone commits adultery they already have an inordinate desire for the person they commit adultery with. So when you covet it leads to breaking another commandment and it also breaks the 1<sup>st</sup>, because that’s the thing that truly sits on the throne of your heart. One commentator – “all who sets his desires on his neighbour’s house, spouse, employees or animals will not be able to keep their hands off.” We desire and then we act out our desires. The 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is not just a way to warn us about our internal desires; it’s warning us that those deep internal desires will soon become a reality, soon become tangible crimes and morph into other sins. So, firstly, it leads to the breaking of other commandments. But secondly, it also leads to the disintegration of community. Both 9 & 10 mention neighbour so they’re concerned about community. There’s a good example in Lord of the Rings – the whole story is about a magical ring that everyone is trying to get their hands on. If they get it they get extra power. The entire world community is crumbling because

of this ring – there are wars, hatred between people, strife and discord all because everyone wants this little ring. Just like our world – has there ever been a war which wasn't started from jealousy, envy, hatred, I want what you have etc

James 4 says you quarrel and fight. And they come from the overdesire within people. They want something but don't get it. People kill and covet, because they cannot have what they want.

**So how can we change?** I want to say three things here. 1. **Walk in the Spirit with each other.** Firstly, as we've done each week we want to look at Jesus. In the book of Galatians the theme of law is discussed, alongside the idea of overdesire is also discussed; and it's a place where backbiting and devouring is causing havoc in this community – in Galatians. Middle of Galatians 5:14 Paul says something astounding – *“The entire law is summed up in a single commandment, Love your neighbour as yourself.* It's safe to say that Paul knew and we know that it's impossible to love your neighbour and at the same time lust after them or their stuff. So in the rest of Gal 5 Paul gives us the answer. This book is concerned with what place does the law have in the life of the Christian? What does commandment keeping have with being a Christian? And here Paul gives us the key to keeping the 10 Commandments.

The Jews had a book “Halakhah” – which was a compilation of all the rabbis teaching at different stages of their history. The word “halakhah” means “to walk”; the way one walks in obeying the law. Listen to Psalm 1 – *Blessed is the man who does not **walk** in the counsel of the wicked but instead he **delights** in the law of the Lord.* Or when Moses said, “Walk in the way of the Lord your God”, he's saying, “Walk in the way of the Law.” Paul picks this up and uses it in Gal 5 – he says, ***WALK in the Spirit and you will not satisfy the **desires ( the epithumias) of the sinful nature.*****(v.16). Paul is saying that everyone of us is now equipped to no longer be

controlled by our overdesires. He's not only saying it, he's promising it. Walk in the Spirit and YOU WILL NOT. Ok How? Gordon Fee says, "Believers who walk in the Spirit do so because they are following where the Spirit leads. The Spirit leads in the way of Christ, in ways that pattern and reflect after Christ himself whom Paul has just described as the one who loved me and gave himself for me. This is not WWJD – what would Jesus do?. Although that is a helpful acronym, Gordon Fee is pressing us beyond that to see this – What Has Jesus Done? And Paul answers this by saying Jesus has loved me and gave himself for me. And the place that we can see this self-giving love is on the cross. On the cross Jesus desired absolutely nothing but the Father's will – not what I want but what you will. You see on the cross Jesus gave up everything. Do you see this, because if you can then you can begin to understand how to apply the cross to your life. You see the cross figured into everything for Paul. EVERYTHING!! The cross is the crux, that's why he goes on to say in Galatians 5:24 – Those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and overdesires (epithumias). The cross is not only the thing you need to understand to become a Christian but it's also the thing that you need to understand to continue to live the Christian life. Now some of you may be saying, I get that Dave, the cross is the centre of the Christian life, but what does it mean to walk in the Spirit? Remember where the Spirit lives; the Spirit was poured out into the church and those who believe in what Jesus has done and those who are baptised share in the one Spirit. So if you want to know how to walk in the Spirit you have to allow someone to disagree with your lifestyle. And this is what he says in Galatians 6:1 – *If someone is caught in sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.* Whose doing that? The community of faith. So you want to know what it means to walk in the Spirit? It means to allow the Spirit-filled community to press in on your life; to allow someone to put you back on track, to get you right in the Way, to get you back on the path, to allow someone to gently speak into your life, and the Spirit can only lead in the way of the cross, that's the only way he knows to lead you

, in the way of Jesus Christ, in the way of the cross. So what does it mean to walk in the Spirit? It means to get close to people, to not just show up but to experience deep rich community where the Spirit is and let those people who are also filled with the Spirit speak into my life and mould you and put you on the way of Jesus Christ, the way of the cross.

Ok, No 2. **2. Make God our greatest treasure.** We've been thinking about desires, overdesires, coveting this morning. Desire is not a bad thing, we are made to have desires. Our problem is that our desires are misplaced if they are not centred on God. I think we all struggle with this in different ways. The Spirit, as we've just said, is changing us and God has put us in community where we are to strengthen each other. For me, I know the truths about Jesus and I trust them but I still struggle with absolutely desiring God for his sake alone. I want to. Now this isn't going to happen overnight in most cases. I can cry out to God. Lord give me a delight in you, a satisfaction in you that is far stronger than my other desires. Life is a treasure hunt. What treasure are we pursuing? I want to hunt for the greatest treasure – God. I was created to treasure Jesus with all my heart – more than treasure footy, sex, food, entertainment or anything else. So what helps me is to keep looking at Jesus, to understand more and more like Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3, I want to know more and more how wide and long and high is Jesus' love for me. And I also keep praying and asking God, "give me a satisfaction in you, so that my greatest desire is to have relationship with you and I just enjoy you."

**3. Don't listen to Satan's lies.** You might be thinking, Here's another commandment that we can't keep. It's easy to get despondent isn't it. I can't keep this commandment – therefore I'm a failure. The fact is, I can't keep any of the commandments. It's a bit like Paul as he cries out in Romans 7: *I wouldn't have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what*

*coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. And Paul goes on to say that he is a miserable person because he does the things that he doesn't want to do. He still has this body that sins. He cries out, "Who will save me from this body that brings me death?" And his next statement has the answer, I thank God for his salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord! And he goes on to say, <sup>1</sup>So now anyone who is in Christ Jesus is not judged guilty. <sup>2</sup> That is because in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit that brings life made you free. It made you free from the law that brings sin and death. If I am in Christ, in Jesus. If I have repented and believed and trusted in what he did on the cross for me, that he rescued me, THEN I am judged NOT GUILTY. Don't let Satan put you down. The father of lies, he will tell you that you are a failure. Yes, I have failed. But he will also say that you are guilty and God cannot accept you. That's an absolute lie. If you trust in what Jesus did on the cross for you what does Paul say, you are judged not guilty. And that is the truth. You are a child of God.*