everyone in the crowd:
care which of them got more. What he cared about was what was going on in their hearts. He used the opportunity to address
bubble burst and unemployment was 50% lower, the general mindset was spend, spend, spend. Not just all of your money,
even
because greed never gives what it promises, and because Jesus wants us to have what he gives us.

A few years ago, a lot of Americans started looking at money differently. Before the stock market sunk and the housing
bubble burst and unemployment was 50% lower, the general mindset was spend, spend, spend. Not just all of your money,
even more than all your money—after all, you can always pay it back in 36 months, interest free. People were spending their
way to happiness. Then a few things changed. Spending our way to happiness didn’t turn out so well. Now as a nation we
seem to be taking a turn toward saving our way to security. How many commercials for gold have you heard this week? One
of its biggest selling points is that it’s never been worth zero.

Dear brothers and sisters,

A man came to Jesus. Apparently his parents had just died and he and his brother were fighting over who should get what.
What was it that made him so foolish? It wasn’t so much what he did as how he thought. He was greedy. And, as Jesus said, there
are all kinds of greed. It wasn’t that he was a saver versus a spender. It was that he thought his life was safe if he saved up
enough stuff. The more I have, the better my life. God said, That’s just dumb!

Greed is a sin that lives in each of us. Whether you’re a reckless spender or a self-centered saver, all of us have a problem
with greed. It comes so naturally to us that we wouldn’t even recognize it if God didn’t point it out. Its desires make so much
sense to us that we wouldn’t even realize it’s a sin if God didn’t warn us. That’s why Jesus considered it important enough to
say to the whole crowd, because it’s a threat to everyone: Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. He warns us that
because greed never gives what it promises, and because Jesus wants us to have what he gives us.

Once I get it I’ll be happy. And the cycle goes on and on and never
ends, chasing after the wind. Or maybe it takes a different form—more like the man who wanted bigger barns to store his
bumper crop. You fixate on decreasing the mortgage and increasing the savings. Once I increase my bottom line enough I’ll be secure.

I know what it’s like and you do too. You fixate on something you don’t have: the home improvement, the new toy, the
vacation. Once I get it I’ll be happy. And you do get it and it feels almost as good as you imagined. But, like a drug, the happiness
soon wears off and you start to fixate on the next thing: Once I get that I’ll be happy. And the cycle goes on and on and never
ends, chasing after the wind. Or maybe it takes a different form—more like the man who wanted bigger barns to store his
bumper crop. You fixate on decreasing the mortgage and increasing the savings. Once I increase my bottom line enough I’ll be secure.

I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.” But
whether you reach your goal or not, you find that it too is chasing after the wind. It fails to give the security it promises. We
all know that – but it doesn’t really stop us.
There’s a saying that whoever dies with the most toys wins. Not true. The one who dies with the most toys finishes in the same place as the one who dies with no toys. And the same goes for whoever dies with the most savings. Hearses don’t have trailer hitches. You can’t take it with you. That’s so obvious—you don’t even need the Bible to figure that one out—but still the man who had just witnessed his parents die and leave all of their stuff behind was still drooling over all their stuff, as if he would never have to die and leave it behind too. It’s so obvious, but still the farmer with the bumper crop foolishly assumed that he would be able to take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry for many years, without giving a single thought to the possibility that he might not live to see even one more day.

You can store up things for yourself completely convinced that your happiness and your security and your life depend on it. But the truth is that trying to spend your way to happiness or to save your way to security or to find your life in the abundance of your possessions is as worthwhile as chasing wind. Greed always fails to give what it promises. And Jesus calls us to stop expecting greed to give us something it never will…

…because he has something even better to give us. Greed and faith are like oil and water. If you’re looking to find happiness and safety and meaning in your stuff, you are failing to find it in God. Imagine pulling over your car to take in a beautiful mountain vista, only for an old pick-up full of junk to drive past and block your view, and then as it drives on you keep staring at the pick-up and forget all about the mountains—even though they’re better! That’s what our greed does to God’s promises. It doesn’t change his promises; it takes our eyes off them—it takes our faith from them. That’s why Jesus says, Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed! It’s deadly. Its victims wind up gaining nothing and losing everything. Isn’t that what happened to the farmer in the parable? Isn’t that what Jesus predicted for those who go down the same path? This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.

When you write your check for your Sunday offering to God and your greed rears its ugly head under its seductive mask: Think of what else you could buy! Think of how much you could save! A little less! A little less! Whenever your greed tries to be the pick-up full of junk that blocks the view between you and God’s promises and tries to be the dividing wall between your heart and God’s will, well, then remember Jesus’ warning and take it to heart. But not only that, shift your eyes back to God’s promises and take them to heart.

God gives you what greed never can. Or let’s put it another way. If you had to choose, would you rather have a beautiful home that took so much time and money to maintain that you didn’t have much time for anything else, or a small house with a family that was bound together in love and forgiveness because of the time they spent in God’s Word? When the end of this life comes, would you rather close your eyes confident that you had plenty of money left that you’ll never use, or confident that your time here glorified the Savior you’re about to meet? Would you rather have treasures made of money and drywall and carburetors, treasures of faith and love and souls touched by God’s grace? God gives us greater treasures than greed ever could. He hasn’t withheld a single thing. All that you need for your life in heaven and all that you need for your life on earth. He hasn’t withheld a single thing, not even his own Son, not even his own life. You don’t have a single sin that he didn’t wash away with his blood. You don’t have a single moment of God’s wrath in hell or a single ounce of his anger on earth that he hasn’t already suffered in your place. He hasn’t withheld a single thing. He’s given you all that you’ve needed both physically and spiritually to bring you this far down the road to heaven—even when you were convinced it would never be enough. He promises to continue to give you all that you need to bring you the rest of the way—even if you still have doubts that it will never be enough. Whether it’s food or shelter or clothing or forgiveness or love or strength or patience, God isn’t going to let you down. There’s no need to find your security elsewhere. There’s no reason to give him less than your all. There’s no need to doubt. That’s what we fail to see when greed leads us to look for life in the abundance of our possessions. That’s what God opens up our eyes to see when we repent and go back to his promises: He hasn’t withheld a single thing and he won’t.

So…to spend or to save? There are plenty of God-pleasing times for both. Not, however, with the thought that you can provide for yourself better than God can; not with the thought that you just have to be selfish and greedy in order to have enough; not with the mindset that your life consists in the abundance of your possessions. It’s not your stuff that gives meaning to your life. It’s your life in Jesus that gives meaning to your stuff. When you see your life where it really is, in your Savior God, then you will regard and use your possessions in the way that brings him glory, until he takes you away from it all to something even better in heaven. God will not forsake those who put their trust in him. Only in him will you find happiness and security and life. Amen.