

EPISTLE READING: 1 Timothy 6:6-12, 17-19

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Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, so that^[a] 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. 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.

¹¹ But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made^[b] the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

¹⁷ As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

Holy Word...**Thanks be to God**

GOSPEL READING: Luke 12:22-34

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²² He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. ³⁰ For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, strive for his^[f] kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

³² “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Common but not Biblical Wisdom Pt 5
“The Love of Money is the Root of All Evil”

“The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” How many of you have heard this biblical phrase misquoted as *“Money is the root of all evil”*? It’s pretty common mistake. For it is not money, but the LOVE of money, that Scripture actually says gets us into trouble. Money on its own is morally neutral. Throughout the Bible, both the poor and wealthy are at times considered godly.¹ Job, for instance, is possibly the wealthiest person in the world during his time, but the Bible is clear that he is a godly man. In the end, God replaces his wealth two-fold! And throughout the Bible we see God additionally bless some of those who were wealthy like Abraham, Solomon, Lazarus, Dorcas, Lydia, Zacchaeus, Cornelius. There is never an equating of money to evil. In addition, Christianity maintains that Christ’s coming into the world is God’s blessing of the world and everything in it.² It is Gnosticism, a heresy, to think that the material world is somehow bad and inferior to the spiritual one. Money is not evil, but the love of money is what gets us into trouble.

In Paul’s first letter to Timothy, his young protégé who has a seeker’s heart for God but very limited experience...in his letter, Paul explains that God cares deeply about our attitude toward money. First, Timothy is told that *“We brought nothing into life and we’ll take nothing out with us.”* And that’s something we often forget, isn’t it? *You may have heard the story of two elderly men paying a visit to the gravesite of their recently departed wealthy friend. “How much do you suppose he left?” one asks. “Well, I reckon he left all of it,” the other responds. Right. In addition, Timothy is warned that “those who want to be rich may become trapped by many senseless and harmful desires.”* It doesn’t take a lot of imagination to know what senseless and harmful desires Paul is thinking of. One likely is:

- **Addiction**—The love of money is addictive, habit forming. The more we have, the more we want. *During the Depression, Bernard Baruch, the famous American financier and investor, the economic advisor for several presidents, accumulated billions of dollars. A reporter once*

¹Chris Brown. “Stewardship” <https://www.stewardship.com/articles/3-most-misunderstood-bible-verses-on-money> (accessed 7/4/18).

²John Buchanan. Sermon: “A Little Biblical Straight talk about Money”. <http://fourthchurch.org/sermons/2007/0903007.html> (accessed 7-4-18).

*asked him, “Mr. Baruch, you’re a wealthy man. How much is going to be enough? Bernard Baruch answered, “Just a little more. Just a little more.”*³ Yes, we’ve seen the tendency toward addiction in ourselves. For when we have less, we share. When we have much, we protect and hoard more and more. Studies repeatedly have shown that those who have lower incomes give more proportionately than those who are wealthy. Something happens to our souls, I think. Maybe it's just that we forget, that we forget what it’s like to share. Maybe that’s it. But whatever it is, I think it sneaks up on us. We’re not really aware of the addiction that’s happening until it’s got us, until we’re trapped. I’ve heard it said that it’s a bit like the fly and the flypaper. *The fly lands on the flypaper and says, “My flypaper”. A bit later, just a very bit later, the flypaper says, “My fly”.*⁴ Addiction.

- Anxiety—The love of money also produces “senseless and harmful” stress. In a 2017 survey, the American Psychological Association reported that 61 % of Americans not only have anxiety but credit it and its associated health problems (e.g. hypertension, headaches, insomnia, depression, ulcers) to money.⁵ Four hundred years before Christ, Kohelet, the wise author of Ecclesiastes concurs. He says that, *“The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep, for they toss and turn fretting about their money”* (Ecc1 5:12). And Jesus, himself, assures us that we need not worry about how much we have. *God will care for us just as...no, even more than...God cares for the lilies and the birds, which he clothes in beautiful and dazzling arrays. “It is God’s pleasure to care for us,”* Jesus says.

You and I, friends, are small, dependent and finite, but we are preciously particular and part of a big world over which our creator God is bigger. Our anxiety about money will immediately lose its power when we take this to heart. When we surrender ourselves into God’s hands, we are freed. We are freed to take hold of the eternal life that we were meant to live, beautiful, dazzling eternal life. *(pause)* Anxiety.

³ Edward Inabinet. “The Scariest Drug on the Market.” <https://sermons.com/sermon/the-scariest-drug-on-the-market/1348361>. (accessed 7/4/18).

⁴ Edward Inabinet.

⁵Stephanie Bethune (contact), “APA Stress in America Survey” <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/11/lowest-point.aspx> (accessed 7/5/18).

- Numbness—And finally, I think that the love of money can also cause numbness. It's like the lidocaine which deadens our nerves before a dentist fills a cavity or before a physician sutures a cut. But this numbness is not to our own pain, even though, as we've said, that is real too, it is to the cries of others' pain, others in need.

Have we not heard the stories of people, who are very idealistic when they begin on a quest to raise money for a cause, and then, when the money begins to accumulate, they gradually lose their fervor and spend it on themselves? Sure, we have. It's the stuff of charity watchdogs and whistleblowers. It's the stuff of scams and swindles. I just heard this week that 39 Texas gas stations which, despite the TX Deceptive Trade Practices Act, engaged in price gouging during Hurricane Harvey. They are having to now pay out \$167K.⁶ *The Chinese tell of a man who dreamed day and night of gold. One day, he stepped directly to the booth of a gold dealer at the marketplace, snatched a bag full of gold coins and walked calmly away. The officials who arrested him were puzzled. "Why did you rob the gold dealer in broad daylight, and in the presence of so many people?" "I did not see any people," the man replied. "I saw only gold."*⁷ Numbness.

But, you know, the love of money not only causes a numbness to the needs of others, it also causes a numbness to God, for it is God's will that we care for our neighbors as ourselves. Paul says that "*we are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for ourselves the treasure of a good foundation **for the future.***" And Jesus directs us, directs us to *sell our possessions and give alms, to make purses for ourselves that do not wear out, ...**an unfailing treasure in heaven.***

There is a legend about St. Martin de Tours. *Evidently, on one cold winter day, when he was a soldier in the Roman army, as he was entering a city, he saw a beggar at the gates. Martin had no money, but the beggar was blue and shivering with cold, so Martin gave what he had. He took off his soldier's coat, worn and frayed as it was; he cut it in two and gave*

⁶ Marjorie Owens. "Texas Gas Stations to Pay Out \$167K for Price Gouging during Hurricane Harvey." <https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/texas-news/texas-gas-stations-to-pay-out-167k-for-price-gouging-during-hurricane-harvey/287-570967452>. (accessed 7-5-18).

⁷ Edward Inabinet.

*half to the beggar. That night Martin had a vision. In it he saw heaven and Jesus in the midst of all the angels; Jesus was wearing half a Roman's soldier's cloak. One of the angels said, "Master, why are you wearing that battered old cloak? Who gave it to you?". Jesus answered, "My servant, Martin, gave it to me."*⁸

Friends, this summer we've been thinking about common phrases which are thought to be but are not in the Bible. "*Money is the root of all evil*" is one of these. It's a misquote of the Biblical passage, "*The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*" But, you know, after considering just the few kinds of evil in which the LOVE of money can result (addiction, anxiety, numbness), I think it's not hard to imagine how this misquote has occurred. It's hard to keep money in its place and not begin to love it, isn't it? (*repeat*)

Rev James Merritt has put together a list of ways we might know if the tendency to love money is sneaking up on us (i.e. If we are sacrificing family for money, marrying for money, arguing, lying, worrying about it, outright stealing, padding the expense account or cheating on our taxes, or if getting it, spending, saving or investing it is more important than GIVING it).⁹ I might add one more...if we can't imagine the good in life without it. For this is what it's ultimately all about anyway, right? God wants us to enjoy life, to have a good holy contentment in the here and now and also in the here-after. God wants everyone to have this. And the way it can be for everyone is for us to live into our calling, open our hearts and wallets, and give our LOVE and life away. "*Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it,*" Jesus says (Mt 10:39). This is actually how we are made rich.

So, as Timothy, the words are for us to hear AND take to heart. It is for each of us to determine. It is up to us. It is our responsibility to decide how deeply and profoundly we will let our love for Christ and not of money guide our living. **This is the Biblical wisdom. This is the Biblical wisdom.** "*Be good, rich in good works,*" Paul said, "*generous, and ready to share... take hold of the life that really is life.*" Amen.

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_of_Tours (accessed 7/5/2018).

⁹ James Merritt. "*Everything Must Go: Striking it Rich*". <https://sermons.com/sermon/everything-must-go-striking-it-rich/1470668>. (accessed 7-5-18).