

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

06 August 2023

Gluttony

Text: "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?" *1 John 3:17*

I like this approach to having too much, or wanting to over do anything.

There are compulsive forces that drive some people to excess.

Then there is the natural tendency to consume an excessive amount of what we like, want, desire.

Most of us grew up with the saying, "All things in moderation."

There is another slogan that fits here.

Each to his own ability and each according to their need.

But the deprived human condition of sin prevents this from being a reality.

Even intentional communities have a most difficult time passing on their ideas and motives to the next generation.

They made a movie about that.

The children want to know what is beyond the wall that keeps them apart from the rest of the world.

Ever since the sin in the garden we want to know and we want to decide for ourselves that which is good for us.

God created us in his image and with great ability.

That drives us to be all we can be.

Then add the sin nature and we are driven to know, want and have.

It is our task to put all of this under the headship and control of God through Jesus led by the Holy Spirit.

Gluttony is not a sin we hear much about today, and when we do, it is usually in reference to overeating.

However, the sin of gluttony is more than overindulgence in food or drink.

It is the sin of excess and intemperance.

It is unrestraint, self-indulgence, and inordinate extravagance.

Gluttony seeks to satisfy our senses and our greed while disregarding the needs of others.

Thus gluttony covers a large number of sins.

Certainly in our affluent society, we can readily see the extent of this sin and the many heartaches it causes.

Gluttony is the sin of the affluent.

The possession of wealth is not a sin.

Occasionally ministers and churches may have given people the impression that affluence is and of itself is a sin.

This is not true.

Although the Bible tells of many wealthy people who used their material blessings to serve God, there are many more illustrations in Scripture about how prosperity became a stumbling block.

As a matter of fact, the Bible generally tends to be skeptical of the use of great wealth by those who have it.

In *1 John 3:17* John was pointedly condemning those who have much but are stingy about sharing with the needy.

If you have no pity, how can you say that you are a reflection of God?

How can you say God's love is in you?

John implied that this is impossible.

Of those who have much, much is required.

Holding on to tightly may ensure that you will always have possessions, but it will not ensure friendship or God's approval.

Most churches have benevolence programs, either through their local congregations or through their denomination.

These are usually exhausted early or are funded by token amounts in comparison to needs.

Churches must be judicious in the distribution of benevolence money, clothing, and food, because unfortunately there are those who prey on a church's generosity or gullibility.

But we must not let this keep us from doing as much as possible.

Jesus did not promise us that people will not take advantage of us; frankly, he said they will try.

Nevertheless, we are given this instruction: "Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." 1 *John 3:18*

Plus we are instructed to not tire in well doing.

Gluttony is a sin of sensual gratification.

Gluttony is a gratification of our fleshly appetites.

It is often based on pleasure, amusement, excitement, or comfort.

Drugs, alcohol, food, and tobacco are representative of this point.

But this point of selfishness to the exclusion of others' needs can also be seen in our use of the world's natural resources.

It appears that many Americans believe somehow that it is a divine right to use water for irrigation and industry, oil for heating and fuel and coal for electricity without regard to future generations or to pollution or to the extinction of parts of God's creation.

A good steward has regard for the future generations.

Godless communism is not according to God's plan but neither is greedy capitalism.

In *Philippians 3:18* Paul wrote: "Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame."

Caring for the poor and poverty-stricken should not be entirely the government's responsibility.

We are called to share our wealth with those in need.

Many new automobiles cost more than some have paid for their houses.

A man once said that he had bought a new car, and it was the first time in his life he had ever paid that much for anything that did not have a lawn or shrubs.

Gluttony is the sin of too much without sharing.

Too much, too often, too expensive, too soon is another way to define gluttony.

Most people in Jesus' day were relatively poor.

The average daily wage was one denarii, about sixteen to eighteen cents.

A yearly income was equal to about fifty to sixty dollars.

In one's adult lifetime, he had only two coats or outer garments worn for warmth and protection from the elements.

Thus what John the Baptist said in *Luke 3:11* has more meaning if you understand how rampant poverty was among his hearers.

He admonished, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

Please notice that John did not admonish us to give away all that we have.

He simply commanded us to share part of our prosperity.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote in his epistle a similar thought: "Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, Go in peace; keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?" *James 2:15*

The implied answer to James' question is, "nothing! It is not good! It is useless!"

Having too much is not a sin,

But having a lot or too much and not sharing is a sin.

I would say that the sin is the lack of compassion for others.

Gluttony is not a sin we hear much about these days.

We live in a consumer run society.

The Bible speaks to all aspects of life.

When it is uncomfortable we call it meddling and none of God's business.

But everything about us is God's business.

Especially our attitudes about others and their needs.

God, the prophets and all those who spoke for God, especially Jesus, had a lot to say about how we use our gifts and resources.

God provides not only enough for ourselves but enough to share with others.

Jesus warned his followers not to be anxious about food or clothing but to seek first God's kingdom and all the rest will be provided.

An abundance, if our priorities are in order.

And if they are not, we will never have enough.

Satan will see to that.

For when we live for ourselves we never have enough.

As my brother used to say, "How much is enough, just a little bit more."

But when living for God we not only have enough but we have a portion to give to his work and a portion to meet the needs of others.

God designed life that way.

That way His people are a blessing to His creation and one another.