

Wendy's October Prayer Thoughts

The record for the UK's biggest hoarder goes to a bachelor who lived in Nottingham, and worked as a computer programmer. He died on October 7th 2020... His brother had no idea that the three bed roomed home was piled floor to ceiling, as also his one bedroom rented flat, two garages, apart of his neighbour's garden, and two wheelie bins.. 60,000 rare items, many in unopened packages, had been accumulated over a period of 18 years. Neighbours had noticed weekly supplies of deliveries, but were unaware of the hoarding of multitudes of rare items. Auctioneer Terry Woodcock of Lincoln was engaged to clear the items. 18 of his staff toiled tirelessly for 180 hours over a period of 4 weeks. They had to clear the way before them, unwrap and itemise the objects which were then placed into 3,000 lots, and auctioned over 4 days. Interest was high because there were so many rare items Beatles memorabilia, 1960's guitars, Matchbox toys, 4,000 rare books, 6,000 vintage comics, signed celebrity photos etc. The estimated price was half a million pounds, but the total raised was 4 million. Why had he become an obsessive collector? His aim was to sell the collection for his retirement.

No one, not even his closet relative or next door neighbour, knew what the man was amassing and secretly hoarding that reminded me of how it is impossible to hide anything from God, the One who is all seeing. John reminds us in his Epistle; "God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything." 1 John 3:20. The Israelites witnessed the truth of this soon after they had crossed the River Jordan, and gained entrance into the Promised Land. God challenged them to conquer the city of Jericho, which had already closed its gates, and was ready to resist invasion. For 7 days the Israelites were to march around the city (priests and armed men) carrying the Ark of the Covenant, while blowing trumpets of rams' horns. God also added a condition. "Keep away from the things devoted to destruction, so as not to covet and take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel an object for destruction bringing trouble upon it. But all silver and gold and the vessels of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord. They shall go into the treasury of the Lord." Joshua 6: 18-19. Jericho fell. Victory was in their hands, but Achan, from the tribe of Judah, had secretly disobeyed God's orders by taking items to his tent. He had been foolish enough to think that God would not know.

The next day Joshua sent 2000-3000 Israelites to attack Ai, a weaker city than Jericho. They were unsuccessful. 36 of the men were killed. 7:2-5. Distraught and confused Joshua prayed to God asking why the defeat had happened. God replied: "Israel has sinned. They have transgressed my covenant... taken some of the devoted things....I will be with you no more unless you destroy the devoted things from among you." 7:11-13. Note how sin inevitably destroys relationship with God. Joshua was instructed to examine and eliminate each family who was not guilty. Achan's turn came, and he immediately confessed his sin. He named the spoils -"....."

..... a beautiful mantle from Shinar (Babylon), and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels." He hid them under the floor of his tent, so that no disturbance would be detected. Messengers brought the hidden goods to Joshua, who then carried out further instructions from God. The whole family spoils and animals were to be stoned to death, and then burned in fire 7:25:28.

Both characters mentioned above desired no one to know about their covetous streak. What may be hidden from those who know us cannot, under any circumstances, be hidden from God. David testified from his own experience to his son Solomon. "The Lord searches every mind and understands every plan and thought." 1 Chronicles 228:9b. Our thoughts, speech, intentions and actions are all known to God. Do we think of this when we approach God in prayer? Let us not hide anything from Him. If we do, we are weakening the relationship he has with us. Have we any greed we should be asking God to remove? Think carefully because it could even have consequences for others.

Paul told the Christians that because they had been raised to new life with Christ they must "Put to death, whatever in you is earthly." Greed is mentioned in the list he gave. Colossians 3:5. Paul was not just asking for covetous thoughts to be curbed, but to be wiped out completely. William Barclay's translation is challenging for us today. "Put to death those parts which are earthly - the desire to get more than you ought - for this is idol worship." In the quietness, let us consider whether we are craving for more, without being mindful of what we already possess. Then, may we be honest, and take time to confess, as well as give thanks for God's bounty...