

March 4, 2011

## Greed Is The god of the United States

***"Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you"*** (Matthew 20:14)

While in the Navy I [Mike] was sent to graduate school because of a specific assignment at the Pacific Missile Test Center at Point Mugu, California. California Lutheran College, which I attended from 1973-75, had a graduate program right on the base where I also lived, so convenience played a big part in my school selection. (At that time I wasn't following Jesus yet, nor had I ever read the Bible.) In my Ethics course we had to do a major term paper. However, rather than letting me choose my own topic like the rest of the students, my professor assigned me one. "I want you to write your paper on the parable of the vineyard owner in Matthew 20:1-16. Tell me what you learn about God from this parable."

I remember going home that evening and opening an old family Bible that had collected dust under the coffee table. I found Matthew 20 and began to read. The first thing that struck me was, "Why do they put *numbers* in front of the sentences?" (As you can tell, I was totally illiterate about Scripture!) It was around this time that my recently "born again" sister Mary challenged me to read the Bible for the first time. I can look back now and recognize that through this and other events God was chasing me down. He was determined by His mighty loving grace for me to become one of His own!

[In our book, *Restoring the Early Church*, we recounted the story of Dick Shand, a Navy pilot stationed with me at Pt. Mugu. Dick was the first person I'd ever met who was committed to follow Jesus no matter what the cost. Thirty-seven years ago Dick saved the lives of five others, ultimately crashing his helicopter into the sea and perishing. Three days later I flew the memorial wreath out to Dick's crash site. That was the day God reached into my life and began to change me dramatically. Someone I had personally known had been consecrated to Him, someone *authentic* in His walk in Christ. My first role model in following Jesus had laid down his life to save others.]

As I worked on the Ethics paper going through the Bible using a concordance, I became aware of how deeply concerned our Father in heaven is with the physical needs of those He has created. No matter how many hours each man put in on the job, the Vineyard owner paid everyone a day's wage. He regarded the workers more from the vantage of their need than from his desire for profit. That motive permeates God's Word, for He is the ultimate Source of all provision. As a gracious Father, He took care of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:16), the Israelites in the desert (Deuteronomy 8:3), the prophet Elijah hiding in a cave (1Kings 19:2-9), and a host of other examples. But in the Bible I also saw how our God *hates greed*. Hates it with a passion!

Father's great heart as Provider has a twofold purpose. Not only does He want people

to perceive their desperate need for Him and trust Him for provision. He also intends that through His faithful example, they would then readily meet the needs of others. This is an authentic indication that they belonged to Him—out of love for Him they would love others as themselves (Leviticus 19:18). Such concern that *extends beyond self* permeates His commands, which, as a wise sage once said, were simply commentary on what loving God and others is all about.

*"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall **leave them for the poor and the stranger**: I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19:9,10).*

*"**Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart**; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to **be open handed** toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land" (Deuteronomy 15:10,11).*

Our Lord isn't looking for you to parcel out a little to others so that you'll feel good about yourself and still have plenty for personal indulgence. The help you measure out to others will be poured out to you as a blessing from all your labor (Luke 6:38). From a Hebraic standpoint, to *do what is right* constitutes your true worship of God as His child (1John 2:29,3:10). To *love God* is to love your fellow man in a way that meets his needs. Pious words alone have no effect if unaccompanied by help. (See James 2:14-17.) Jesus warns us to keep everything we have in open hands. We are *stewards*, not owners, of what He's given us here on earth — vessels through whom He pours out His blessings.

*"'The eye is the lamp of the body.' So if you have a '**good eye**' [if you are generous] your whole body will be full of light; but if you have an '**evil eye**' [if you are stingy] your whole body will be full of darkness. If, then, the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22,23). It really is a *heart* issue; is yours bountiful or tightfisted?*

**Greed is the god of the United States**  
**"A stingy man is eager to get rich**  
**and is unaware that poverty awaits him"**  
(Proverbs 28:22)

The Apostle Paul reminded Christ followers in Colossae to keep focused on things above, things that matter to our Father. Why did they need this reminder? Because, as with people in this country today, hunger for earthly things was a constant temptation to give way to sin. Paul defines greed as *idolatry* (See Colossians 3:1-5). Greed is demonic at its core. It is Satan's seduction to fan intense and selfish desire, especially for wealth and power. A heart overcome by greed is fixated on self-fulfillment that's

gained through personal effort and achievement. Having no need for God in his life, the greedy person blinds himself (or herself) to the real needs of others.

When you study the beginnings of this nation, relatively few were motivated by a desire for religious freedom. On the contrary, the majority were driven by greed — an urgent pursuit of self-gain that ultimately cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Native Americans. Financial institutions became bastions of greed for those at the top. Now, with the concurrent demise of personally owned businesses and the rise of mega-corporations, the idol Greed has become THE god of this nation. Employee interests have fallen by the wayside as investors pressure corporate boards toward greater profits. If the Vineyard owner had been driven by that mindset, many of his workers would have starved!

Why has today's two-party political system predominated? Because of greed. The Republicans represent the agenda of the greedy rich despite their veneer of alignment with conservative values. Historically, interwoven with the big-business interests of the Republican Party has been its connection with the Masons as power brokers of influence. [For more on the evil impact of Freemasonry in this country, see Lifebyte 59: *Will You Be Among Those Our Lord Chastises?*]

The Democrats, while historically focused on materials needs of society, have done nothing to support the *dignity* of those in need. Impersonal and irresponsible welfare programs have made the needy ever more dependent on handouts, reaping a generational pattern of entitlement dependence. Biblical charity, on the other hand, is dignity-driven; help is given with the purpose to return (or bring) the individual to self-provision. The type of help given by the Democrats comes with a tremendous cost — excessive spending in all areas has reaped unimaginable debt for the next generations. Each child born today is saddled with close to \$50,000 of government debt that must be paid. Simply by being born in the United States the debt they owe is a greed-driven curse on this nation. This situation hasn't gone unnoticed by our God — and it's only going to get worse unless there's widescale repentance!

One of the most identifiable phrases in the United States Declaration of Independence is the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Considered by some as part of the most well-crafted, influential sentences in the history of the English language, these three aspects are listed among the "unalienable rights" of humanity.

However, a life aimed at the *pursuit of personal happiness* is not a biblical goal! And, looking to achieve fullness of life and liberty through self-effort does away with our need for God. Remember, most of the Founding Fathers were "**deists**" — a theology in which God created everything but left it up to mankind to run it as we see fit. He's merely a "benign overseer", uninvolved in the affairs of men. Sadly, many Christians we've met live like deists — giving God intellectual assent that He exists but unconcerned about His will or His commands and His purposes.

What is the motive of *your heart* as you labor on behalf of your family? Is it to meet your

needs and help others as His Spirit directs, or to sustain a lifestyle that's personally gratifying but wasteful and self-indulgent? The current housing foreclosure crisis points up the tragedy of living beyond your means, presupposing that your financial status quo will continue. But using up your resources just to satisfy yourself is *stingy and uncaring*—definitely unlike the character of Christ!

***"Those who know Your name will trust in You,  
for You, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek You"***  
(Psalms 9:10)

When the **Dark Days of Chastisement** come on this nation, we hope that the hearts of Christians in particular will align with Father's purposes. Perhaps then business owners will see themselves as stewards of God's resources to benefit both themselves and their workers. Perhaps greed will cease dominating the business climate among those who come (or return) to Jesus as Lord of their whole life. Perhaps chastisement will produce a **republic form of government** without the two parties constantly fighting each other over their individual states' interests. (Keep in mind that historically, a *democracy* will over time devolve to an antagonistic society in which each person indulges their own sin nature regardless of the impact on others.) In a republic, older and wiser men who truly represent the needs of ALL the people govern. You may think this is naive. But, you haven't seen how God blesses a people when they live according to His ways: "*He provides food for those who fear Him; He remembers His covenant forever*" (Psalms 111:5).

For years we've been graced with the fruit of our Father's blessing by conducting our ministry according to His revealed will. How faithful He's been! He has made sure that we don't beg for money, but instead trust the Holy Spirit to prompt those He wants to be part of our work. We established our ministry practices on biblical *halakhahs*, that is applications, over 30 years ago based on these scriptures: "*Freely you have received, freely give*" (Matthew 10:8); "*Unlike so many, we do not peddle the Word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God*" (2Corinthians 2:17; see also 1Timothy 5:18).

We've presented this truth before, and it's worth repeating:

Following Jesus entails obedience-based trust that is grounded in a love relationship much like that between Abraham and God. **Obedience-based** trust means that we are concerned with seeking our Father's will and doing it no matter what the cost. And, as His Word attests, with obedience come His guidance, His provision, and His power to complete that will!

**Outcome-based** religious practice, on the other hand, relies on human rationale rather than obedient trust. That's the world's way of doing things. People governed by that framework seek a particular, desired result regardless of whether it is our Father's will for them.

We leave you with this passage which captures the reality of your life as our Father would like you to understand yourself in these dark and greedy times:

*"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, **set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory**" (Colossians 3:1-4).*

Looking forward to seeing you at the Banquet,  
**Mike & Sue**