

“Deadly Sins: Sloth”

Date: February 28, 2016

Place: Lakewood UMC

Theme: Sloth, Laziness

Occasion: Deadly Sins, series

Texts: Luke 19:11-27; Revelations 3:15-16

“I’m sorry. I had a busy week and a lot of other things to do. So, I never got around to writing a sermon this week.” (sit down)

No, actually I did write my sermon. But imagine if everyone took the attitude of “I don’t care. I’m just going to blow this off.” Life would be pretty miserable if everyone stopped caring, wouldn’t it?

Elie Wiesel, Jewish author and speaker and holocaust survivor, tells the story of a young Jewish man named Michael. Michael returned to his Hungarian hometown at the end of the Second World War. Michael had been imprisoned in a concentration camp but had survived the brutality. He returns home out of curiosity, not revenge.

In particular he is curious about the man who lived across the street from the synagogue where Michael used to worship. This man had watched from his window, day after day, as hundreds of people were herded off to their death.

This man watched with no pity, no anger, without even pleasure or interest, as people were marched to their death. He just watched, impassive and indifferent. It didn’t matter to him one way or the other. He didn’t care.

In a strange way, Michael understood the brutality of the guards and the executioners at the prison camp. But this indifference confused him. The man behind the window, with his indifference, committed the sin of sloth. Like the church in Laodicea, mentioned in

the book of Revelations, he was neither hot nor cold. He was just a spectator, lukewarm, worthy only for being spit out of God's mouth.

Sometimes sloth is thought of as meaning laziness. In fact, it is because of this very slow pace of life that a creature in the Amazon jungle was named the sloth. It moves so slowly that it was perceived to be lazy.

But you can be a very active person and still commit the sin of sloth; because the essential meaning of sloth is not laziness. Sloth describes a lack of caring, an indifference to God and others. It can even include an indifference to one's own life.

Sloth is the sin of being unconcerned about the world and the people around us. Sloth is when a person turns his head away when meeting someone on the streets who is need of help, or the victim of a crime. Sloth describes the well-clothed and well-fed people of society ignoring the needs of the poor and the hungry. Sloth says, "I don't care; it's not my problem."

The parable of the talents is a story about sloth. The parable describes a man who is immobilized by fear and thus buries his gifts. He was so afraid if tried to do something with the money given to him that he might fail, so he did nothing.

In the final analysis, he just didn't care enough. He didn't have enough commitment and motivation in himself to do anything. He was lukewarm, to borrow the term used in Revelations. Jesus harshly criticized such a person.

Martin Luther King Jr. is quoted as having said, "All it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing." That is sloth.

Now, of course good people have excuses for their sloth. They might say, “There is so much wrong in the world, I can’t possibly do anything to help. I’m just one person; what difference does my effort make?”

One person can make a little difference. A lot of people making a little difference add up to a big difference in our society. Do you know our country would cave in if little people stopped caring? The men and women, young and old, who volunteer their time and talents to hospitals, to civic clubs, to schools and churches and scouts and ball clubs – it all adds up to making a big difference in our community.

Every day, people are doing little things to make this world a better place. And every one of them is an unsung hero – just one little person doing something little for someone else, but making a big difference. Why? – because they care.

Don’t ever think that your little effort doesn’t make a difference. It does. You do. Don’t stop. When we’re younger we have our whole lives ahead of us. But sometimes, when we’re older, the sin of sloth creeps into our minds and our hearts.

When we’re younger, we hope to make a name for ourselves; we hope to contribute something to the world we live in. But one of the temptations as we get older is to think that our lives have been for nothing.

The danger is that sloth will enter our hearts and make us think that our lives haven’t amounted to anything. We doubt if we’ve done any good in the world, and when that happens, we stop caring. We stop caring about the world and about other people. Life loses its meaning and its purpose.

Satan, be gone! Our purpose and our meaning are found in Jesus Christ. Our lives do matter! We can make a difference. We have made a difference. We do make a difference. No matter what your age, don't ever stop caring.

Sloth is not merely laziness, although it does include that. Sloth is the sin of not caring." Who cares? Who gives a darn? Why bother? What's the use?" Sloth is the sin of not caring.

In the book of Revelations, Jesus says that he does not want disciples who are lukewarm. He said, "I would rather you be hot or cold. But if you're going to be a lukewarm disciple, I'll spit you out of my mouth. I don't want that kind of disciple. I want Christians who are on fire for God, who really care about the kingdom of God."

Are you that kind of disciple? Are you on fire for Jesus?

During the American Civil War, one soldier decided to be friends with both sides by wearing a Confederate jacket and Yankee trousers. But do you know what happened to him? The Confederates shot him in the legs and the Yankees winged him in the chest. You can't serve two masters.

You either belong to Jesus or you belong to the Devil. You can't wear a Confederate jacket and Yankee trousers. Which is it going to be? Jesus Christ wants us to "all in" for Him. He wants your whole Self – heart and mind, body and soul. Don't hold anything back.

Give Him everything, and you won't be troubled by the sin of sloth. Sloth is the sin of not caring, of holding back, of not wanting to get too involved. Jesus doesn't want that kind of disciple. He wants

people who surrender all for Him. And the reward is eternal life.
Amen!