



Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 11, 2018



Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues

From Greed to Contentment

Exodus 20:17, Luke 12:15-21 • Alf Halvorson preaching

8:30 AM BLENDED

WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP	Dave Steane
*SONGS OF PRAISE	
*PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE	Brett Hurst
STEPHEN LEADER COMMISSIONING	Beth Case
GIFTS OF GRATITUDE	
MESSAGE	Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues: From Greed to Contentment
RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE	Alf Halvorson

9:45 AM CONTEMPORARY

WORSHIP INVITATION	
*CALL TO WORSHIP	
*MOMENT OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE	Kyle Collins
MESSAGE	Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues: From Greed to Contentment
GIFTS OF GRATITUDE	Beth Case
STEPHEN LEADER COMMISSIONING	Beth Case

Musicians in these services: Meliza Gómez and Michael Middleton, worship leaders • George Heathco, guitar • Daniel Martinez, keys • Asher Pudlo, drums • Dennis Whittaker, bass

11:15 AM TRADITIONAL

PRELUDE	<i>Lenten Prayer</i>	Louis Vierne (1870-1937)
WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP		Dave Steane
CHORAL INTROIT	<i>The Old Hundredth</i>	Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
*HYMN OF PRAISE	<i>What Wondrous Love Is This</i>	#85; Vs. 1, 2, 3 WONDROUS LOVE
*PRAYER OF CONFESSION & ASSURANCE		Rachel Poysky
*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH	from the United Church of Canada	
*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE	<i>The Gloria Patri</i>	Hymn #579
ANTHEM	<i>Adonai, Adonai (Lord, Lord) from Chichester Psalms</i>	Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)
STEPHEN LEADER COMMISSIONING		Beth Case
OFFERTORY	<i>Faithful Over a Few Things</i>	Glenn Burleigh (1949-2007)
MESSAGE	Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues: From Greed to Contentment	Alf Halvorson
HYMN OF PREPARATION	<i>More Love to Thee, O Christ</i>	#359; Vs. 1, 2 MORE LOVE TO THEE
POSTLUDE	<i>There Is a Longing in Our Hearts</i>	arr. K. White

Musicians in this service: Lisa Borik, Laura Coale, Tomer Eres, Ben Shaefer, Anthem ensemble • Charles Hausmann, conductor • Julio Sanchez, percussion • Kathryn White, pianist/organist

Discover MDPC with Alf

Want to know more about MDPC? Thinking about membership? This info meeting is about who we are and how we operate, within our walls and out in the world. No commitment required!

Sun, March 25 | 10:45-11:10 AM | Gathering Room

Registration Is Open! The Spoken Word

Experience God's Word in a special way and prepare your heart for the miracle of Easter! Come to read or to listen, strengthen your faith, and enjoy the fellowship experience of this Holy Week tradition at MDPC.

Pastor Alf kicks off reading at 6:00 AM, March 26; we conclude on Maundy Thursday by 4:00 PM.

Sign up to read for a 15-minute increment by visiting spokenword.mdpc.org.

Summer Camps & Classes

Kids camps include a variety of sports, educational, music, and art themed camps. Adults can enjoy strength training, yoga, voice, and piano. There's something for everyone!

For a complete list, more information, or to register, visit reach.mdpc.org or call 713-490-9564.

Kids' Meals Monthly Service Project

In Houston, one in four preschool children goes to bed hungry - you can make sure there is one less empty tummy! Give one hour of your time, bring 4 loaves of bread per sandwich-maker, and make sandwiches for Kids' Meals. That's all it takes to make a difference.

Weds, March 14 | 4:30-6:00 PM | Fellowship Hall

Contact Julie for information: hempeljulie@gmail.com

Make a Legacy Gift

Help insure the future of MDPC by making the church a beneficiary of assets like appreciated securities, real estate, and bequests. Your gift enhances our ministries and missions and provides financial resources for special projects and initiatives.

Contact David Eyre for info (legacygiving@mdpc.org, 281-797-6916) or visit legacygiving.mdpc.org.

Save the Date: Dr. Mark Labberton

MDPC's Speaker Series welcomes Fuller Seminary President, Dr. Mark Labberton, a leader with a deep awareness of the urgency of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thursday, April 26 at MDPC

Details coming soon at speakers.mdpc.org.

Evolving Worship at 9:45

Have you noticed a change in the 9:45 worship service? We've been working to create a more focused time of Worship and Word, followed by a reflective Offering. This aligns perfectly with our Reformed theology, in which the offering is given in response to the message. Additional elements can distract from the spirit of worship, so we have moved some activities to bookend the service, allowing uninterrupted worship time. We ask for patience as we experiment with these ideas.

Journey to the Cross

Walk with us through Holy Week on a guided tour of the stations of the cross. An experience for children and families.

Good Friday, March 30 | 9:30-11:30 AM

Register: journey.mdpc.org

Does the OT Have a Dark Side?

Different guest speakers will tackle Old Testament topics such as Violence, Women's Issues, Rituals & Sacrifices, and Slavery. There will be opportunities for Q&A, and each scholar or professor will bring his/her own flavor to the discussion, so it's sure to be interesting. This is for ALL ages and stages of faith.

11:00 AM-12:15 PM | Amphitheater

Details: darkside.mdpc.org

Next New Member Class

If you are interested in membership, or in becoming a Christian, any of our pastors would love to meet you and discuss your questions! Taught by our Pastors and Elders, the class includes an outreach service project.

Sundays, April 8-29 | 11:00 AM | Parlor

Registration: membership.mdpc.org

Please Pray for MDPC Ministry Partners

This week, we're lifting in prayer these MDPC partners:

Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Family Alliance offers emotional, educational, and practical support to children with cancer and their families. It also provides Medical Center parking vouchers, a major expense that parents of these children face.

candle.org

Casa de Esperanza de los Niños is a loving home for children who are in crisis due to drug abuse, neglect, or the effects of HIV. Casa provides residential care, and coordinates medical and psychological services according to the needs of each child.

casahope.org

MDPC Field Partner Rev. Dan Mc Nerney works with Frontier Fellowship, which seeks to bring the Gospel to unreached people groups all over the world. He has led MDPC members on mission in Egypt and other areas of the Middle East. Dan also leads friendship groups in Chicago, which gather Christians, Muslims, and Jews to dialogue on Kingdom life, reconciliation, and the teachings of Jesus.

newsfromthefrontier.com

WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

2018 Operating Budget	\$ 11,600,000
Expected Income to Date	\$ 1,642,134
Actual Income to Date (3/4/18)	\$ 2,031,834
Current Income Surplus	\$ 389,700
Needed to Meet 2018 Budget	\$ 9,568,166



Loving God. Proclaiming Christ. Living Generously. Engaging All.

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From Greed to Contentment

Exodus 20:17, Luke 12:15-21
Alf Halvorson preaching

As we continue our study, we must repeat again and again that people cannot work their way into God's grace. Instead, we, with the Protestant Reformers, proclaim that "grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone" will naturally lead to lives lived in grateful love and service. In our Christian walk, therefore, we will both acknowledge, confess, and strive against the sins that pervade our hearts and reveal themselves, and attempt to develop virtues that honor God.

In the famous 1980s movie *Wall Street*, the character Gordon Gekko states without reservation that "greed is good." But is Gordon correct? Is greed really good? If so, in what sense? Furthermore, good for whom? For me? For my family? For my company or employer? For the United States of America? For the world? Continued financial and material gain has its strong points. The homes in which we live, the meals we enjoy, and the luxuries we expect every time we flip on a light switch, board an airplane, or keystroke our password enrich our lives. No doubt indoor plumbing and central air conditioning are marvelous gifts in a city like Houston! Yet money and possessions fail to give a person's life any true, lasting meaning. How do we discover true, lasting contentment regardless of circumstances? Our Scriptures provide some insight on this quite important question.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Exodus 20:17

ESV: "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."

NLT: "You must not covet your neighbor's house. You must not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor."

Luke 12:15-21

ESV: And He said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

NLT: Then He said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own." Then He told them a story: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. And I'll sit back and say to myself, "My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!" But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?' "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Introducing: Getting Ready to Discuss the Passage

- Share a time in your adolescence when you just had to have "the thing" that all your friends had because it was simply the coolest thing to have. How did you attempt to get it? What did you say to your parents or other significant adults? To your peers? Describe the success or failure of your attempt, and what life was like afterwards.

Discovering: What the Passages Say

- Compare the two translations above for each Scripture passage (Exodus 20:17 and Luke 12:15-21). What jumps out at you? Similarities? Differences? Overlaps? Things to pursue?
- What does it mean "to covet" something, as mentioned in Exodus 20:17? How are coveting and greed connected?
- Please consider the items listed in Exodus 20:17 that should not be coveted. Why might these specific items be singled out in ancient Israel? What additional items might we add today?
- In Luke 12:15, how does Jesus introduce the parable He is about to share? What warning does Jesus sound? On what basis is the warning given?

- Describe the state of affairs of the rich man in the parable. How are things going for him?
- The rich man's response to his perceived state is to do what, according to Luke 12:18-19? What does the rich man believe will be the logical and natural consequence of his response?
- God interrupts the rich man's scenario of how things will go in his life, according to Luke 12:20-21. What negative term does Jesus use to describe the rich man in Luke 12:20? Why do you think Jesus uses such a strong term? Who else fits the negative term mentioned above, according to Luke 12:21? Why?

Exploring: What the Passages Mean

- Based on both Exodus 20:17 and Luke 12:15-21, what damage does greed create in a person's life? In a community's life? In a church's life?
- Jesus says in Luke 12:15 that "life is not measured by how much you own" (NLT). If how much we own does not provide the best measurement of our lives, then what does? Please provide some examples. How is this measurement expressed both in terms of its quality and its quantity in a person's life?
- Please elaborate upon any possible connections between greed and idolatry, as alluded to in Luke 12:21. What other Biblical references might be found?
- H. L. Mencken is famous for stating that Puritan Christianity (a strong influence upon the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition) should be defined as "the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy." Is God, as shown in Exodus 20:17 and Luke 12:15-21, a Puritan deity in Mencken's sense of the word? Is He against all desires for happier, better, and more abundant living? If He is not, then what desires for "more" and "better" are God-oriented desires? What distinguishes these desires from greedy and covetous desires, and why?
- Some Christians equate our personal wealth and material possessions with God's blessing, and the absence of wealth and possessions as a self-evident sign of our lack of faith. Based on what we have read in Exodus 20:17 and Luke 12:15-21, what are the pitfalls of such belief for us? What impact does this belief have upon:
 - 1) the witness of the gospel in a post-modern and post-Christian age?
 - 2) those experiencing difficult and challenging times?
 - 3) the priorities of the church for ministry locally, nationally, and internationally?

Applying: Wrestling with the Implications of the Passages for Our Lives

- One implication of this study is we all struggle with greed. What about God's grace through Jesus speaks to your greed? How may you become content in Christ?
- Another implication is greed is foolish because it leads you on a downward spiral away from Jesus Christ. As you think on this truth, please consider the following and evaluate honestly your foolishness as reflected by:
 - My conversations with others about what makes a person happy, successful, and worthy
 - My comparisons regarding my life, the lives of my loved ones, and the lives of others
 - My belief about what constitutes "the good life"
 - My schedule of activities
 - My personal goals
 - My generosity to people and to organizations in need
 - Other areas not listed.
- Yet another implication is greed destroys your ability to experience true contentment. Kevin DeYoung states in his work on the Heidelberg Catechism, *The Good News We Almost Forgot*: "Contentment and covetousness are opposites. Covetousness says, 'I need that. I won't be happy without it. It isn't fair. I don't have it. I want that more than anything else.' Contentment says, 'I have what I need. I am happy in the Lord. He does good to all. I want nothing more than I have.' So if you aren't content, you're almost certainly coveting." What are you really coveting but have not admitted until now? How does this secret covetousness hinder your true contentment? How can you deal appropriately and effectively with your hidden greed?
- One more implication is personal possessions and wealth are not the most important characteristics of life, but instead what is most important is a rich relationship with God. How may you cultivate your relationship with God so it can be described as "rich"? What relationships, habits, and practices will help you grow toward this state? How can you work with others, both in this group and in other groups, to develop and to maintain these relationships, habits, and practices?

