

Sermon Reading: 1 Timothy 6:6-10,17-19

Sermon Theme: Put Your Hope in God

Money is good. That's right; you heard me correctly. Money is good. Not only is it nice to have and something you need, money is good. You might be thinking, "But wait a minute, I thought money is the root of all evil." Have you heard that before? I have too. The thing is, it's not true. At least, it's not what God's Word says. Money, in and of itself, is not a bad thing. Money is good. Money is a blessing from God. It's something God gives for you to enjoy. But as with so many of God's good gifts, we can love money too much. And if there is one thing besides ourselves that we tend to love too much, it is money. Maybe that's why money is talked about so often in the Bible. Maybe that's why Paul chooses to wrap up his first letter to Pastor Timothy with these words: **"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 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people 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"** (v.6-10).

Did you catch that? Money is not the root of evil. It's the love of money. Already at a young age we begin learning the importance of money when you want the gumball from the machine and you hear we don't have money for that. Quickly we realize that with this money stuff I might be able to get what I want. I can achieve some sort of my dreams. Sure, when we are younger it was for toys or candy. But this desire for money starts so early and clings to us until the grave.

It doesn't take long or too much for this love of money to grow either. It's one of the most noxious weeds and resilient too. It hears that godliness with contentment is great gain and responds, "Ideally, yes, but that's just not how this world works." No, if you want to get anywhere you need to work more so that you can have more, so you can spend more, so that you have more for a cushion in case of an emergency or that big "what if" actually happens.

But Paul continues in v.8 **"If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."** But will we? We are flabbergasted when we hear some of these huge money contracts that professional athletes receive and wonder, "That's so much money! Money is ruining everything! Why couldn't he settle for less?" as he goes to a different team who will pay him more. But would I settle? We tell ourselves that we don't want much; just a little extra, just a little more. I don't want a lot, just as much as him or at least not too far behind; then it will be okay. But will you? I think about this with the church finances. How much do we need to have sitting in the General Fund so that there would be no grumbling or worrying about what the bottom line say? What number needs to be

there so that we are less budget-focused and more ministry-focused with our planning? I think about myself: What does the magic number have to be with my own finances? What about for you? And it may not be money in the dollars and cents. It could be time—time is money—it’s experiences and achievements, it’s the actual stuff and things, it’s relationships; there are many things of which we want more of and to be rich in.

So Paul warns: **“Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people 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” vv.9-10.**

Watch your heart. Greed led King Ahab in the Old Testament to have a man murdered to gain his vineyard. Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus’ own disciples, did not enter into following Jesus as a spy for the Jews to set a plan to betray Jesus. No, it was a heart that allowed the love of money to take root that grew into eventually betraying his Lord. That love of money sets the bait with the promise that this will give you security, peace, hope, comfort, and even contentment. Having money will bring you the life you can live, be proud of, and maybe even look back at to assure you that you must be doing the right thing, a good worker, and a good person. Once we take that bait, it traps you by giving you a little of what it promises while leading you along, “Just work a little more; get a little more.” But the desire to gain more and climb higher leads to falling further and plunging deeper. Some people have even wandered from the faith and impaled themselves with so much pain because of their love for money. The pain of distress because what will happen if it all goes away. Stress over needing to have these things in my house and in my life so I can tell myself that I have this life thing kind of figured out. Worry whether or not you really do have enough saved up while being able to keep up with rising costs and inflation.

So where is your heart? How do you react when there’s another sermon talking about money in the church? Do you feel the church shouldn’t be talking about such things? Do we forget how much Jesus talks about and warns against the love of money? Money is the world’s favorite idol that we allow to control our lives and the decisions we make. Too easily we fall into placing our trust in it hoping that it will give us some sense of security and peace because we remember how insecure and lack of peace there was when you didn’t have as much. We love it too much because it does bring us happiness to be able to treat ourselves and feel good about treating others. Paul isn’t speaking to just the ultra-rich here. Paul is speaking to the penny-pincher who holds so tightly to her money, grief-stricken and anxiety ridden as if God would all of sudden decide he’s no longer going to keep his promises if she lets go of any of it. He’s speaking to those who find their rest in their retirement funds and bank accounts. But Jesus warned us in Luke 16: You cannot serve God and money.

So money is bad, right? No, not at all. Money is good. It's a blessing God gives. And that's where we need to start in order to see our money correctly. Paul writes in v.7, **"For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it."** All that you have is from God and a gift from him. Just as easily as he gave it to you, so he can make it all disappear. Even if you worked hard and were a good worker, that did not guarantee you anything. No, all that you have is a gift from God! And if we use these gifts to sin, to keep us from him, to pull us away, if we love these gifts too much, then we are abusing the gifts that God has given to us.

The fact of the matter is that God gives you exactly what you need. If we have food on our tables, clothes on our back we will be content because this is talking about everything you need for your daily life. God gives you your daily bread, even without your asking and even to the wicked. And he's given us so much more. Oh it might not be as much as him or as nice of stuff as her. But it's what God has given to you and with simple child-like faith we simply trust that his will is being done.

Be assured, this faith doesn't rest on wishful thinking or empty dreams. It's based on the fact that God gave you his one and only Son. Because he willingly did that for you, Paul asks in Romans, **"How will he not also give you every good thing?"** (Ro. 8:32). Your Heavenly Father has too much already invested in you. It wasn't because we were such wonderful creatures. No, our love is often misguided and misdirected, too often we love so much more than him. And, yet, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He became poor for our sakes. The Father would not spare his Son any pain or suffering; every one of your sins had to be paid in full. The price was far more and precious than all the silver and gold in the world; it was his own Son's holy and perfect blood poured out for you. He would crush His Son who he dearly loves for your sins and mine. He would turn his back on His Son who took my greedy heart as his own so that the Father's face shines on you and gives you peace. He does this all and Jesus willingly endures it so that you might become rich. And you most certainly are; have not a doubt in your mind. The tomb is empty and Jesus lives. God is for us; he's on your side! Of course he's going to make sure that you are taken care of, especially because you are his son and his daughter. You have been washed and set apart as God's child with water and word of baptism and made heir to his kingdom forever. Therefore, be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, "Never will I leave you and never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

Put your hope in God who richly provides us with everything. Set aside any arrogance you might be tempted to have because of what you own or what you have achieved in life. Remember what Job said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart" (Job 1:21). Do not put your hope in your money or wealth—it's a terribly shaky foundation that can give way at any moment. Instead, put your hope in the one who gave you all these things for your enjoyment. Don't feel bad, guilty or ashamed if you have more than someone else or if you have less. God gave these blessings to you! Enjoy them and use them thoughtfully. Praise God that he has blessed you in such a

way. And then be a blessing to others: **“Do good, be rich in good deed, and be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life”** (v.18-19). Be a blessing to your church. Serve and love your neighbor. Live your life as God has given to you today. Yes, you might dream for a different job and more things. And that’s okay; but check your heart! At the same time, this is where you are at right now. Don’t wait for later to do these things God has given to you to do; later might never come. Instead live and use the gifts you have today to serve God by serving neighbor. As you consider what to give your offerings, remember that God promises you cannot out give him. So test him on it and watch him open the floodgates of heaven as he blesses us. Cheerfully give from the heart knowing that what you give is laying up treasures and serving neighbor. Put your hope not in the math, the numbers in the accounts, or the stuff in your home. Put your hope in God who provides you with everything for your enjoyment. Amen.