

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

This last week in FBS we learned about the conquest of the Promised Land led by Joshua. After the Lord gave the city of Jericho into Israel's hand and they devoted it to destruction, the Israelites went up against the small city of Ai... yet were defeated. Eventually, it was found out that a man named Achan had broken faith with the Lord by taking some articles from Jericho, articles that were either to have been destroyed (like the cloak) or given over to the Lord (the gold). When Achan was brought forward, Joshua said to him, "My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and give praise to Him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." To which Achan in complete frankness answered, "Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I did: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath." Joshua 7:20-21 This sin of coveting is precisely the issue we hear about in the Gospel appointed for today. We hear a portion of the Gospel again to focus our meditation this morning, from St. Luke, chap. 16: As follows in Jesus' name: [Jesus] also said to the disciples... "And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings." (ESV) This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17) There are two commandments that the Lord has given to us regarding the sin of coveting. This special emphasis should drive us to examine ourselves according to God's will. When we consider the 9th and 10th Comm.s, we recognize that what they are forbidding is a sin of the heart, not of words or actions. And how fitting this is that the Lord ends where He begins, how the 1st Comm. begins with the heart - that we are to have no other gods, have nothing in your mind or heart that would entice you away from your fear, love, or trust in God, nothing else that you would trust in for your joy, hope, or protection. And so after teaching us in the 2nd through 8 Comm.s how we transgress our love for Him, through our words and deeds, He returns to the sins of our thoughts, showing us that this, too, is a mismanagement of our resources, of our reasons and senses. Covetousness is a sin of discontentment with what the Lord has given to you. ...It is a sin of the heart, but as Achan's story demonstrates, a sin that easily leads to other sins. Why did he covet the precious metals and the cloak from Shinar? Did he do it to enrich himself? To be able to buy himself a little more luxury, or have a little more financial security in hard times? Did he do it because he could? Because he thought he could get away with it? Or did he do it because he didn't care for the Lord or His Word? He believed that the Lord existed (after all, he just miraculously crossed the Jordan River on dry ground in a spectacular way,) But why should the Lord dictate what he should keep/ destroy/ bring into the Lord's treasury? Yet, how foolish! What a dishonest manager! The Lord was going to make him to inherit his portion in the Promised Land. A house that he did not build. A well that he did not dig. Vineyards and orchards that he did not plant. There would be many battles from which he would receive gold and silver, and flocks and herds, closets and pantries and shelves that he did not stock. These were to be his, given to him by God... and yet, he wanted still more. He coveted... and took what was devoted to God, what God Himself had set apart as His own... and he hid it in the ground in his tent... (a sure sign of guilt, knowing that he was doing something that he should not). For Achan, the Master called him to account for his dishonesty. The Lord

knew Achan's heart. He didn't get away with it. Achan was quickly removed from his earthly management of the Lord's goods, the goods that he was planning to use for his own purposes, rather than for his Master's, and so he lost his portion of the Promised Land, his inheritance. Achan's heart was given to the god of covetousness, of greed, of idolatry. This god is a hungry god. His hunger cannot be satisfied. His thirst cannot be slaked. It only wants more... more... more... And it only wants for itself. Oh, it might tempt you into thinking, "If only I had more, I would be happy to share more..." But this is just a ruse. It is a trick. It is a way to make you dissatisfied, discontent with the daily bread that the Lord gives you. It is a way to blame the Master for not entrusting you with more. You do not want to serve this god of covetousness. It is a merciless master, not just a slave driver, but it enslaves you again under a heavy yoke of sin. And, just as easily as any other god or sin, can tempt you away from your eternal inheritance. But thanks be to God that you have a different Master, who is completely satisfied with the life and death of His Son, Jesus Christ, who knows that it better to give than to receive. Acts 20:35 He it is who has given you your body and soul, your eyes, ears, and all your members, your reason and all your senses, and still preserves them. It is He who gives you your daily bread, and often even gives you enough for a week, a month, or even a retirement. It is He who has given you the management of His possessions... you know... your body and soul, your eyes, ears, and all your members, your reason and all your senses, And not only has He given them to you, He has also given His Son for you, Jesus Christ who has redeemed you, purchased and won you from all sin, death and the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death, all that you may be His own and live with Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. And yet, how often do you treat all that you have, that are to be devoted to the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind Luke 10:27... in fear, love, and trust... Expl. To 1st Comm. and waste them as if they were your own, as if your Master has not given you a management... using them, not in fear, love, or trust in God, but in covetousness, greed, and for self-preservation... as if you could prolong your life or your comfort in this life without the Lord's blessing. And this, when the Promised Land is in sight, and you have already been called an heir of Paradise. How piddly does a cloak from Shinar compare to the righteousness of a good conscience and contentment that Jesus has adorned you with? How sad does one bar of gold seem in relation to the street of paved gold in front of the heavenly mansion with your name on it in Paradise? How insignificant do all the sports trophies and honors you can amass here seem when you put them up against the honor of having the Son of God become your human Brother in order to give you His crown of life? How dull do the finest delicacies and luxuriant cuisine compare to the richness of the Body and Blood of Jesus given and shed to wipe away your covetousness and greed? This is not to say that it is wrong to enjoy the gifts of God's creation, that you can't eat good food, can't participate in sports or excel at your job, that you can't build a nest-egg for retirement, or enjoy a nice vacation. Remember that the servant in the parable was a manager, his job was to regulate and administer the Master's resources according to His Master's will. A manager also needs to eat, recreate, save, and relax, but not to the neglect or detriment of his duties. And so it is important to know and hear what things your Master has given you to manage. First and foremost, the most valuable and essential resources He has given you are, not cloaks, gold, or silver, but His Holy Word and His precious Body and Blood. These you are to have and use regularly and often so that Jesus may give Himself to you and fill you with His love, forgiveness, and mercy; so that you may have contentment in His good gifts and learn to forsake the gods of covetousness and greed and idolatry. And so that you may have these regularly and often, He has given you pastors to administer them to you, to call you back to them, to encourage you in them. And He has given you the means to support this ministry of the Gospel through your prayers, your

services, your offerings, your care, your time and all else He has given you. ... And do you know one of the blessing of this? As you work diligently at your job, play in your field of recreation, or eat at your favorite restaurant... As you support and enable this ministry through your offerings for your own good and welfare, you are also working a part of what your Master has called you to, "to make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings." As the ministry, or service, of the Church grows here and other communities, as our Lutheran elementary, high school, and college grow, more opportunities are given and more friends are made as we give to them the love, forgiveness and mercy of Jesus through His Word and Sacraments, and thus extend to them, not just a temporary cloak of Shinar or bar of gold or sacks of silver, but extend to them a clean conscience before God as they don the robe of Jesus' righteousness in Holy Baptism, thus making them an heir with Christ, and opening up an eternal inheritance, an eternal dwelling, with streets of gold with you.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria