

October 7, 2007
Pentecost 19

"There Is More to Life Than Money"

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-16

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. ¹³ In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴ to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which God will bring about in his own time-- God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

I am holding in my hand a mouse trap. Did you ever have to set one of these things to capture the mouse that had invaded your garage or even your home? First you need to put some bait on the trap such as a little cheese or even better some delicious peanut butter. Then you set the trap so the trigger will release quickly when the mouse touches the food with its nose. Quicker than you can blink an eye the trap snaps shut and the mouse is gone.

Satan is always setting traps for Christians. One of his best baits is actually a blessing which the Lord gives us, the blessing of money. He is very good at using money to trap people who have large amounts of money, people who have very little, or just ordinary folks who are somewhere in between.

It is amazing how often Jesus talked about money and told stories about money such as the story of the rich man and poor Lazarus. Money created challenges for people at Jesus time just as it does for us today. This morning we want to use the words about money that Paul wrote to Timothy as we speak to you on this subject, **"There Is More to Life than Money."**

A love for money can trap us

It is not wrong to love money. Money is a gift from God. It is wrong to love money so much that it takes us away from loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind. Listen to these words of Paul. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it." It makes you happy when some stock you have gains in value, or you see the value of your home go up. An even more

important gain or growth in your life is this "godliness with contentment."

Godliness is living your life for the Lord and close to the Lord because he has been so good to you. Paul uses that word several times in the two letters he wrote to Timothy. Paul had this joy and contentment in living a godly life. He wrote while he was a prisoner in Rome, "For I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. Then he wrote, "I can do all things through him who gives me strength." The Lord is so powerful and so strong that he can make you happy and content in him even when everything is taken from you. When Job lost everything he was able to say, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." It was the prophet Habakkuk who was given strength from the Lord to say, "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and fields produce no good, though there are no sheep in the pen and cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior." Habakkuk then gives all glory to God with the words, "The Lord God is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer. He enables me to go on the heights." Have you ever met people who seem to be so happy in the Lord, like deer running up to the heights, even though they have little money?

How different when money controls our life to such an extent that it robs us of our joy in the Lord and the blessings he has for us. "People who want to be rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." There is nothing wrong with wanting to be rich and have money as long as the money does not become a root of evil in our lives, or lead us into foolish and harmful desires that plunge us into ruin and destruction.

Andrew Jackson Whitaker also known as Jack was a self made millionaire who had everything going for him. He had dropped out of school when he was ten years old and eventually had his own construction company in West Virginia that employed 200 people. He paid his workers well and they loved him. He loved his wife Jewell and his teenage grand daughter Brandi was the joy of his life. One day he pulled up to a convenience store to put fuel into his big black Lincoln Navigator. It was there in Hurricane, West Virginia that he bought a Powerball lottery ticket that won him 315 million dollars. Off course he took it in lump sum payment of 93 million after taxes and immediately gave 10% to his church and another 17 million to a foundation to feed the homeless. After that it was all downhill. He was arrested for drunken driving and assault in a so-called gentleman's club, his wife left him, and his granddaughter Brandi whom he lavished with a 2000 per week allowance died of an overdose of drugs. Only recently in an interview he said that he wish he had lost the ticket and never cashed it in.

We can easily see how money messed up the life of Jack Whitaker, or the rich man in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, or Judas who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. What about a more careful look into our own lives? Did you ever want something so badly that you were willing to forget about the Lord and do something foolish to get it? Maybe it was going into debt just to have that nice new car with payment so high you had to work extra hours and neglect the family, or even neglect giving your first fruits to the Lord? Or maybe it was the money you lost in an investment that became a daily source of grief and

anger in your life so that you could not be like that deer that runs up to the heights as you jump for joy in the Lord. Or maybe it was the lottery ticket that you bought one day and actually prayed that you might win instead of being content with what the Lord gave you. Or maybe it was the foolish argument you had in your marriage over money and how it was spent. You smelled the bait on the trap, you wiggled your nose, and then let your whiskers touch the bait. You couldn't resist even though you knew something was wrong about this scene. Then snap. The trap was shut and all sorts of evil and bad stuff emerged from that excessive love of money.

A love for Jesus always sets us free

Jesus knows the traps that Satan sets for us when it comes to money. That is why he talked about it so much, and why he came to this earth to free us from the punishment we deserve for any excessive love of money. It is Jesus who gives us the strength to say no to these temptations. Listen to what Paul said to Timothy. "But you, man of God, flee from all of this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness." Look around you and see people running after money and things. Instead of joining the herd and running wildly after material things we are told to flee and run toward greater values in life such as righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness."

Dear Christian, think of how much you love righteousness. You know the stark truth about your own righteousness. You know it never measures up to what God expects of you as Paul said, "I know that in me that is in my flesh dwells no good thing." You know Jesus and the perfect righteousness you have in him. His perfect life and perfect death are there for all your failures including how you handle money. The Savior who makes you clean also fills you with a holy desire to want to be righteous in everything you do, and godly, and faithful and loving, and gentle and patient. These are virtues that fill us with joy as we live our lives out for him who showed so much love for us. Think of the freedom that Jesus brings into our lives as Paul said, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Then he tells us to take hold of eternal life. "Take hold of eternal life of the eternal life to which you were called when you made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses." The word for "take hold" has the thought of not just grabbing something but grabbing on to it. The riches in this life are here today and gone tomorrow hardly worth holding onto so tightly that we lose Jesus. It was Job who said, "Naked I came and naked I shall return." It was the Lord who gave Job the strength to confess in his lowest time of life, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God." Romans 8 says that sufferings of this present will not compare to the glory that shall be ours. 2 Corinthians 4 says, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."

Paul writes about Jesus and the good confession that he made before Pontius Pilate to encourage us to not be afraid to confess freely and opening to the whole world that our real riches and our real homes are in the place that Jesus has prepared for us. Remember what Jesus said to Pontius Pilate when Pilate asked him, "Are you a king?" Jesus said these famous words, "My kingdom is not of this world." Our kingdom is also not of this world. In Jesus we have a King of kings who comes to us with treasures he has won for us by his death and his resurrection. He comes into our lives, and opens up a treasure box far more

valuable than gold and jewels, or a portfolio of high performing stocks and bonds, or huge CD's earning a high interest rate. Jesus has come into your life with the greatest treasure in the world, his love and his mercy and his faithfulness and his goodness, that he earned for you by being forsaken on the cross with our sin. This goodness and mercy follow you all the days of your life. All of this is so real to us because as Paul says of our God "He is the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or even can see. To him be honor and glory forever and ever."

Let me tell you a story of my life only because it is also the story of your life because you and I share together these eternal riches in Christ's love for us. I am thankful for the day I was waiting in line to rent a car in the airport in Chicago. The girls behind the counter were busy talking about what they would do if they won the Illinois lottery which was 40 million dollars. One girl felt bad she had ignored me, joked about it and was very friendly. Then she asked if I had picked up my ticket because there were only a few hours left to buy one. I simply smiled and said, "No!" Then she said, "Oh you don't play the lottery do you?" I said no. And then she asked why not. Without thinking I said, "I am perfectly happy with my life the way it is now. If I won the lottery it might change all that." Then she said, "What land do you come from, I would like to go there someday?"

You dear Christian are privileged to know you come from a kingdom that will last forever and that leads you to believe and confess there is so much more to life than money. Amen.