



# Anti-Gambling

SUNDAY

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LUKE 12:15, CSB



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# Why We Should Care About the Cost of Gambling

BY JOSH WESTER

Gambling isn't the fun and glamorous thing we often see on television. In reality, the gambling industry is a predatory enterprise that hurts real people, often those who can least afford it. The problem is not that gambling creates winners and losers, but that it creates winners by *punishing* the losers. That's why I'm convinced that a government that fails to restrict a predatory industry like gambling is neglecting one of its essential duties.

St. Augustine saw more than a thousand years ago that the state lacks the ability to guarantee human flourishing or cultivate individual well-being; it is neither competent nor tasked to do so. Instead, Augustine argued the state should play a much more limited role in our lives and believed the primary responsibility of government was promoting justice and punishing offenders. The main way the state does this is by establishing and enforcing laws. More specifically, by making laws that allow citizens to flourish. This is why the state has a vested interest in prohibiting things like predatory gambling.

I've seen the numbers. I realize that expanding gambling to include sports betting and more casinos, for example, is likely to increase revenues, which means more money for state governments to spend or potentially provide tax relief. But unfortunately, the millions of dollars generated in casinos actually bear an inestimable human cost.

Each year, millions of people make their way to a casino to try their hands at the slot machines, table games, and most recently, to place bets on the outcome of college and professional sporting events. People visit casinos with hopes to relax or score some easy money. But there is a reason the casinos have continued to flourish at the expense of so many of their patrons—betting against the house is almost always a losing proposition.

Gambling ruins the lives of flesh and blood people. And among gambling's greatest victims are those already in poverty. The poor and destitute are easily induced to gamble but can least afford the cost. When they do, rarely are their lives changed for the better. As the people of God, we are called to stand up for the vulnerable and care for "the least of these" (Matt. 25:40). It is fitting then that we should oppose such a predatory industry and offer help to those who have suffered harm as a result.

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