

Title: “8th Word: Kleptomania & God’s Provision” Series: “10 Words: God’s Path to Freedom” June 18, 2017 Pastor Dave Sattler Texts: Exodus 20:15; Leviticus 25:23; Deuteronomy 15:1-6; Isaiah 3:14-15; Matthew 6:11 & 7:7; Philippians 4:19; 1 Timothy 6:17. Sources: NIV Life Application Bible. Commentaries: Peter Enns & J.A. Motyer. Books: Darrell Johnson, Chapter: “Kleptomania: The Disease of Un-Faith” & Ronald Wallace, “The Ten Commandments: A Study of Ethical Freedom.” Sermons & Bible Studies: Mark Peters & Tom Kanwischer. Wikipedia: Stephane Breitwieser. Emails: Melanie Chappell. Website: waitbutwhy.com

Introduction & Review:

- Good morning, everyone. I’m Dave Sattler, one of the pastors here at NSAC.
- <Slide> ILL - His first heist came in March 1995 during a visit to a castle in Germany.
- Entranced by a small painting, he worked out the nails holding the painting in its frame and slipped it under his jacket. In the ensuing years, Frenchman, [Stay-fan Breet-visor] Stephane Breitwieser would use similar methods for at least 170 notorious art thefts.
- He’d visit regional museums, where security was lax, and his girlfriend would serve as his lookout as he cut the paintings from their frames, and made off with them.
- If you look him up, you can read how Breitwieser finally got caught — there’s even a dog involved! And, the bizarre story of how his mother shredded many stolen paintings he’d been hiding in her house and jammed their remains down her garbage disposal!
- Although he’d amassed a large collection of art — worth an estimated \$2 billion CDN — strangely, Breitwieser never attempted to sell any of it. Instead, he said he just enjoyed thinking about how he was “the wealthiest man in Europe.”
- <Slide> And so we come to the 10 Commandments. What do we do with them?
- Right them off as ancient, out-dated — no longer applicable? Or, quickly ‘check-list’ them ... ‘I didn’t lie, steal, or murder anyone this week, so I’m good.’
- Two weeks back, Pastor Mark said, Q: “These 10 words are not a way to secure our relationship with God, but a way on in our relationship with Him.” - Sermon, MP, 6/4/2017.
- The commandments were originally handed down to a people already redeemed by God from slavery in Egypt.
- They were given not just to individuals but to an entire community.
- And, the people of God are not meant to blend in, but to stand out. To be different.
- Following these commands is not merely about producing ‘nice Christians’ or ‘good upstanding citizens’, but agents of world change, people who’ll be a ‘light to the nations’ — image-bearers of the God of the Universe.
- The 10 words confront many aspects of our common life together.
- Family, rest, sex, marriage ... Now, with the 8th word, God seeks obedience in our economic life. In Exodus 20:15, God delves into — could be said He even meddles with — the processes by which we acquire property, amass possessions, & conduct our business.
- This too is how we “love our neighbour” — and calls for a new way of living — one that is countercultural — different from virtually everybody else all around us.
- <Slide> To take what is not yours threatens the whole community. More important, to steal is to take matters into our own hands; and this trumps our ability to trust an entirely good God Who loves to provide for our needs, in His time and in His way.
- When it comes to ‘stealing’ there are some fairly obvious ‘no-no’s’: blatantly making off with another person’s ox, donkey, or sheep is a clear breach of God’s 8th Commandment.

- However, kleptomania (the irresistible impulse to ‘snatch secretly’) has far more subtle roots in the human heart. For 21st Century Christ-followers, the impact of this 8th Word runs deep ... even to things like people’s intellectual property, robbing another’s dignity, accumulating wealth.
- And there’s a barrage of questions to wrestle with today in the sermon: How will I fill out my tax return? What time will I clock out of work? How will I source-credit this talk when I want everything to sound like my brilliant idea? Where will I buy my \$4.68 latte? How do I approach the North Shore housing market? How much should I spend on vacation and where will we go? Who should I vote for? Where should I download my music & movies? How should I think about welfare and disability and people on income assistance? Is a stockpile of personal wealth good - for me, for everyone? Should I keep accepting that benefit cheque even though I no longer qualify? How will I think about population density and the gentrification of neighbourhoods & cities? And most poignantly, what do I get to keep for myself (what is mine) and what must I give away?
- Word #8 packs a mean punch. “You shall not steal.” Demands integrity in how we conduct all of our affairs — business, pleasure, home, private. PRAY: ‘Lord, move me out of the way. Come, speak to us by Your Spirit. We’re hungry to hear from You.’

Sermon Outline:

1. <Slide> It’s okay to need stuff, but ... (Matthew 6:11; 7:7)

- Throughout history, there have always been people who’ve insisted that to be Christian is to deny all earthly possessions and suppress desire for any thing apart from God Himself.
- But, “Give us today our daily bread” is the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer. (Mt 6:11)
- And, Jesus says, Q: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find.” (Mt 7:7)
- While we are not to solely rely on earthly things, **it is okay to need stuff.**
- To need stuff is part of what it means to be human. Reality is, our personal welfare is often tied intimately to our socio-economic circumstances — real or perceived. How much we have — or how much we think we have, or deserve, or wish we had — often dictates our sense of personal well-being. And consumes our life-practices.
- ILL - Shortly after I started my job at NSAC, we purchased our one and only ...
 - Brand-new car ... a 1997 GMC Safari Van! **<Slide>**
 - [Around that time, one of our kids told their Sunday School teacher we had just bought a new “Ferrari!”] Close!
 - I was very proud of my new van — powerful engine, smelled nice, flashy, made me look good ... then, a few months in, I backed it into a short street sign [and kept on backing it in] and scratched it from driver’s side door clear on through the rear quarter panel. With my wife’s family watching it all happen.
 - My baby didn’t look so pretty anymore! I was devastated. And it cost me.
- Problems arise when stuff, or the pursuit of stuff comes to mean too much to us.

2. <Slide> Stealing is not just a poor person’s sin. (Isaiah 3:14-15)

- I admit I’ve been long guilty of thinking wrongly about this 8th word: believing **stealing is primarily a poor person’s sin.**
- ILL - Imagine my horror, when, years ago shopping with my mother at ...
 - Shopper’s Drug Mart, I was grabbed roughly by an undercover security guard,

- o Hauled into an office, and accused of stealing. Said he saw me put something in my coat pocket. I hadn't. And retorted rudely, Q: 'Search me, pal!'
- o After a thorough investigation, no evidence was found, so he let me go.
- o [We now affectionately call it 'Shoplifter's Drug Mart!'] And, with a mix of embarrassed rage and self-righteous teenage pomp, I smugly walked away from that scene, ticking the box beside the 8th Commandment, 'I'm no thief.'
- Recently the Lord's been convicting me big time on this: perhaps I am actually more of a thief than I give myself credit for! Do you know that poor beggars, dirty pan-handlers, & petty thieves are only called out a few times in the Scriptures?
- <Slide> When page after page of judgment comes down in the Bible on rich people who take away the rights of the poor, prey on widows & orphans, & horde possessions?
- Cf. Isaiah 3:14-15 offers scathing commentary, Q: "The Lord enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: 'It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by cursing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?'" declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty."
- This is the real backdrop for the command, "You shall not steal." Such a destructive, grinding, rich-poor-divided economic life was not to be the way of the people of God.

3. Wealth is to meant be shared. (Deuteronomy 15:1-6)

- <Slide> ILL - Credit Suisse came out with a sobering report in 2014 ...
 - o Revealing that the bottom half of humanity — about 3.5 billion people — possesses less than 1% of the world's total wealth.
 - o And, starting from the top, it only takes the combined wealth of the world's richest 85 people to equal the wealth of the bottom 3.5 billion.
 - o The study goes on to break down the total wealth of the entire world's population — \$241 trillion USD — into representative gold cubes, and say,
 - ❓ Q: "If all the world wealth were divided EVENLY, everyone would have \$51,600 — or, gold the size of a golf ball."
 - ❓ But, in actual fact, the median human on Earth has only about \$4,000 to their name — or, gold the size of a sugar cube. And, this "average" person [virtually everyone in this room today] is richer than half of all the humans on Earth. - from waitbutwhy.com
- There's an old adage, Q: 'Water always flows downwards, but money tends to flow upwards to those who already have it.' This was Israel's sin.
- Because, in God's economy, **wealth is meant to be shared**, He gave specific instructions for a new and different way of living.
- <Slide> Cf. Deuteronomy 15:1-6, "At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel any loan they have made to a fellow Israelite. They shall not require payment from anyone among their own people, because the Lord's time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your fellow Israelite owes you. However, there need be no poor people among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the Lord your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. For the Lord your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you."

- In the Levitical laws, Israel was also to practice what they called a “Year of Jubilee” every 50 years when all land was to be returned to its original owner (Lev 25:23).
- Now I’m not suggesting we adopt this verbatim, but there are principles here to consider.
- #1) Why did God say there need not be any poor among them? In the Promised Land, God would bless them with enough resources to go around — to sustain the entire community. If they shared it right.
- #2) No possessions or debts were permanent in the economic system God prescribed. The motivation for lending money or land was not for profit, but to help one’s neighbour. Why? So the people would remain mindful of who the real owner was — God.
- And, the chasm between rich and poor would be kept from widening too far.
- <Slide> Biblical scholar, Ronald Wallace suggests God is, in effect, saying this, Q: “I have not redeemed your brother in order that he might lie starving and exposed under your feet. Nor have I been especially generous to you, in order to put power in your hands to afflict him. Give to your brother what he needs for his welfare out of what you have, for what you have is mine, and to withhold your hand from him is to steal from me!” - p 156.
- This is God’s way of rooting out the seductive power of greed which always destroys relationships and breaks down social cohesion.
- If we only think about sustaining our way of life and never consider others less fortunate — near and far — we steal, we are ‘kleptomaniacs’, and turn our backs on the precious value of interdependence to which God has called us.
- ILL - I was walking Lonsdale one day several years back ...
 - When I bumped into 2 guys from Coffee Time — our Wednesday afternoon Ministry for people battling addiction, mental health, & homelessness.
 - Sitting on the sidewalk up against one of the buildings, Jimmy shouted,
 - ☒ Q: ‘Pastor Dave, look what we got with your money!’
 - <Slide> I looked down and the two of them were gorging on a whole BBQ chicken they’d bought with the food cards they’d just received at Coffee Time.
 - [I think they even offered me a bite! I politely declined.]
 - Coming to fiscal yearend in 2 weeks, we have given nearly \$27,000 worth of food cards away through Coffee Time this year to people in our community who are battling poverty. Thanks to your generous gifts to our Care Fund, people who can’t afford to shop like most of us do — people like Jimmy — can walk into a grocery store and buy something good to eat.
- Generosity is one of the hallmarks of NSAC. And it ought to be. As Christians, we must advocate for a free-er flow and distribution of wealth in our cities. Let us be urging politicians and businesses and decision-makers not to feed the rich or extort the poor, but to open up access to all of our community resources so everyone can enjoy the wealth.

4. <Slide> Trust God to provide. (Philippians 4:19; 1 Timothy 6:17)

- Problem is — at least in Christian circles in the West — our many possessions easily become idols that trick us into thinking we don’t need God.
- It’s why the apostle Paul urged young Pastor Timothy, Q: “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” - 1 Timothy 6:17

- Rev Darrell Johnson contends God's whole intent behind the Law and the 10 Commandments is this: to show us we can't do it. To bring us to the end of ourselves. And reveal we are all sinners in need of a Saviour. - p 64
- Truth is: there's absolutely no way I can stop stealing, apart from a work of God's Spirit in me. For, left to my own devices, I always have eyes for what's not mine to have.
- If I'm poor, and desperately trying to meet my basic needs for food or shelter by manipulating the system or craftily ripping people off — this is stealing. And it is wrong.
- So too, if I'm rich and desperately longing to stay wealthy & successful by purposely taking advantage of people and systems — this too is stealing. And it is wrong.
- Both fundamentally do **not trust God to provide**.
- Which is so difficult. Yet so vital for us to embrace.
- ILL - God has been driving this point home again in my heart lately ...
 - As many of you know, we were given notice 4 months ago that the house we'd been renting for 9 years had been sold and we would need to move.
 - Looking at the local rental housing market for a big family of 6 like ours was a daunting task. We were staring at a \$500/month rent increase just for the top floor of an old house. My heart sank. Feelings of failure as husband and father began to envelop me, 'I haven't provided for my family.'
 - Felt mad at myself. Mad at the economy. Mad at God. Where was He?!
 - You see, I long to be self-sufficient — for people to think I've got it all together.
 - At very least I want to be not so needy.
 - **<Slide>** God led us to a house, a very old one in Lynn Valley just 900m down the street. But affordable. And it stank ... like cigarette smoke, mold from a recent grow-op, and cat urine mixed with a feint smell of leaky plumbing. Many of the electrical sockets and fixtures didn't work or were unsafe. There was even dirty old shag carpet in one of the bathrooms!
 - It needed a ton of work to make it liveable. And I am not exactly 'handy.'
 - And in one of my weakest life-moments, God provided big time.
 - People from church, soccer, our home group, Coffee Time — over 60 different friends — sometimes 10 or 15 at a time. And, over a 3-week period they fixed up our house using their skills and gifts — mostly for free. And we moved in 2 months ago yesterday. And now it even feels like home. God provided.
- **<Slide>** Philippians 4:19 says, Q: "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."
- The basic root of stealing — in all its subtle and blatant forms — remains the same: **not trusting in God's provision**.
- Lack of faith. Cynicism that God doesn't see my needs. Or, isn't good enough to meet them. And this fear that 'I'll be without' fuels our propensity to take what's not ours.
- ILL - Recently I received an email from a congregant.
 - Went like this, Q: "Not being able to work has been a huge loss but I keep hanging on to what I believe. The other day I was reminded just how much God provides. I was walking down [the street] & it was slightly raining and it came right away to my mind, 'You see, God even feeds the trees and plants, why would you even doubt for a minute that He's not going to provide for you?' When that realization hit me it was like a light went on in my head, it was my 'God a-ha moment.' Having that feeling when you can lean back and say 'Ok

it's all on you God' is just so freeing. So thank you for reminding me that God is taking care of me.” - Emails, MC, 6/2/2017 and 6/15/2017.

- Here's the whole point of the 8th Word:
 - God is wholeheartedly committed to taking care of His people — taking care of you (x4).
- The One who gave Himself freely at the cross is also good to meet my needs and yours.
- In Him we can confidently put our trust to provide. In His way and in His time.
- God's provision is always good. And, coming to that place where we have no other plan but to count on Him will always be freeing. And, so good for us. Amen.