



“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 belongs to your neighbor.”
Exodus 20:17

THE DEEP LONGING

last in a series

THE LATE INDUSTRIALIST AND OIL MAGNATE, John D. Rockefeller, was once asked how much money it takes to make a man happy, to which he gave the immortal reply, “Just a little more.”

The longing for things belonging to others is not the exclusive purview of the unsaved, unrepentant, greed-consumed wealthy. Some believers have said they wish to follow Christ to the full extent of His poverty and homelessness. They have taken to heart Jesus’ injunction against idolizing wealth.

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on.* Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

Matthew 6:24-25

To that end they swear a life of poverty—or at least one of modest income. As a result they go without many of the glittering and expensive niceties that their presumed unregenerate neighbors enjoy. But searching for peace within holy simplicity, they find instead only consuming jealousy, and resentment toward those they consider less pious yet more comfortable than themselves.

By idolizing penury they impoverish, instead, their own spirit.

God still pays more attention to the heart, and in this final commandment He emphasizes again the heart condition. In civil law no offense has been committed where no action has yet taken place. There is no crime in *thinking* about robbing a bank; the crime is only committed when the bank has been robbed.

But God says that in His Kingdom that's not good enough. Thoughts matter, intentions matter. The longing alone—the desire for those things in the possession of others—is sufficiently wrong.

God doesn't really care how much money we have in the bank. He cares, instead, about what has first place in our heart. And if we are longing for something other than Him—whether gained through hard work or thievery—then He has been dethroned in our life.

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

Colossians 3:1-2

Covetousness is idolatry, because it replaces our longing for God with a longing for something or someone other than Him.



But none honors God like the thirst of desire,
Nor possesses the heart so completely with Him;
For it burns the world out with the swift ease of fire,
And fills life with good works till it runs o'er the brim.

Then pray for desire, for love's wistfullest yearning,
For the beautiful pining of holy desire;
Yes, pray for a soul that is ceaselessly burning
With the soft fragrant flames of this thrice happy fire.

For the heart only dwells, truly dwells with its treasure,
And the languor of love captive hearts can unfetter;
And they who love God cannot love Him by measure,
For their love is but hunger to love Him still better.

Frederick William Faber

