

one

Avarice/Greed

Greed, also known as avarice, is a disordered preoccupation with money or the things that money can buy. Of all the seven deadly sins, this one is perhaps the most starkly condemned in the New Testament. It was the vice of Judas, who stole from the common purse, complained when money was spent on Christ's glory, and then finally sold his Lord and God for thirty pieces of silver. Jesus tells his followers in no uncertain terms, "You cannot serve both God and money," and he warns that it will be very difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of Heaven. St. Paul and Pink Floyd tell us that "money, so they say, is the root of all evil today." As the song goes, "Money, it's a gas. Grab that cash with both hands and make a stash. New car, caviar, four star, daydream, think I'll buy me a football team."

Now, almost nobody ever lists avarice as one of their sins when they go to confession. Almost nobody thinks they have a problem with greed. But don't you think it's weird that we, the richest nation in history, should think that we're all totally free from the vice that Jesus was so concerned to warn us about? The problem is that greed is everywhere. It's not that we don't suffer from avarice. It's that it's been so woven into the pattern of all our lives that we can't even see it anymore.

two

Why is love of money the root of all evil?

Love of money is the root of all evil because all sin, all evil, comes from preferring some worldly thing to love of God and love of neighbor. Money, which is a symbol of the power for getting others to give you what you want on demand, is therefore the primary symbol for the things of this world. Love of money, preoccupation with money and the stuff money can get you, is therefore equivalent to a preoccupation with this world. And preoccupation with the things of this world means a rejection of the kingdom of heaven.

three

We treat money, in so many ways, as the measure of our success

We treat money, in so many ways, as the measure of our success. As St. John Newman says, "All bow down before money." We feel validated by a larger paycheck - instead of by more meaningful work. We send our kids to school and to college so they can get "good jobs," - which means well-paying jobs - instead of prioritizing the formation of their minds and wills and imaginations for holiness and happiness. We admire, cultivate, and flatter people with money - and then we treat poor people like we're doing them a favor just by spending time with them. This is not the Way of the Lord - who came

to us in the form a baby born in a barn and a homeless vagabond – the King who “fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich away empty.”

Money isn't a bad thing, and it can legitimately factor into our calculations. But it should never be our main criterion of what people or activities are worth.

four

Money as the source of our worry

Jesus told us not to worry about what we shall eat or wear, and St. Paul tells us to be content with food and clothing. However, in a society where every person is guaranteed to have these basic needs, we are constantly worrying about money and the things it can buy. This is because our avarice has made money into an idol, and idols never leave us with any peace.

If you are anxious about money, consider what kind of money or things that money can buy you are worried about. Is it your car or car payments? Your house or house payments? The college your children will attend or the tuition payments? Your job security or the rising prices of gas? Your medical needs or medical bills? God takes care of the lily and the sparrow, and He will take care of you and your family. You won't have a perfect life on this earth, so stop trying to make it one. Money and the things it can buy are no substitute for the peace of living simply and preparing for Heaven.

five

Almsgiving

In the meantime, show your detachment from money by giving generously to the Church and the Poor, the two groups Jesus identifies Himself with. Giving your money to the Church and the Poor is the most secure investment you can make. Let Christ be your stockbroker and let Him store up your "treasure in heaven." Be at peace while you're in this world.