

Sunday September 25, 2022

1 Timothy 6:6-19

Next Sunday we begin our study on Luke's gospel. I hope all of you will pick up a journal and read through the gospel together.

So, what to preach on this week?

I turned to our lectionary readings, the readings appointed for this week, and there was a passage from Luke- but I don't want to hop around in the gospel.

I want to start at the beginning and read through it with you.

And then there's the reading from 1 Timothy. Today is Presbyterian Sharing Sunday, and today we are celebrating our treasurer Gerry and all he has done for us as a church, so it seemed like a good Sunday to talk about money, or at least as good a Sunday as there is.

The Bible talks a lot about money. Jesus talked a lot about money.

Our passage contains one of those verses that we hear quoted, or rather misquoted frequently. We hear that "money is the root of all evil", but the Bible actually says; "¹⁰ For the love of money is

a root of **all kinds of evil**, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.”

And we know that.

We see people gamble on lottery tickets or at the casino – wanting to be lucky, wanting to be rich.

We see folks who chain themselves to their work so they can be successful and rich.

We see people drive themselves into debt so that they can have all the things their friends have.

People are pierced with many pains in the attempt to have more and more.

But love of money isn't the whole story.

The passage begins with this great truth:

“there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it, ⁸ but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. ⁹ But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.”

There is great gain in godliness combined with contentment.

What is the opposite of contentment?

As we think about this from a spiritual perspective there seems to me two sins that lead to great ungodliness and are opposite to the contentment Paul is talking about.

The first is greed and the second is envy. Greed is just wanting more, never being satisfied, and envy is just wanting more than you have.

Both of these sins are part of the *“harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.”*

One of the most helpful books I have read about giving- teaching about God as giver and then learning to give as God gives is the book “Free of Charge” by Miraslov Volf.

Speaking about life apart from Jesus, he writes; *“It is possible to have a fortune and as many talents as any Renaissance man and still **be** poor. The bottomless pit of our hollow core will never be satiated (filled and content). No matter how much we have, we remain “not-enough” people.*

Greed and envy and fear keep us being “not-enough” people. *“No matter how much we have, we will still hunger and thirst, railing against the obstacles*

placed in the path of the satisfaction of all our unsatiable (unsatisfiable) desires.

As to the gifts we might have or we may give to others, our hollow core will suck in everything and leave us with empty hands, all our wealth notwithstanding.

Inversely, we can be paupers and still be rich. How? The Apostle's answer was this: If we are indwelled by the Christ who became poor so that we can become rich, we will be rich. No matter how little we have, we will be "more-than-enough" people.

To have little and yet to have more than enough may be a strange thought for many today. We work in a world and are conditioned by advertisements urging us to want more, no matter how much we already have.

And yet without being "more-than-enough" people, our wanting will always outpace our having, and we'll end up perpetually exhausted and forever dissatisfied.

The presence of the gift-giving Christ makes us rich, rest replaces weariness, and peace banishes unending restlessness." (p. 108-109)

Becoming and continuing to be "more-than-enough" people, learning contentment, resting in the sufficiency of the gift-giving Christ, comes from keeping our focus on Jesus.

Paul instructs Timothy, and all of us who would follow Jesus, to avoid this never ending wanting, this hollow core, and unsatiated desires, learning to be generous as God is generous, saying:
pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness.

Does that sound like a familiar list?
It is the fruits of the Spirit.
How do we bear the fruit of the Spirit?
We dwell in Jesus and He dwells in us.

Paul continues:

¹² Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Paul makes it clear that this is going to be a struggle.
Greed, envy, fear of not having enough, love of money, are our normal.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, pursuing righteousness, doing the things that encourage our faith, holding fast to the confession we made, is work.

And then Paul after speaking about Timothy and his confession of faith, reminds us of **Jesus'** confession before Pilate in his trial before his death.

I don't know about you, but I made my confession of faith a few times, usually in a church, sometimes before a small group of friends, I do it Sunday by Sunday.

There are some risks, some sacrifices, but it has never cost me like Jesus' confession before Pilate cost him.

Jesus' confession cost him his life.

He gave his life for me, for you, for the church, for the people He loves, for this world.

I need to hold fast to my confession, hold to Jesus, remembering his sacrifice on the cross and all that it means.

Holding fast to Jesus, striving to grow as his disciple, fighting the good fight of faith, taking hold of eternal life, which is Jesus our Lord, allows the gift-giving Christ to bless us so that we learn or continue to be content no matter our circumstance.

And then we learn to open our hands and to be generous.

When we look towards the cross, when we remember the confession of Jesus, when we rest in his love and generosity, we learn to open our hands, we learn to sacrifice, we learn to follow in Jesus' steps.

Thanks be to God.