

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED I Timothy 6:6-12

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Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Imagine that life is climbing a mountain. Everybody is climbing the mountain. That's the way life is—climbing the mountain. Where are you on the mountain? Every one of you is going to have a different answer. On Thanksgiving Day, the two specific questions are, are you thankful for where you are on the mountain, today? And are you thankful for the equipment the climb-supervisor gives you each day? He knows the mountain inside and out. He knows the route you are on.

It's easy to be dissatisfied--to be looking at the progress of others and the equipment of others. Are they are getting ahead of you? But it's not a race. Do they have better equipment than you? But the route they are on calls for different equipment. Does their trek seem to be more glorious and stylish? But it's not about glamour. It's about progressing each day.

On this climb *Godliness with contentment is great gain.* Interestingly the word "great" is actually "mega." Godliness with contentment is mega-gain. Huge, wide, vast, exceedingly plentiful. Gain? Getting, acquiring provisions. Of all the provisions for the day's climb, the best equipment is godliness. Godliness--forgetting about everyone else, making the climb that God has set out for you, climbing onward each day with the provisions that God has provided you. !!And the provisions are more than just insulated clothes, ropes, cleats, etc., but His provisions are likewise His love and forgiveness for the many errors, mistakes, poor judgments, sins, you make every day. In His crucified and risen Son, He is holding you safe, pulling you out of a sure jam, sparing your life when you could have plummeted to your death, all until you reach the summit!! Godliness with contentment. Being at peace and joy for what you have for each day's march up that mountain. Contentment—what I have is enough. The contents of the box of supplies for today's climb is just what is best and right. The loving and wise climb-supervisor has provided it for you. The Greek word for contentment is also used to describe a country and a people that are self-sufficient, not looking for imports from other lands, but prospering with what they have. Sufficient. So no more "Thank you, Lord, but I wish I had different contents in this box of supplies!" Like the child who opens a gift and says Thank You, but quickly sets it aside for "better" fare.

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. This climb is not about you—as if, "Lord, look what I've done to get ahead!" It's about going forward each day under the Lord's hand. You are making progress. I mean, today are you ahead of where you were yesterday? You don't think so? How about ten years ago? Forty years ago? Do you have more blessings now than then? Is the car you drive today—a well used car at that—easier and more advanced than the new car you bought forty years ago? Or do you still insist that you are not better off now than in the past? Stop looking up the mountain, look down. See how far you have come. Let's go back farther in life. Are you more blessed now in life than the day you were born? What did you have then? Nothing. A bare bottom at that. You have been much blessed. *Having food and clothing with these we shall be content.* Thank you Lord, for helping me with this climb and the provisions I need, each day. Thank you, Lord, on Thanksgiving Day!

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. The desire to be rich, to have more, to hit it big, to be on Easy Street, is a lure from Satan. It leads to many seductions and traps in life. It hinders the climb up the mountain, focusing only on the pleasures of the here and now. Like the rabbit caught in the snare, the mouse caught in the trap, the bird caught in the webbing of the fowler, the desire to be rich will bring harm. It is like an addiction, never satisfied and always craving more, so that one forgets about the climb, longing to enjoy only the temporary satisfactions of the flesh. These are foolish and harmful lusts that drag one down into the deep. A horse can't run in the thicket, a ship can't sail at the bottom. Destruction and loss awaits. The lust for money and for possessions is at times overpowering. The word for "lust" is describing that which is in the mind at the forefront of desire--steering, or mis-steering, all thoughts and actions. Do you want an example? How about in the fall, during deer rut. Caution is thrown to the wind. The results for the buck can be deadly. *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.* Forget about getting richer and richer and richer, whether in dollars or in possessions. It's a dangerous mis-step on the climb.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. The love of money, not money, but the love of money, is a dangerous keg of dynamite in life. It brings all kinds of evils, sins, and harm. It leads one away from Jesus the Savior. "You cannot serve God and mammon" we heard in the Gospel reading today. Love for money brings with it every other sin. Lying, cheating, stealing, law-breaking, hurting, harming, disloyalty to friends, family, and spouse. Money becomes an idol. Having more money becomes an addiction. In greediness some have strayed from the faith. Like picking apples on a ladder. Leaning out away from the ladder just a little too far to pick one more, standing at the very top rung, holding onto twigs and branches, stretching for one more, is a sure recipe for disaster. When the love of money fills the heart, the Lord is demoted. Forgiveness, and Jesus, and heaven are easily dismissed and lost, to one's own eternal harm. The climb up the mountain ends in disastrous death.

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. You have a mountain to climb under the Lord's supervision. So if you are going to expend a lot of energy, do it on something helpful. At the top of the list--righteousness. Not just doing right things to advance self along the way, but clinging to the righteousness that God provides in Christ. The righteousness that is yours by faith in God's Son, who went to death like a lamb to the slaughter, so that you are spared. His righteousness is credited to you! All the rest, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness, flow from this righteousness. Be thankful and content with your climb in life that God has given you and the contents in the box of supplies that God has given you. Don't give up because other things look appealing. That's the devil talking. Push on, as your Father's child, loved and forgiven in Jesus with the glory of heaven awaiting. *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.* Don't give up. Heaven is yours in God's Son whom He has sent for you. Trust Him—which itself is by the Lord's own power. Fight on. Keep climbing each day. Live with thanks in your heart for all—ALL—the blessings of your Father whom you have confessed and professed as your Father in Christ.

Thankful contentment describes the child of God in Christ.—especially on Thanksgiving Day. **Be CONTENT WITH THE CONTENTS** of the box of supplies given to you by the climb-supervisor for each day's life and climb!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach ---