

complained to Jesus that his brother would not divide the inheritance. Although we do not know all the details it would seem that one brother was given an overly impressive portion of the family goods. The other brother, a member of the Lord's followers, wanted a better portion. He does not seem to have been cheated, rather he seems to reflect an attitude of simple greed. Jesus, in responding to his request, first notes that his lot in life is not to be a judge or a divider of goods. But then he quickly warns the questioner about the danger of covetousness (Luke 12:15). "Life," says Jesus, "is not a matter of the abundance of things that man possesses." Therefore the greedy amassing of goods is not the great end to which one should strive. No matter what one has, the relationship with God is more important.

Perhaps this helps us to see the basic error in coveting. It tends to substitute goods for God. Rather than thinking about the Divine will, human ambition gets set on things earthly and overlooks the spiritual realities. It is a matter of what your eye is set on and how it governs the rest of your activities. One will learn regretfully that the mind set on earthly gains will have difficulty gleaning spiritual truth.

So it is that Paul gives a striking commentary on covetousness in Colossians 3:5. The apostle tells us that a number of sinister traits should be put to death: among them is covetousness which, he says, is idolatry. As such it should not be named among the Lord's people (Ephesians 5:3) nor to have any part in their lives. There is no room for anything so corruptive to the people of God as is greed. Among all communities and places where the people of God are known, covetousness is an unwelcome guest.

#### Conclusion