

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 4/22/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, April 23 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for those who serve as caregivers to family or others who are homebound or restricted because of disability. Pray for their service and ask GOD that those who are served are blessed by this work. Ask that caregivers receive appropriate time for themselves and their own needs.*

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Let's talk about coveting. The Ninth and Tenth Commandments (depending on how you count them) talk about avoiding coveting those things that belong to someone else. To be covetous is to have or show a great desire to possess something belonging to someone else; to think that someone else has is more deserved by us.

I don't think many of us see ourselves as covetous, but I thought about it after a discussion with our confirmation students. But when you break it down, you might be surprised. I will confess that after moving into Belmont Shore in Long Beach once Sandy and I married I became covetous of something of our neighbor's. I hadn't really looked at it as covetousness, but I didn't like how felt and decided I needed to do something about it.

You see, we live in an area where everyone parks on the street. If you have a garage, it is used for storage or workshop or something like that. Houses are small and space is a valuable commodity. So everyone parks on the street. Our neighbor and his wife have three vehicles for two drivers. And he's obsessive about holding the parking spaces in front of his house—and ours. They clean the other side of the street on Thursday, so he holds these spots for most of the week. And because they clean our side on Friday, he moves one vehicle so that he can hold two spots across the street, and then when another space opens, he moves the second so that he then can fit all three vehicles into the spots. And after our side has been cleaned he moves them back. Sandy is permitted by our neighbor on the other side to park in front of his driveway. But I have to park halfway to all the way at the other end of the block. I found myself carrying a grudge toward our neighbor and wanted to do something about this situation.

The way I have found to handle my covetousness is not to focus on him, but rather on me. I started thinking about the positives of parking further down the street. I noticed how often I have conversations with our other neighbors who I otherwise wouldn't see. I found pleasure in looking at other people's homes and yards. I took joy in the additional exercise I got in the walk from my car to the house. Now, I find that my neighbor has blessed me by creating circumstances that have me parking away from our home.

Martin Luther in his Small Catechism writes about these two commandments on coveting. The Ninth Commandment says, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house." Luther explains the commandment this way: We are to fear and love GOD so that we do not try to trick our neighbors out of their inheritance or property to try to get it for ourselves by claiming to have a legal right to it and the like, but instead to be of help and service to them in keeping what is theirs. The Tenth Commandment reads, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. About this commandment, Luther writes: We are to fear and love GOD so that we do not entice, force, or steal away from our neighbors their spouses, household workers, or livestock, but instead urge them to stay and fulfill their responsibilities to our neighbors.

I realize that a parking space on the street isn't something owned, but it is claimed when someone moves into the space. I marvel at how hard our neighbor works to claim these spaces for their vehicles on both sides of the street. I no longer resent him for doing this because I have found worthy reasons to rejoice in the walk up the street from car to home. I overcame this covetousness, for that is what it was, by changing my focus from what

our neighbor had to look for what I was getting from the walk. It is amazing how a change in focus from them to me resulted in a release from a potential problem between our neighbor and me.

In CHRIST's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey