

Exodus 20:15

## Properly Responding to God's Blessing in Material Possessions

Friday, June 24, 2022 ▫ Read Exodus 20:15

*Questions from the Scripture text: What does this verse prohibit?*

**What is the proper relationship of God's provisions to the obtaining of those provisions?** Exodus 20:15 looks forward to the evening sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In this verse of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that the God Who put His image in us has appointed to us our possessions and the right means of acquiring them.

Possessions are a good thing. As creation and creation mandates have been behind the first seven commandments, we would do well to see that connection in the eighth. God created everything else before He created man—an entire world to be possessed and enjoyed. And He created man needy of food and gave man duty of taking subduing the earth. Benefitting from what God created to benefit us, enjoying what God created to be enjoyed, and managing what God commands us to manage... this is good.

But there are right and wrong ways of possessing. We tend to think of work as the primary way of possessing. And Scripture does address giving good labor and paying a fair wage. And Scripture teaches us that one of the ways that God provides for us is good stewardship: not just hoarding what God gives us, but putting what He gives us to work in ways that make it even more productive.

And Scripture actually spends quite a few words on inheritance and trade. Two significant ways of stealing included moving boundary markers to take from someone's inheritance and using unequal weights and measures to take more than was actually agreed upon in trade.

Other righteous ways of obtaining include spoils from just war, God giving His people favor in the eyes of kings and others in high position, and especially generosity of others. This generosity includes both allowing the needy to gather leftovers, as in the gleanings laws, and direct contributions (whether through the church via Levites and later deacons, or immediately to the recipient).

To possess in the wrong way is to deny God as Provider. It's most important in spiritual things to remember that although God provides all, He does through so appointed means. Trying to be counted righteous or grow in righteousness in a way other than He has appointed is to deny Him as Savior. The eighth commandment gives us an analogy in the area of material provision. He is our Provider. We pray to Him for our daily bread. He feeds the birds and clothes the flowers. He knows what we need before we ask, and tells us that we are of much more value than birds or flowers.

So if we steal, we do something even worse than infringing upon what God gave others. Stealing says that we don't trust God to give us what we need in His ways. It says that we must be our own provider because He is unable or unwilling or both. The dishonesty offends against God's truth and justice. The distrust offends against God's goodness and power.

On the other hand, when the thief no longer steals, his goal is not only to provide for himself, but to have enough to become a means of God's generosity to others (cf. Eph 4:28). Our goal in all material dealings—whether giving or receiving—is to glorify God as the provider of all good gifts.

What means do you have? How are you stewarding them? How are you enjoying and using them? How are you blessing others with them? What more means could you have? What is your goal in all of this?

*Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for loving us and providing for us. Thank you for employing us and enabling us to do good to others. Forgive us for all of our doubtings of your provision and attempts to get things by wrong means. Forgive us our lack of generosity toward others. And make us both more grateful to you and more generous with others we ask, in Jesus Christ, AMEN!*

Suggested songs: ARP15 "Within Your Tent, Who Will Abide" or TPH174 "The Ten Commandments"

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Exodus 20 verse 15. These are the words of God. You shall not steal So far, the reading of God's inspired and inherent word.

It seems like it would be a very simple commandment and we see how we have stumbled from the knowledge of God as a culture and even a church culture and that the primary way or one of the primary ways. Many people think of obtaining things as either how to trick or take others property from them or even to use the government to take others property from them stealing as fundamental form of practice of economics currently right now.

One of the great problems and our country is that all of that extra money that the government made up supposedly to giveaway to others over the last couple years of COVID has. Of course, not actually produced any goods or services. And so it just means that the total amount of money divided by the goods and services is higher.

So having increased that ratio, that takes now more money to buy those goods and services and everything that people thought that they had received, they discovered was just stolen from their future, selves. Even this is the hardest upon those who have a difficult time, earning like the poor and those who are no longer able to earn such as those who are elderly and in firm, not so much retired.

There are many people who are not elderly or in firm, but have achieved the so-called American dream of no longer working. They could work, but it's harder on those who cannot work. And so one of the great big economic factors right now in our nation, is that the value of that which was stored up by those by some who worked hard, their whole lives, it has been suddenly.

And cruelly shrunk and they've installed from. That's just an example. But in giving us this commandment, you shall not steal. The Lord does imply to us. A few

simple things that I would like for us to consider briefly this morning, first possessions are good thing. The Lord is the one who assigns possessions to us.

He made the world and all that was in it before he made a man so that we might see the whole world and all of the good with which he filled it as a gift from him. And we see a microcosm on a special, local instance of that in chapter two of Genesis, where he makes especially the, the good things of the garden, which he emphasizes as the best of the best, and the whole world, and the Garden of Eden.

Before he puts. The man. There he places the man there and he shows him actually is making of all those things. So possessions are good thing. They're not a bad thing. Our goal is not to have nothing, Our goal is to see that. It was all from God and to use it all for God.

And to know that if God has given us Christ, then everything is actually for our good. Whether we immediately personally because I said or not, this one of the bright things that the gospel does for you as it tells you that he who did not spare. His only son, He will for sure.

Give you together with him all things, and all things are hours because we are Christ's, he says in another place to the Corinthians there, not the Romans and therefore, all things are working together for our good. So possessions are good thing and that means our neighbors possessions are a good thing for him.

And one of the great parts of loving, your neighbor is wanting not only for him to have what God has appointed to him. But also of course for him to have the gospel so that those things will be good for him. It is important of course to obey God and not taking from our neighbor.

But if we want our neighbor genuinely to benefit from what he has, then most of all we want our neighbor to have Christ because though he has all other good things. If he doesn't have Christ, it is all judgment against him, kindness and mercy and patience from God that will testify against him in the last day.

And this is what we want for you. Our dear children, our nearest neighbors that you would have Christ. There are many even in churches who think that they put good food on the table, and they're careful that it would be nutritious and they get their children and education and have their children.

Learn things like economics skills of self-discipline and give them means by which they can quote unquote. Get ahead in this world that they have done very well for their children. But if you possess all those things and you are able to come into a very comfortable and affluent wealthy earthly life, but you don't come into possession of Christ.

Then all those other good things that we have provided for you will be a curse against you. We'll testify against you that you enjoyed much of the creation, but you did it in denial of the creator and all in the right on in the wrath of God will be revealed against all of your unrighteousness and ungodliness.

So the first thing is possessions are a good thing and the most important thing to possess the Lord himself that he would be our heritage. That he would be our inheritance that we would even be able to be like Moses who had not yet, brought Israel into possession. And ultimately would not even be permitted himself to enter and yet to the one Psalm and the Psalter that he pends begins.

Lord. You have been our dwelling place throughout our generations. It's a positions are a good thing. But then, of course, there are right and wrong ways. That possessing how do we know that? Well, we know that because this is a commandment again against wrong ways of possessing. There are many right ways of possessing.

One, of course, a great one is to be given gifts by the king of kings, and we see this reflected, even in many places where there is generosity of kings and generosity of people who are not, you know, civil Magistrates or great kings, but others who are wealthy. And so you have even the church being the beneficiary of such kings as Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus and Darius.

So it's actually a mercy from God, if he gives his people eyes and in favor, in the eyes of the of the magistrate, it is not, it does not constitute and approval of or participation in the acts of Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar, or Cyrus or Darius to receive from them.

You can do both Oppose, the injustice, and wickedness of the king especially by testifying to the one true God. And seeking that the king would come into repentance, like the repentance in which Zacchaeus came and of course, first part of his repentance was refusing to cheat anyone and returning.

So far as he was able with extra whatever he had cheated from others, But to a lesser extent and you're in America we're we're all still and in God's amazing providence to this nation Kings of a sort. There's talk of poverty level but someone who is in poverty or below the poverty line.

I guess are at the probably light in America is still one of the wealthiest in terms of goods and comfort of this world. Then the history of this world, But generosity is a very important means of provision. It's the opposite of stealing the when you look in the New Testament at what repentance from stealing looks like he says, let's the thief no longer steal but let him work hard with his and so that and it's not so that you can provide for himself.

But the apostle says, so that he may have something to give to others in times of need. In other words, God has so richly filled this world with good and so designed his providence that hard work. And fragality working hard with your hands and resisting living for pleasure and possessions and self-indulgence.

We'll give you such a surplus that when you actually do here of need and there is need, of course, because this is a fallen world in which there is sin and misery and the effects of sin including such things as drought and famine, and so forth. So that when someone else has need you have extract and you are able to be generous.

And so repentance from this sin, doesn't just look like working hard for your own goods but it looks like generosity and then there are other ways other right ways of possessing of course Write good hard work is itself a form of generosity. And in our interactions with others, the work that you do, the good, that you put goods that, you produce, the service that you provide, it actually has to be valuable to someone for it to be able to obtain things for you.

And so God gives us the mercy of a world and economics that are designed to encourage us to at least pursue another's good. Even if out of self-interest, Now this is very different for a believer, right? The unbeliever who has only his fleshly nature, he wants it to be something that is good for others.

So that he may obtain and he wants it not just to be a trick, which, you know, you may or may not call marketing, there's legitimate marketing but there's there is a form of marketing and sales and, and so forth that just tries to trick everyone into thinking that what you are producing or offering is good so that you can get it from them.

But if it's all marketing and it's all tricks, then goods and services aren't actually being produced and we all go down together so someone who has at least the wisdom of a Milton Friedman or a Thomas Milton Friedman or Thomas Sol or other maybe less populist but good economists.

They will say is important to produce something that is genuinely good because otherwise we'll all go down together but for the believer, he wants to do genuine good because he wants the thing that he is doing with his life to genuinely and truly and greatly benefit. His neighbor out of love for his neighbor out of a desire to participate in the generosity of his God.

So for a believer for you, even the work that you do, you should seek to, to be a form of generosity that you would be spending your life doing the kind of hard work that benefits others. And this makes the the key to all economics. Good wives and mothers.

Because if people are learning to love God and receive all things as good from Him and to be productive with their lives for the good of others in the home, and out of the home, than the most valuable thing, is actually a converted person. And for the bearing and much of the bringing up of children, the mother and wife, who does so is in God's providence and the instrumentality that he has established most vital.

So we we all want to to follow. And we all want to have a life that is as productive as possible for good. Of course to possess in the wrong way, then is worse than taking from the total amount that is produced taking from your neighbor harming your neighbor.

It does all those things. But as we've been hearing for the last several minutes, as we think about this, you shall not steal and how it implies that possessions are good. And that God Himself is the one who has established. What we are enabled to possess. And that there are right and wrong ways of coming into possession.

For the sake of time, we won't talk about inheritance just now, but that also fits in. So if we steal, if we come into possession in a wrong way, Then we're not only harming our neighbor, but we're also denying God and his goodness, and I'm Him as the one who is a provider and obscuring hiding, at least from our neighbor's site, and from our own site, the fact that it is God, who provides.

It's a way of saying, well, God has set up a system in which he would provide for me, but I'm gonna step outside God system, because I think I can get more and better by myself laying down, different ways of obtaining. That's what we do when we steal. So Sophia If God's main way of providing for you.

Just now in your life has been through mommy and daddy and they have things that are good for you and they are glad to give you good things and then you decide you want something that mom and dad aren't giving you yet or you want it quicker. So you don't want to bother with asking and you're gonna take it for yourself.

Then you're saying God gave me parents who are the way that he gives me good things, but I will go around God and I will get more better good things for myself by not asking by taking for myself. Now that would be a horrible thing. Not just because you take from mommy and daddy, you have plenty but it's still wrong to take from mom and dad and a way that hurts the house hurts you.

But the big reason it would be wrong is because it would say I can do better for myself than God does for me. And I will break his rules to get my stuff. That's the great reason behind You shall not steal, not just because it hurts. Others hurts. The individual.

You take from and hurts everyone by you not being productive yourself and harming someone else's productivity. But because it denies, God, as the provider denies, his goodness that makes you trust in yourself. And it takes away from that which God has given to others as a demonstration display of his goodness to them.

So it's actually a very significant moral issue. Isn't it What we do in order to obtain how we come into our possessions? And what we do with on the Lord, give us to be generous, to be generous with the work that we choose generous with the way that we do it.

So it would be hardworking and excellent generous with what we are able to obtain by that work that we would be charitable towards others. Especially towards those that right now are being most hard, hit those who have not means to obtain for themselves and that we be generous, especially to our children and our children's children that has God has set up this, even this covenantal succession of inheritance as a display of how he is with us, that we would enjoy so long as he maintains it to our descendants though?

He would we would enjoy his blessing to us and to our offspring even in the matter of material possession. Let's ask the Lord to help us. Now Our Father in heaven and pray that your Holy Spirit will bless to us this portion of your word very immediately. We pray that you would give us diligence and joy and zeal and being productive and doing excellently throughout the rest of this day.

That every day you would give us the repentance and faith and life and righteousness of Jesus to be in us. That is necessary for that day and that you would be seen as a good and great, and merciful and generous God, and King, and Father, and provider for us by not only making us to reflect your image in that.

But also blessing establishing the work of our hands so that it is productive. So that we can be generous, help us O. Lord, we ask in Jesus name, Amen.