

ST. CHARLES BORROMEO CATHOLIC CHURCH

JUNIOR HIGH FAITH FORMATION

JANUARY 8, 2023

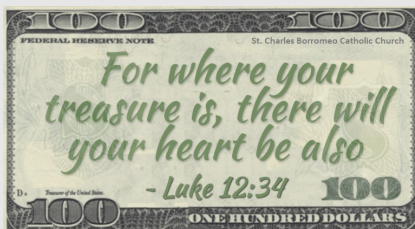
ABOUT THIS 4-WEEK SERIES

During the junior high sessions in January, we'll be discussing **four categories that people often use as substitutes for God, based on Saint Thomas Aquinas' writings. The four areas are wealth, power, pleasure, and status.** Each can be alluring and promise safety and security, but are waiting to devour us if we trust them too much. Unfortunately, when relying on these "goods" to comfort us, we forget where we should truly place our trust and as a result we create substitutes for God rather than trusting Him.

We'll be looking at each of these substitutes and how they can adversely affect our relationship with God if we are not careful about how we view and use them. The goal of this series is to have you recognize the four substitutes for God identified by St. Thomas Aquinas and gain insight on how to be counter-cultural by choosing Christ-like virtues.

It's important to note that wealth itself is not evil, but the inner attitude (*greed or avarice*) and the outer behavior (*selfishness, lack of almsgiving, hoarding, wastefulness*) that can be associated with wealth are problematic.

1 Timothy 6:10 tells us: ***"The love of money is the root of all evils, and some people in their desire for it have strayed from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains."***



WEALTH – The Pursuit of Money

We seek wealth to avoid feeling discomfort and inadequacy, and its disordered pursuit can make us greedy and lack empathy. We are all called to spiritual poverty, wherein we detach ourselves from the world's luxuries in preparation for the richness of eternal life.



- **John 3:16-17** – These verses bring the whole Gospel into focus. God's love is a free gift offered to all. It is a generous, outreaching love. Reflect on a time when you felt God's love, either directly or through the actions of another.
- **Luke 15:3-7** – Scripture expresses gladness when lost valuables are found: the lost coin, the prodigal son, a lost sheep. In these examples, it is vital to recognize how God does not wait for the lost to come to Him. Instead, He actively searches for the lost and joyfully forgives.
- **1 John 3:16-17** – Sometimes we can struggle with how to share God's love with others. Jesus laid down his life for us, which is the ultimate example of love. We are called to do the same for others. Laying down our lives for another means setting aside our desires and seeking the best for others, even when it costs us deeply. Real love is an action – not a feeling – that produces selfless, sacrificial giving. The greatest act of love is giving oneself with no thought of receiving anything in return.
- **Matthew 6:19-21** – Jesus reminds us that true wealth is found in the unending joy of eternal life. He calls us to store treasures in heaven. We do this through service to others in the same way Jesus served others.
- **Luke 16:13-15** – We live in a culture that tends to serve money, and that highly values material things. At times, our desire for wealth and what it can buy can outweigh our relationship with God. As a result, we will spend much of our time and energy thinking about and pursuing whatever we value. Ask yourself, *"Have I allowed things other than Jesus to take priority and become the master of my life?"*

KEY TERMS TO KNOW:

- **EMPATHY:** The ability to enter into another's feelings, needs, or sufferings without having experienced them yourself.
- **GREED:** A distorted desire to possess more than one needs, especially concerning material wealth.
- **SPIRITUAL POVERTY:** Detachment from earthly possessions, in knowing that worth is not defined by wealth.