

The Nineteenth Sunday of Pentecost

September 25, 2016

Prayer of the Day: Mercifully grant, O God, that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, for without your help we are unable to please you; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Verse of the Day: Alleluia! At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Alleluia! (Philippians 2:10)

Sermon Text: 1 Timothy 6:6-12

What is the one thing you still want? Do you have one of those lists? You know, one of those: “If only I had (fill in the blank), then I would be completely content” kind-of-lists. “If only I had... a newer car, then all my car troubles would go away.” “If only I had... a bigger television, then I would never complain about the size of my television ever again.” “If only I had... a bigger house, then I would have all the space I need.” “If only I had... the newest video game, the next trading card, the Nike self-lacing shoes, then I would finally have everything I want.”

Do you have one of those lists? If so— and you got the newer car, the bigger house, the newest shoes, did that give you the satisfaction you wanted? Maybe it did— at least for a little while. You owned the biggest television on the market, but then out rolls the bigger television. You bought the new car and had no troubles, but as the car got older, the troubles reappeared. Perhaps you purchased the larger house and space was no longer an issue, but then your family and hobbies grew and the garage and basement quickly filled up. Maybe you got the newest video game, the next trading card, the Nike self-lacing shoes— and you felt content. Then you saw the advertisements for the sequel to the video game or the next generation of trading cards or the newer self-conforming Nike shoes. It does not take long to restart the cycle of: “If only I had (fill in the blank), then I would be completely content.”

So, let’s ask the question: What one thing will make you completely content and end those “If-only-I-had...” kind-of-lists?

1 Timothy 6:6-12

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Listen to our sermon reading, which tells you where true contentment lies. From 1 Timothy 6:6-12:

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So, where do you **DISCOVER LASTING CONTENTMENT?** Our reading divides quite nicely. (1) *Not by looking at your money,* (2) *But by looking at your God.*

I know, that sounds like a very obvious answer. I assume that you do not come here Sunday mornings to receive money management advice. Chances are you expect me to say something along the lines of: “Find lasting wealth in God.” After all, a church is a place where you hear how God intersects in your everyday life. Maybe a part of you expects a church to call money “evil.”

You will not hear that because God does not call money “evil.” The Bible clearly says: **...the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil**— not money itself. God does not condemn people for having money— people like Abraham and King Solomon— or people like you and me who have bank accounts and retirement plans. Money itself is not evil.

God gives you money as a blessing. In the Lord’s Prayer you pray: *Give us this day our daily bread.* So, what are you asking for? You are asking God to give you food and drink, house and home, clothing and shoes, land, cattle, and all you need to live. In today’s culture where many of you do not get food from your family farm, God gives you money to buy food. He gives you money to purchase homes and clothing and shoes. He gives you money so that you may have your *daily bread*.

So, God does not call money “evil.” What he calls “evil” is when your heart makes it a number one priority to get more money. You will recognize how dear your money is to you just by spending it. Either you will rejoice that God gives you the ability to secure food and covering. Or you will mourn and mope around as if you lost something precious and valuable.

So, where does money rank in your heart? Social security payments have remained relatively flat over the past few years. Do you thank God for having social security benefits (in the first place) so that you can buy food and covering? Or do you mourn that you cannot buy vacations and luxuries— things you may want, but not necessarily need? Yes, gas prices rise and fall— and it is frustrating. Yet, do you thank God for the car you have

and the ability to fill your tank so that you can travel long distances? Or do you fret that you will not be able to pay your bills? Maybe you have a monthly budget. Do you eagerly look forward to giving an offering, thanking God for giving you so much that you are able to give something back to him? Or do you feel as if giving an offering is losing money. Or is your offering the first item slashed from your budget the very minute money grows just a little tight?

Understand me rightly. I am not saying that it is wrong to want prices to go down. I am not saying that it is right for companies to price-gouge people. It becomes wrong when we worry about the money we use instead of trusting in God as we use our money wisely. Because if we worry about keeping our wealth, we will spend more time doing all we can to preserve it— even if that means spending time out of worship to make more money or to keep money out of the offering plate.

That is why God says: **People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.** Maybe a better word for trap is “snare.” If you hunt, you might set snares to trap rabbits and squirrels. You hide iron clamps or nooses of rope in the woods. When an animal walks through the snare, it snags the leg— and that animal cannot escape. If you are not a hunter (like me), maybe the strap of a backpack, purse, or diaper bag is a snare. If those bags are lying on the floor and your foot snags the strap, you get tripped up.

Greed for more money can snag us away from God. **Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.** If that sounds like an overstatement, then just remember how a young man loved his wealth more than he loved Jesus who came to give him eternal life ([Luke 18:18-30](#)). Judas loved 30 pieces of a shiny metal more than he loved the life of God’s own Son. If those people put their love for money over their love for God, then what makes us immune from behaving the same way?

The love of money causes people to make the most foolish of choices and the most illegal of actions and the most hurtful things to their family. Yet, the love of money can separate us from the riches of heaven and plunge into hellish grief.

If you are tired of always fighting to get the newest, best, biggest thing, if you realize just how empty life is even though you have wealth, if you want to **DISCOVER LASTING CONTENTMENT** you will not find it *by looking at your money*. You will **DISCOVER LASTING CONTENTMENT** only *by looking at your God*.

He reminds you: **For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.** Babies do not bring bags of money or cars or homes with them into this world. The Egyptian pharaohs were buried with their money so that they could use it in the afterlife. Yet, centuries later, their wealth is still here. **We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.** That really puts your wealth into perspective. Only one thing leaves this world— you.

So God fills your heart with every single need. He gives you Jesus. Understand what that means. Jesus did not enter this world and love gold and silver and green dollar bills.

He sees you— a human being with flesh and blood. He knows how often your heart finds value without God. So, he keeps his heart free from love of wealth. He loves you so much that he took your blows, suffered your bleeding, agonized for the penalty you owed for greed.

How much money would it take to pay someone to go to hell instead of you? How much money would it take to make God erase one single sin? How much money would it take to bribe God to smile at you for just one second? God already owns everything in the world; you and I could give him nothing! So, Jesus gives the one thing God wants: his perfectly priceless life! He makes that payment for your benefit. **DISCOVER LASTING CONTENTMENT** *by looking at your God.*

You already have everything that is of true value! Jesus would have many reasons to cling to heaven for himself, but he gives all of it to you. You get all the tear-less-ness. You get all the reason to be happy. You get all the days without sorrow or pain. You get the full share of heaven's inheritance.

If God's forgiveness is the only thing that you get to take out of this world, it really puts into perspective the wealth you have now. It remains a blessing. It means that you get to use God's blessing as God intends his blessings to be used.

You are content with food, clothing, and covering; you can provide for yourself. If you have extra, you are content to use it on the extra expenses without feeling like you are losing something dear.

It means that you get to use your wealth so that others may become rich in God. Quite simply, you give your offerings. Your offerings support the ministry of this congregation. You are providing a place for people to gather and hear how Jesus forgives their sins free of charge! You are using your earthly wealth so that others can take God's forgiveness with them from this life.

So, you take an honest look at what God gives you and you set aside an offering in keeping with your income. It may mean that you are able increase your offerings because God has given you the ability to do so. (And no, this does not mean that you must empty your savings accounts). It may mean that your offerings are limited, but you eagerly look for the opportunities to continue giving back to God. You have **DISCOVERED LASTING CONTENTMENT** *by looking at your God!*

So that changes our opening question: "What one thing will make you completely content and end those 'If-only-I-had...' kind-of-lists?" The better question to ask is: "What do you already have?" See the blessings God continues pouring out on you. Food and drink, house and home, clothing and shoes, land, cattle, and all you need to live. Most of all, a Savior, who has paid your entry into heaven with his precious blood.

This is all yours— and it always will be. You get to take that priceless forgiveness with you. It transforms your attitude when dealing with wealth. **DISCOVER LASTING CONTENTMENT.** *Not by looking at your money, but by looking at your God.*