

Sermon: 7 Deadly Sins: Sloth (4/7)

Date: Sunday March 12, 2023 (Cornerstone Christian Community Church)

Speaker: Kevin White

Series: Taming the Monster Within

Our theme for the year is “Making Space for Joy and Flourishing” It’s an amazing theme and I’m so excited about it.

At the same time, it’s been a rough few years for many people including myself - for some we’re going through something right now - which makes experiencing joy complicated.

It’s not easy. There are all kinds of forces around us that threaten this journey that we are on. This journey of joy and flourishing. If we are even more honest, sometimes we are our own worst enemies. Sometimes we don’t know what we should be doing, so we don’t do it. Sometimes we do know what to do, but we still don’t do it. Why? Because there is an enemy around us and even within us at times. A monster.

Good morning! My name is Kevin White and I am your friendly neighbour hood youth pastor here at Cornerstone. We’re right in the middle of a series called, “Taming the Monster Within.” It’s a series based on the 7 deadly sins. This list was created hundreds of years ago by Christian thinkers who considered these particular sins dangerous because they were “source sins” – meaning they tend to give birth to other sins of all kinds.

The 7 sins are Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Greed, Gluttony and Lust.

We’ve already dealt with pride, envy and anger. Pastors Steve, Jeremy and Andrew preached some powerful sermons on these topics so if you haven’t had the chance, visit our website where you can listen to them, read them or check out the services on YouTube

Today, we are going to talk about sloth

We are going to talk about:

- a. Misunderstanding of sloth – what we think it is
- b. What it actually is (Matthew 25:14-30)
- c. What to do about it

But first, a story

Talk about my parents house - I asked her if she had any stories about me being lazy - she said I don’t do anything - like she’s still waiting for me not to be lazy!

She said I had so much stuff to do outside of the home I did nothing in the home

Misunderstanding of sloth

Sloth is not even a word we really use anymore. The dictionary definition is basically “a habitual

tendency to lack of effort.” So being lazy. When you think about it like this, it doesn’t really seem that bad. In our society, people tend to be too busy. So kicking back once in a while and watching Netflix on the couch with some chips doesn’t seem as bad as other deadly sins such as envy, lust, pride etc. Don’t most of the problems we have in this world come from people who are too busy?

I was watching Netflix (I guess I’m lazy), and I saw a documentary and part of it was talking about how in Japan, they have a term – Karoshi – that means working yourself to death. People are literally working so hard and in such stressful environments, that they are dying as a direct result of it.

So, surely being a little lazy isn’t that bad is it?

You see, in our society, we equate sloth with laziness and inactivity, but is that really what sloth is?

If you look back in history, sloth was opposed to the Christian virtue of diligence. Diligence was when you had a powerful sense of responsibility and dedication to hard work. The word diligence is actually Latin in origin and it comes from a word which means, “To love.” A good example of this for me is one of my youth leaders - Grace - we call her amazing Grace. 1st of all she’s been serving with me for all 15 years that I’ve been at Cornerstone - so that’s amazing. But there’s so many things that she does behind the scenes. She’s the one that organized the graffiti wall in the youth lounge.

When Covid hit and we stopped doing snacks she started baking treats and individually wrapping them for the youth. She meets up with the youth for hot chocolate individually... so much more. When I think of Grace I think of someone who loves the youth and so works hard and is dedicated to them and the ministry of Cornerstone. That’s diligence. She’s also reminding me about making space for youth who are more introverted. Or who haven’t been around in a while... Always challenging us to think of creative ways to include everyone.

The opposite of that is a love that’s lazy. There is a Greek word (acardia) which literally means, “lack of care.” Sloth is a sin not just because it makes us lazy, but because of the kind of love that lies behind that laziness – “Lazy love.” Think about sloth as lazy love. When you know you could do more, you should do more - but you just don’t. But why would love be lazy?

Lazy love stems from a wrong view.. That’s a critical point for today’s message. I’ll explain why as we open the Bible and see how a wrong view of God leads to lazy love - and why that’s a monster we need to tame.

What it actually is (Matthew 25:14-30) – The parable of the Talents

Just some background – this passage is coming towards the end of what is called the Olivet Discourse. Jesus gives a bunch of parables to help his disciples prepare because he is leaving soon. He wants to teach them how to act until his return. These parables focus on a suddenness – so the disciples must be prepared. Prepared by being responsible, ready, productive and accountable. We are only looking at one of these today. So just keep in mind that this is not the whole picture, but I do feel it is the word

that the Lord would have for us today.

Vs. 14-15

¹⁴ “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,^[a] each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.

The older NIV version talks about “talents instead of bags of gold.” In fact, this passage is referring to money, but our English word talent – like talented – comes from this very passage.

5 talents = 1.25 million dollars

2 talents = 500 thousand dollars

1 talent = 250 thousand dollars

Master is crazy rich and extremely generous.

If I was the 1 talent guy, I would feel awesome – until I found out that another person got 500 000 thousand and another person got 1.25 million.

Yesterday, I had nothing. Then today, I got an extremely generous gift from the master. He entrusted me with all this responsibility. I’m no longer the same. My identity has changed. I’m awesome! I matter.

But then instead of thinking about that, I start thinking about why I got the least amount? And then I hear that each person was given according to their ability? Am I as important as the other person? Do I really matter? Instead of saying, “Why did I get all this talent?” I start saying, “Why did I only get this talent?” Comparison - remember the sermon on envy from a couple of weeks ago?

What changed?

The gift was still a generous gift

The master is still a generous master

But now all of a sudden the servant changes. He had the opportunity to see the master for who he really was from the beginning: A generous master who gives generous gifts and turns an ordinary person into someone special – someone extraordinary with awesome potential.

Don’t we do that sometimes?

Don’t we do that all the time? Compare ourselves to others – who seem to be more gorgeous, or smart, or rich, or spiritual or in a better place in life? If we’re not straight A students, we feel bad next to our friends who are straight A’s – some without trying. If we don’t have a job, or a “career” – we compare ourselves to those who seem to have a great job. If we don’t have a significant other, we look at those who are married. If we are married, we look at those who have kids. If we have kids, we look at those who have well behaved, smart kids who have career jobs – and the cycle continues. If we are not careful, we can start to develop a wrong view of God.

Actually, if we are not careful, we WILL develop a wrong view of God.

This “one talent” guy... something happens to him. His relationship with the master changes.

I was reading a book by Dan Allender -- “To be Told” -- and it talks about how this parable sounds like God - divides talents in seemingly random ways with no explanation. He departs with no announcement on when he’ll return.

Be honest - doesn’t God seem absent in our lives sometimes? When we look around, don’t we seem to see that talents are divided unequally in ways we can’t understand?

If we’re not careful, we will develop a wrong view of God. **Lazy love stems from a wrong view of God.**

This is where the deadly sin of sloth comes in

Matthew 15:16-18

¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went **at once** and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ **But** the man who had received one bag **went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.**

What was it about the other two that made them go **at once** and put their money, their talent to work, while the other dug a hole in the ground and hid their money, their talent?

What did the servant with the one talent do all that time that the master was away? His talent was buried, so he wasn’t using it.

The way the text is written, the meaning suggests that the ones with the two and five talents worked with their talents. So they got this generous gift from the master and then they worked with that generous gift, they worked with that talent, and together – it increased. It’s important to note that the first two workers worked OUT OF their right view of the master. It’s not like they worked FOR a reward.

They worked from a place of realizing how blessed they were, their new identity and a gratitude which led to action

LET’S TAKE MOMENT TO TAKE THAT IN - how blessed are you this morning? What do you identify as?

One of Cornerstone’s paths to discipleship is Establish identity in Jesus....

If we could get this right....

What about this other servant? The one talent servant. What did he do with his days? It says that after a long time the master returned. So what was he doing all that time? He could have been a couch potato, but most likely, living in that society, he was busy. He was making a living. Maybe had a family,

and needed to provide for them. So he was doing stuff. Ironic because he may have worked really hard. That's the thing about sloth. It can be lazy, that couch potato image. But the other side of sloth, the one more likely to affect us today, is the one who is busy with all the stuff of life.

Doing stuff is fine but there's so much more to life than just doing. School is important but there's so much more to life than your school, or your job, or your relationships...

We are not human doings - we are human beings - who are you?

The fact that you are known and loved by Jesus is the most important thing about you. God has made each of us unique - he's generously giving us so much talent... Sadly, many of us have our talents buried - because we aren't truly connected to Jesus. **As a matter of fact, many of us keep busy SO that we don't have the space to recognize our talent. Our new identity. And so it remains buried.**

Picture any relationship. It could be best friends, husband and wife, parent and children, coworkers, classmates... whatever.

At first, the relationship starts. It's great. It's all exciting and adventurous. But after that, it gets regular, even boring. It's then that the work of love comes in. You have to choose to love day in and day out. When things are great. When things aren't so great. Why? Because love is an ongoing choice and commitment.

What about with God? It's one thing to accept Jesus as your Saviour, to realize that God has given us the generous gift of life through Jesus Christ, who died in our place. That's amazing! But we can't stay there.

In her book, "Glittering Vices" Rebecca DeYoung talks about the fact that we have the Holy Spirit in us as Christ followers. We have a new identity. A new self is born but not yet perfected. The Spirit doesn't just jump in and create a new us over-night. It's not like God just waves a magic wand and we become perfect. It takes a lifetime. And a lifetime of cooperation on our part. In one sense, as followers of Jesus - you are a Christian. In another sense, you are becoming Christians. The church word for that is sanctification. We can't just say, "I'm saved! Praise the Lord!" and then sit back and assume God is done with us.

It's that transformation that the sloth resists. That's lazy love. It takes time - which is why the opposite of sloth is diligence, perseverance.

Any love relationship results in an identity change and commitment to daily transformation.

Say you become a parent - by birth, adoption, fostering. Okay - yeah, you're a parent. But anyone who has a child knows that it doesn't stop there. It starts there. But then there's the work of caring for a newborn who's totally dependent, raising a toddler, loving a

teenager even when it's tough and supporting a young adult trying to find their way.

Any relationship requires work.

Story time...me and long jump. – why do I need to train? I already beat you!

The sloth resents the fact that God says in the words of Anne Lamott, "I love you the way you are, but I love you too much to let you stay that way."

Perfect example of a sloth who would fit in in today's culture – the older brother in prodigal son story – kept busy and never dealt with how he really felt - about his brother and about his dad. But it all leaks out. He resented that his brother got to play while he had to work and be faithful. He resented the lavish love of the father.

Lazy love comes from a wrong view of God – the older brother thought the father was unfair and so he lived in that identity.

Jeremy preached on this passage a few weeks ago so check it out but what's cool about it is that the father showed the same love to both sons - the one who was 'away' and the one who was home but 'away.'

No matter where you are - God has so much love for you.

Going back to the story of the talents...

Matthew 25:19-30

This last servant ends up out of the kingdom. That's a big consequence. The servant's actions reveal that he was never really in a right relationship with the master.

What were the other servants rewarded for? Because they were faithful. They took risks. The last servant acted out of fear – which was not what the master was like. It made no sense to bury it in the ground, because although it was safe - it wasn't doing anything. I get it. I don't like change. I don't like risk. But the message translation of this passage talks about how it's criminal to live cautiously.

I challenge you today - don't play it safe. Don't be lazy with your love of God. God is after what's best in you and for you - don't do the least.

Is there something that God is calling you to risk?

- Baptism... (easter) - have sign up on screen
- Patching up a relationship
- Becoming a follower for the first time

- Getting back on track after falling away
- Getting the right view of Jesus? Of God? **Discipleship pathway - have QR and link for discipleship pathway on screen**

LOVE IS AN ONGOING CHOICE AND COMMITMENT.

Call the worship team up

You know what? The master probably knew that the servant was going to bury the talent. And yet he STILL GAVE IT TO HIM. That's grace.

This next song that we are going to be singing is called Thousand Hallelujahs. Isn't God worth our praise? Let this be your prayer and your praise today as you think about all that God has given to you and as you seek him about how to use what he's given to you for his glory this week.

Benediction:

We have the power of the resurrected Christ – Galatians 2:19-20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.

Jesus broke the gates of hell, rose from the dead and has given us the Holy Spirit to guide us until he comes back.

Thanks for being a part of the service today. For those of you who are with us online, thanks for being here and have a great week!

For those of you here in person, feel free to stick around and connect with each other in the cafe.

Be blessed and be a blessing.