5th Sunday after Trinity
Series on 7 Deadly Sins
Bessemer - 1959
W. Henrietta - 1960
Rolling Meadows - 1967

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. Mark 8: 36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

## AVARICE

Avarice, says the dictionary, is the greedy desire for riches. We huma beings, ~~it seems~~, are forever restless, forever unsatisfied. We want more, alway more of ~~what we term~~ that thing we call success and security. We stuff ourselves - our minds, our stomachs, our hours, our barns, our bank accounts - and still we want more. If only we had another bathroom; if only we had another car, a new refrigerator, a new dress, a new suit; if only we ~~could keep up with our neighbors~~ had the things others have - and so our discontentment deepens. Is it any wonder that ~~St. Paul~~ Scripture says, The love of money is the root of all evil? The worship of the Almighty Dollar has become the curse of America. As the old ~~saying~~ adage has it: Anything for a buck! "Every Man has his price" is true Men will do almost anything ~~to acquire another dollar~~ "for a buck" money. They will lie, cheat, steal, crucify their ~~own~~ consciences, slander ~~their neighbor~~, and even kill. For only thirty pieces of silver our Lord Himself was betrayed. - Anything for a buck! Thus it is that St. John gives the warning: Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

One of the most revealing parables of the curse of avarice outside the New Testament is Dostoyevsky's story of the onion: Here is ~~what~~ a story: Once upon a time there was a peasant woman and a very wicked woman she was. And she died and did not leave a single good deed behind. The devils caught her and plunged her into the lake of fire. So her guardian angel stood and wondered what good deed of hers he could remember to tell to God: She once pulled up an onion in her garden, said he, and gave it to a beggar woman. And God answered: You take that onion then, hold it out to her in the lake, and let her take hold and be pulled out. And if you can pull her out of the lake, let her come to Paradise, but if the onion breaks, then the woman must stay where she is. The angel ran to the woman and held out the onion to her; Come, said he, catch hold and I'll pull you out. And he began cautiously pulling her out. He had just pulled her right out, when the other sinners in the lake, seeing how she was being drawn out, began catching hold of her so as to be

pulled out with her. But she was a very wicked woman and she began kicking them. I'm to be pulled out, not you. It's my onion, not yours. As soon as she said th the onion broke. And the woman fell into the lake and...the angel wept and went away. It's only a story, I know, but it certainly illustrates much of the hell o human life. This is my onion, my goods, my money, my security, by which I - not you - am to be pulled out of my insecurity and exalted and made superior to others How men love to get and possess. How we love to admire and caress our possessions And inside there wells a sense of pride, as we boast: This is mine, all mine. Men will work night and day, hour after hour, in order to build bigger and better barn to pile up more and more riches - of this thing we call security - only to be told in the end: Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be? Some people imagine ~~they have discharged their obligation t~~ that all there is to Christianity is to go ~~God by going~~ to church for one hour of worship a week. Others never give a thought to the service of God. They have no time for the work of the church and of Christ All their time is required to achieve success. Our Lord declared that no success story is worth such a price: What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Our twentieth-century world has good reason to know how right Christ was. Financial successes in the 1920's were followed by the worst flurry of suicides in history. It is said that in 1923 a group of the world's most successful financiers met at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Present were the president of the largest independent steel company in the United States, the president of the largest utility company, the greatest wheat speculator, the president of the N.Y. Stock Exchange, a member of the President's cabinet, the greatest bear in Wall Street, the president of the Bank of International Settlements, and the head of the world's greatest monopoly. Collectively, they controlled more wealth than there was in the United States Treasury. Magazines and newspapers held them up as examples for the youth of the nation. Now we know what kind of example they set. One of them lived on borrowed money during the last five years of his life and died penniless. Another died abroad insolvent. A third served a term in Sing Sing prison. A fourth, after serving a term in prison,

was pardoned in order that he might die at home. A fifth committed suicide. A sixth committed suicide. A seventh committed suicide. Few, if any, had learned the real meaning of life! ~~what it means to live~~. What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

The very night in which our Lord was betrayed, His disciples fell to bickering about who ~~who should~~ would be ~~counted~~ the greatest in the kingdom of God. While they argued, Christ confronted them squarely with this question: Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as He that serveth. The nameless waiter may not look very important compared to the successful man who sits down to dinner at a fashionable restaurant ~~eating place~~. Our Lord said He was willing to take the place of the waiter. He preferred to demonstrate His greatness by serving. Everything He said, everything He did, right down to the cross, grew out of a consuming desire to serve. The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Christ came to serve, and so He did. On Calvary's Cross He crashed the gates of hell and death from both sides that He might serve the world, save the world that you and I might have the forgiveness ~~of sins~~ and, life, and salvation. The lives of those who believe in Him and follow Him are characterized not by the search for success, but by an earnest striving to serve.

It is the tragedy of all human existence that people longing for the fullness and satisfaction ~~of~~ in life do not know how to find it. A rich young man came to Christ one day, bubbling over with eagerness and excitement born of the great things he had heard. The young man asked a question: What must I do to inherit eternal life? It was a good question. Jesus, beholding him, was attracted to him. He was a good young man. Though obviously gifted, showing great promise, and morally upright, this young man had his eye on the great god Success. What he himself did not see, Christ saw. He saw a proud youth in love with himself, and with what he had - wealth, position, and social advantages. He was in love with the wrong things. One thing thou lackest, Jesus informed him. I imagine that the young man never forgot that day and never forgot the eyes that pierced his soul.

They weighed him in the balance and found him wanting. One thing thou lackest. The one thing lacking in his case was the will to serve. He had the will to get but not the will to give.

Richard Halverson tells the story of hoodlums who hid in a department store until after closing hours. Although doing no damage to the merchandise, th changed all of the price tags around. Eyebrows were lifted in the morning when sales clerks found mink coats price-marked $2.98 and waste baskets $1500. Sterli silver trays were priced at 79 cents and men's handkerchiefs at $150. The world follows the same absurd procedure in its evaluation of life. and We go along with the world, misplacing the price tags, when we put so much value on temporal things and so little value on eternal things. The real values put on life by many people tur out like this: Reading the Bible - 21 cents; reading the daily newspaper - $250. Christian service - $2.50; social and club activities - $3500. The picture may look a bit silly to us, but it is tragically real to God. What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

The rich young man turned away. Others did not. Take Peter and Andrew, for example. One could not call them poor men. They had a thriving fish business. They enjoyed a certain amount of security. Then came Jesus with His request: Come .. and I will make you...fishers of men. They left their boats to rot on the Galilean shores. and Where did this new life take them? It led them to the loss of everything they had once counted valuable. It brought them difficulty, peril, suffering, persecution, and eventually the disgrace of crucifixion. In their lives the words of Christ had came true: Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it.

Then there was the man with a future, an intellectual destined for leadership. He was headed for ~~such~~ great distinction, that is, until he met Christ, From that marvelous moment onward, St. Paul became a different man. Tirelessly, endlessly, he followed the way that Christ led until he reached the end of the road. What was the end of his road? Prison and death by execution. He had a feeling

that this would be the end of the road when he set out upon it. The Lord had tol Ananias, who had misgivings about receiving Paul after his conversion on the Damascus road: I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake. No matter. Again it had come true: Whosoever shall lose his life of My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it.

If any real success is to be had in life, Christ ~~will be~~ must be the heart of it There have always been men and women who have given up lucrative positions, fame, and important jobs to lose their lives for Christ and for the Gospel. They may not have been considered successful by their contemporaries, but then it must be recognized that success in the terminology of the world has become a meaningless term. Lord Byron once said: They never fail who die in a great cause. It might be truer to say: They never fail who give their lives to a great cause. It would be truest of all to say: They never fail who give their lives to the cause of Jesu Christ, who yield their weakness to His strength, and who put the strength acquire through faith in Him into the service of their fellow men. How is it with you? Have you given your heart, your life, your possessions to Christ, your eternal Redeemer? What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

Amen.