

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED

I Timothy 6:6-12
CONTENTMENT VS. COVETOUSNESS

But 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 raiment let us be therewith content.

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.

A good meal! Nothing like it. As the dinner nears its end, there's a dilemma, right? Shall I have more, or shall I quit? Will the pleasure of another plateful supersede the comfort of a happy stomach? --- Actually, daily life for the child of God in Christ is a lot like that. At your "meal of life"—I don't mean just "eating"—are you satisfied with the money, house, home, family, clothes, crops, food, job, weather, health, friends, nation, etc., that your heavenly Father is providing for you? Or do you yearn for more?

Paul in our text from his letter to Timothy addresses that very point. He has been intertwining two thoughts. The one has to do with erring teachers in their midst who are filled with idle talk, leading the listeners away from love, and forgiveness in Jesus. They use lies and hypocrisies devised by demons to steer others into false living based on false commands. They fuel arguments and strife. Their goal is to use their brand of godliness for earthly gain! Withdraw from these! Paul tells Timothy.

His other thought is that Timothy and the people of Ephesus live lives of true godliness, built on devotion to Jesus, Son of God and Savior of sinners. That Christians in godliness pray for their government so that under conditions of peace the Gospel may be spread. That men be humble in prayer, not angry and doubting. That women be modest and yield to their husbands as the role God has given them. That bishops and deacons [we would say pastors and councilmen] be humble leaders of good repute, with lives devoted to the Lord. That the people honor the faithful elders in their congregation. That older men and older women be dealt with respectfully, that widows be lovingly cared for, that younger widows marry and care for their families, that families care for their own. That slaves be faithful and respectful to their masters. Godliness of living is Paul's second major train of thought.

Godliness. Living for the Lord who has tenderly rescued sinners by Jesus. Godliness. Knowing that God is for us; and if God is for us, who can be against us? Godliness. Living lives of contentment and peace, and foregoing lives of covetousness and greed—like the ungodly teachers from whom they were to withdraw.

Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and not by his own philosophy, says *Godliness with contentment is great gain. We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.* The Lord who has put you here, loves you dearly, and washes you clean from your sins at His Son's expense. He will never abandon you or shortchange you. *Be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you (Hebrews 13:5).* He is leading you safely through this life by faith in Christ as proclaimed in the Scriptures to eternal life in heaven.

Why all this seeking to amass more and more money, more and more stuff? All the treasures that seem so important, the pickup in the shed, the tools in the shop, the heirlooms in the hutch, the photos on the wall, the family homestead you inherited or the one you have spent 30 years creating, the savings and investments you have, these are all extras only for this life. They do not last and have no real future. You came without them and you will leave without them. You came without a stitch and will leave without a stitch. By earthly standards you will leave embarrassingly poor. But by God's standards in Christ, you will be righteous, forgiven, and luxuriously rich. *Having food and raiment let us be therewith content.* There's nothing wrong with having wealth, but be content with what the Lord allows.

So is your focus on God or on yourself? Think of spendthrifts who indulge self with everything. Money runs through their fingers like water. They have this and get that. They enjoy this and are entertained by that. They relish honor of others, so they spend lavishly on them. Is this focus on God or on self? Is that you? But then consider the saver, the miser, the hoarder. Everything gets squirreled away and piled up. Why? For self-security. Is the focus on God or on self? Is that you? Use wisely the wealth God gives. Be content.

They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. Toiling and striving for wealth is a dangerous path. The text talks about *they that will be rich*—not “will be” in the sense of the future—I will be in town tomorrow. But will in the sense of “plan to be, determined to be”—I **will** go to town tomorrow. Such an attitude toward getting riches— I **will** be rich—uses shortcuts, ungodly short cuts, that bring harm to your own soul. Disservice to employers, lying, cheating, stealing, hurting, harming, ruining marriage, cursing, swearing, denying Christ if need be. Finally when faith in Jesus is damaged beyond repair, one drowns, “falls into the depths,” in destruction. It could be the depths of the ocean and thus one drowns; or the depths off a steep cliff leading to certain death; or the depths of hell and damnation **Will** for riches and “more” lead one away from God.

The love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. In case you have not been shown this before, the verse does not say “money is the root of all evil.” “Money” or wealth is not the problem, but the “love” of money. If God makes you rich, you are blessed and I rejoice with you for that. But if you love that money and love it more than God, then I regret that you have it. Do you ever wonder about this verse, How can it be true that the love of money is the root of all evil? Money was not even involved in the Garden of Eden and Satan’s temptation of Eve? The passage is not saying that all sin in this world comes from the love of money. That’s not true. It’s simply saying, that once the love of money is present, then any and every other sin is apt to follow.

While some coveted after [it], they have erred from the faith. To “covet after” money is not just “to want.” We all “want” things. Maybe you want a new pair of shoes, or a bigger refrigerator. It’s not sinful to want something. Coveting is “to want something you can’t have.” Coveting is wanting something so badly that you will stop at nothing to get it. The Greek word translated “covet” originally means “to reach, to stretch,” to do everything in your power to get what you want. And in such reaching, people are misled, coaxed to wander from the faith, *and pierce themselves through with many sorrows.* Imagine being on a ladder leaning against the roof of the house. You are nailing the first row of shingles at the bottom edge. Because it’s no fun to keep going down to move the ladder, you try to reach as absolutely far as you can. There comes a point when you better not reach any further, or the ladder will topple and you will crash to the ground. To fit the text, let’s say it’s a hundred dollar bill out there. You’re afraid the wind will blow it and someone else will get it. You reach and reach, you covet that money, you reach a little bit too far, and go down, and break your head. Coveting after money is a one way street to disaster.

Like any other sin, a little bit leads to “a lot of bit.” At the dinner table “I’ll just have just one more forkful” often leads to another, and another, and then a big serving spoon full, until you’re stuffed and uncomfortable. Short term pleasure vs. long term pain. Beware of greed for money.

Do you get hooked into frequenting gambling casinos? or buying lottery tickets? Why? Lack of contentment with what you have. Looking for the “big one.” Then you’ll be happy. Then all your problems will be solved? Don’t count on it. Why do you want to waste your money, risk your money, to get somebody else’s? God has given you your money. God has given them their money. And whether you have plenty and can “afford” to waste some, isn’t the point. It’s irresponsible. And whose money are you trying to get? Not the casino’s. but the money of those who lose! For somebody to win in gambling, somebody else has to lose. It’s not like a business, I make chairs, People buy chairs from me. They walk away happy. And I can pay my bills; I’m happy. Not so in gambling. Somebody loses. And you say, Well if they are foolish enough to play, I’ll take it. But it’s not yours. Isn’t it like an unmarried man and woman. She may be willing to give herself to him, but does that mean he has a right before God to do so? Beware! And finally, “Well, every year farming and ranching is a gamble.” Really? Whose money are you trying to take? No one’s. Under the Lord’s hands, it’s a faithful way to earn a living. It’s a matter of trust. *They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

The text closes, *But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.* Flee! Run from these things. “Godliness” is the order of the day. You have been declared **RIGHTEOUS**—you of all people—through faith in Jesus and His rescue for you. Even your shameful sins of discontentment and “wanting more” are forgiven. Trust your Shepherd. He is your Brother. His Father is your Father. Relish your blessed state. Stop trying to gorge yourself in the meal of life; it leads to destruction. Let the Holy Spirit fill you with contentment in Jesus through the Word. Godliness and contentment are yours! Father, forgive my discontent!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---