

Recycling Gluttony
Ecc 2:24-25, Phil 3:17-21

Well brothers and sisters, this morning we continue with our series on how we can recycle these seven deadly sins and use that recycled sin to help build Christian community.

Last week we looked at the Sin of Pride and how it is recycled into Power and so I pray that if you are a powerful person – you’ve been working with the Holy Spirit this past week; to use your power to protect others and take steps to become an empowering leader in our church community.

So that was Pride recycled into Power, and this morning we’re moving on to deal with the deadly sin of Gluttony

And the timing is perfect really, because it’s right after the holiday season and by now we’ve all seen the evidence that we’ve indulged in too much holiday food, too many goodies, too much egg nog, too much turkey and stuffing... and we feel guilty and gluttonous.

And so at the start of the New Year many of us are watching our diet, eating healthy and getting back to the gym to work off those extra pounds that we put on over Christmas.

And not just because our pants were getting a bit snug, but because we’ve become far more aware of the consequences that come from over-eating and under-exercising.

And when it comes to Gluttony, this idea of unrestrained consuming, gorging oneself on food and drink is what most people consider to be gluttony.

Like when someone finishes off an entire large pizza, a basket of wings, a plate of nachos, a 2 Litre bottle of pop and then a whole container of ice cream – all by themselves... for a midnight snake... we tend to identify that as gluttonous.

Well brothers and sisters – if this is our understanding of Gluttony I’ve got good news and bad news. The bad news is that is far more to Gluttony as a deadly sin than gorging yourself on too much food and drink.

There's far more going on in Gluttony than what we realize.

But that's the good news too, becoming more aware of Gluttony in our lives simply means becoming aware of more opportunities to co-operate with the Holy Spirit to recycle it and then use that recycled Sin to build community.

And so this morning we are looking at Philippians 3 to find out what exactly is involved in the deadly sin of Gluttony and why it is so prevalent among us... So I draw your attention to vs. 18 where Paul states *"there are **many** who live as enemies of the cross of Christ."*

Brothers and sister the first thing we need to know about Gluttony is that it makes us an enemy of the cross of Christ. That is the end result of Gluttony, it is where Gluttony leads to, and it is a good description of how Gluttony destroys Community, since an enemy of the cross is also at odds with those who are friends of the cross and friends because of the cross of Christ – that's why Gluttony is a deadly sin.

Now, typically when we hear about an enemy of the cross of Christ we'd think about a radical Islamist, someone in ISIS, or a secular humanist, or a Satanist... but not a Glutton. So how does Gluttony get to this point?

Well let's start by examining the four characteristics which Paul uses to describe those who live as enemies of the cross of Christ in vs 19. *"Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things."*

Now at first glance we can see the connection between gluttony and an enemy of the cross in these characteristics when it says "their god is their stomach" because that connects with understanding gluttony as over-eating. But how do the rest of these characteristics apply to Gluttony, and how might they expand our understanding of Gluttony?

Well let's take note of the logical progression that Paul is working with as he lists these characteristics; he lists being

“destined for destruction” first because this is the logical consequence of being an enemy of the cross of Christ.

If we look at the order of the next three characteristics it becomes obvious that Paul is tracing out the path which leads to this destruction.

So, having your stomach as your god... comes from glorying in your shame... which is the result of having your mind set on earthly things.

So to see how Gluttony ends up positioning us as enemies of the cross of Christ and how it destroys Christian community let's examine what it means to have our minds set on earthly things.

Now many Christians think this means that we are too focused on money, or work, or sports or sex... and that we don't spend enough time on “spiritual things” like worship, prayer, going to church and studying the bible.

Now it may very well be that this is the case in your life and you need to give spiritual disciplines more time and sacrifice some other things in order to that.

But, what Paul means by having our minds set on “earthly things” is what happens when we are doing what God created us, and commanded us, to do here on earth – *be fruitful and multiply, till the garden and keep it (Gen 1-2)* - but we are doing so with no regard for, or relationship with our Creator.

Again we see the parasitical nature of SIN as a state of being at work here – twisting and warping the original purpose for which God made us into something that causes us to ignore, even oppose God and set ourselves up as gods.

The original plan was that this was something we could do and pursue in co-operation and relationship with God, as it says in Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 *“A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?”*

But when sin twists this good arrangement that is from the hand of God... these verses are reduced to *“A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work”* or as the song goes *“We’re here for a good time, not a long time.”* How many people do you know whose lives are characterized like this?

So brothers and sisters, when acknowledging and including and honoring God in our day to day activities is left out... that is when our minds become set on earthly things.

And without God our lives become centered around them, they demand more and more of our time, all our energy, all our resources, all our heart, everything...

And with God out of the picture SIN is free to twist the pleasure, *“the glory”* that comes from these day to day activities... and other things like alcohol, drugs, and even food,

And it perverts it into something that enslaves us and disgraces us – as Paul writes their glory becomes their shame.

If you’ve ever seen someone who is enslaved by an addiction, it is obvious to see the disgrace that comes along with it. How it reduces someone created in the image of God to rule over the creation into a slave of the bottle, pills, or the refrigerator.

Maybe you’ve seen those Reality TV shows about people who can’t stop binge eating; they are out of control and have grown so obese they can’t fit into their clothes, or their car or even their homes.

Or maybe you’ve seen someone check out of life and stop taking care of themselves and waste away looking like death warmed over because all they care about is *“the glory”* of the next drink or the next high. So, their glory is their shame. You see how this works? It’s fairly obvious with things like food, alcohol and drugs... But other good things - like our work, or our possessions, sports, even family – they can enslave us too.

They won’t enslave us as quickly, and at first they might seem more benevolent and kind and very generous but... over the

years and ever so gradually they become more and more demanding, and eventually we find ourselves enslaved to them and controlled by them.

And so our glory – whatever it is that we get from these good things is twisted by SIN into our shame.

And it's probably a bit redundant to go into detail on how eating disorders, drug addictions, alcoholism, workaholism, being that crazy sports parent, breaks down relationships and destroys community.

We know those effects all too well don't we. SIN warps and twists relationships into something they should not be.

Children have to become the "adult" to look after an alcoholic parent, friends have to become "caretakers" for addicts, parental roles are filled by others when absented due to workaholism...

Sin turns relationships into something they weren't intended to be; including the relationship that we have with our own body and it's God-given ability to experience pleasure.

The biblical reveals that God created us with appetites and desires and made it pleasurable to satisfy those desires – that's a good thing.

Ecclesiastes in 9:7- 9 "Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do. Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love...."

In this verse we see the affirmation of the pleasure we derive from eating and drinking and celebrating, from getting dressed up and taking care of our appearance, and from romance and marriage - it pleases God that we are pleased by these good gifts He created for us.

And in this verse do we not find a wonderful description of the pleasure of community?

A great party with food and wine, well-groomed people dressed up to look their best, together with those they love – celebrating a wedding - a marriage perhaps – the union of a man and woman who together bring forth children and create family – more community...

So this verse also gives us a glimpse, a taste, of what recycling Gluttony can look like and how it is transformed into Pleasure in God's good gifts that help to transform a group of people into an actual Christian Community.

But before we get too far into what Recycling Gluttony we still need to finish looking at Paul's list of characteristics.

So we've covered what it means to have our minds set on earthly things, we've covered when glory becomes shame, we've looked ahead at recycling Gluttony – but why is it that when our stomach is our god that we are destined for destruction?

Well, on one level – simply from the way God made our bodies to work - if our stomach controls us and we do not control what we eat – we are on our way to an early grave.

We've already looked at the examples of obesity and addiction but we also know that consuming too much saturated fats, cholesterol, sugar and salt will lead to clogged arteries, type II diabetes and other health issues.

And so we control our diet and we eat healthy and we exercise so that we can stay vital and fit, and this is good

But, SIN is so subtle and deceptive that it can twist this as well and pretty soon eating healthy becomes our god – so we're right back to having our stomach as our god and now we're enslaved to constant updates on which foods we should or shouldn't eat, you know what I'm talking about right?

One study says don't eat the eggs, then a subsequent study says eat the eggs. One study says don't eat butter use

margarine instead, then another study says eat butter, avoid the chemicals and oil....

So just when we've switched up our diet to make sure it's really healthy – we discover that we've been eating something that is unhealthy and is contributing to health risks in some way and we have to switch it up again.

So while healthy eating and exercise is far better than addiction and obesity, eventually we discover the truth in the old Latin saying *“What nourishes me destroys me...”*

But brothers and sister this is why the scriptures repeatedly tell us that *“man does not live on bread alone...”* (Deut 8:3)

Because “bread” alone - the earthly created things which God gave us to experience the pleasure of satisfying our appetites - is not the source of life, only God is.

That is why Jesus Christ said *“I am the bread of life... I can give you living water...so that you will thirst no more.”* (John 6:35, John 4:10)

So - here's the hard truth brothers and sisters, feeding our appetites with only created things – either in excess or in moderation will not bring a life that lasts.

At best we get a few extra years of better quality, at worst it only speeds up the inevitable and makes us miserable as we wait for – but either way in the end we die.

And this is what Gluttony is really all about; **it is feeding or disciplining our physical body in an attempt to live spiritually.** And when we attempt to gain spiritual life through we how deal with our physical body it positions us as an enemy of the cross of Jesus Christ. Why?

Because it was only on the **Cross**, where Sin was put to death in the sacrifice of Jesus' **physical** body, that **spiritual** life for our physical bodies was made available.

So to try to get “spiritual life” from how we deal with our own physical bodies is really an act of unbelief, an act of denial about what was accomplished on the cross; it makes us an enemy of the cross – this is why Gluttony is so deadly.

And in our day and age, with all the resources available to help us improve the quality of our life – mental health, emotional health, fitness and nutrition, financial health, medical advancements etc... we have all sorts of instances that we can attempt to pursue that everlasting spiritual life through created things instead of God.

And they do very much improve the quality of our life and SIN deceives us into thinking we’re good – we’re set.

So Gluttony has become the most insidious of the Seven Deadly Sin because many of us are living as enemies of the cross without even realizing it.

Friends, the spiritual life, the real life, the everlasting life our bodies need - comes from Jesus body. That’s why Jesus

himself said *“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”* (John 6:54)

That promise is what Paul speaks of in our passage this morning when he declares that Jesus Christ *“will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”*

This is the end goal of our cooperation with the Holy Spirit in recycling our sin, our Gluttony.

So, now that we understand what Gluttony really is and how it turns us into enemies of the cross of Christ – how do we cooperate with the Holy Spirit to recycle it and use our redeemed capacity for pleasure to build community.

Well brothers and sisters – the truth is we are all guilty of trying to live by bread alone as various times in our life.

But if you find yourself constantly struggling with Gluttony; if feeding your appetites in excess or disciplining your desires is needed to truly feel alive; and you continually struggle to keep

this from becoming the main focus of your life and excluding your Lord Jesus Christ...

Then the good news is that you are someone who has a high capacity for pleasure and with the Holy Spirit's sanctifying and recycling work in you – you serve an important role in helping us receive those good gifts of God which make a community celebratory and worth celebrating!

It is through serving others in this way that we can co-operate with the Holy Spirit's recycling work and enjoy the pleasures of satisfying our body's appetites and desires without allowing sin to twist it into gluttony.

And we can learn a lot about how to serve in that role from Paul's advice in vs 17 where he says *“Join with others in following my example and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.”*

You see friends, God's people have always had a pattern for life – *“six days a week you shall work but the seventh day is a*

Sabbath – set apart for the Lord...” (Ex 35:2) and *“set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year.”* (Deut 14:22)

Worshiping regularly together, giving regularly from what we earn together.... these are patterns of living that help to keep our minds focused on God instead of earthly things.

And getting into the habit of thanking God for the food and asking Him to bless it each time you eat also helps us to continue to acknowledge the creator, the giver and the source of life – so your stomach does not become your god.

And developing spiritual disciplines and self-control will help to prevent our glory from becoming our shame.

Now remember friends - the goal in recycling Gluttony is not to try to impress God or earn his approval through the disciplines of fasting, praying and studying scripture.

Instead we pursue these spiritual disciplines together so that through the power of the Holy Spirit, Sin's influence on our relationship with our bodies is lessened, it becomes undone so

that we are in control of our desires and appetites and they are not in control of us – it's recycling.

And it gives us time to examine our minds, our hearts and seek out our motives to see if we are somehow attempting to gain spiritual life in what we do with our bodies.

It gives us space to confess this to Christ and to each other and to think about how we might turn away from what we are doing, and encourage others to do so as well - even if it is only changing our motives as to why we are going to the gym. However... it's just as important to remember that God's pattern for living also calls for times of celebration and joy and feasting. We need to party together! We should enjoy the good gifts that God gives us and thank him for that.

So... we have 10 Year Anniversary celebrations, we have Christmas Parties, organize youth group events like games nights and snow-tubing and swimming and we need the Gluttons to use their Recycled Sin to make these events great!

So friends until Jesus returns.... Our community needs to live by a pattern where there are times for spiritual disciplines and times for spiritual celebrations, this builds up Christian community- helps us recycle gluttony, and enjoy the gift of pleasure that God wants us to experience from His creation.

And the essence of how we live together as Christians is summed up in what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:31

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

So friends, what is the Holy Spirit speaking to you about this morning with regards to gluttony?

How can you begin to recycle it?

Let's Pray.