

1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19 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. . . . Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 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.

Our Attitude Toward Wealth

1. The Love of wealth
2. How to use wealth

The Russian author Tolstoy tells the story of a rich peasant who was never satisfied. He always wanted more. He heard of a wonderful chance to get more land. For 1,000 rubles he could have all the land he could walk around in a day. But he had to make it back by sundown or lose the money.

He arose early and set out. He walked on and on, his greed driving him just a little farther as he saw new territory. Finally, he realized that he had to turn back and he had to walk very fast if he was to get back in time to claim the land. As the sun got lower in the sky, he quickened his pace. As the sun neared the horizon, he began to run. His heart was pounding rapidly and he was gasping for breath, but he gave it everything he had and plunged over the finish line, fell to the ground, and collapsed, just seconds before the sun set. A stream of blood poured out of his mouth. He lay dead. His servant took a shovel and dug a grave and buried him on the spot. Tolstoy's story is entitled, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" His answer: Six feet from head to heel was all he needed.

How much do you need? How much is enough? What is our attitude toward wealth? That's the hard truth that Paul is addressing in this lesson today.

Did you hear the radical exclusivity of what Jesus taught in the gospel lesson? Jesus said, "**You cannot serve both God and money.**" (Luke 16:13) He didn't say, "*You should not* serve God and money, but rather, "**You cannot serve both God and money.**" (Luke 16:13) Most of us try to work out a compromise. How about if I'm 60 percent for God and 40 percent for money? But Jesus knew our hearts so he drew the line in the sand as if to say, "Choose your lord! Will it be God, in which was you relinquish all rights of ownership? Or will it be money, in which case, you are not serving God.

Be careful. *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.* Both money and loaded guns are quite useful in certain situations. There's nothing I'd rather have than a loaded gun if an angry bear was charging at me in the forest. But even so, I need to treat it with respect and know how to use it or it could harm me or my loved ones as much as the bear could. Money deserves the same caution as a loaded gun. If you are not careful, it can destroy you and your family.

The love of money is a root sin. That is to say, it lies beneath the surface and nourishes any number of other sins. My neighbors have a ground cover that started to spread into our property. At first, we didn't mind, but then it started taking over everything. Connie wanted it gone, so this spring I started pulling it out. If I got a good grab, I could pull up several plants connected to roots that spread 10 to 15 feet.

So, the love of money by itself can't be easily seen, but like a root it grows and spreads in our heart. Then it sprouts and produces all kinds of sins: greed, worry, selfishness, cheating, stealing and lovelessness. Like a weed the love of money crowds out time to serve our Lord, read his Word or join him in worship.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. 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. Contentment is a point of view. It's not about what we have. It's about what's in our hearts. Contentment is the opposite of the love of money. It's being satisfied with

however much God is willing to bless us. *For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.* In other words, nothing we have is ours. It's on loan from God for a while, and I can't keep it.

Do you ever feel deprived when you finish shopping for the month and there is no money left for savings? Do you feel guilty when you can't buy the latest styles of shoes or clothing for your children? If so, materialism is living in the same house you are. Where does God promise enough money to do and buy everything you want? Can we possibly exist without two Cokes a day or going out to eat once a week? Can you live without the iPhone 14? Can you be satisfied with a 22-year-old minivan? Paul says that we can be content with just food and clothing. Can we?

We can, if we remember what Paul said. *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.* God will take care of you. Everything we have comes from him. And we can trust that he loves us enough to give us what's best. Writing to the Romans Paul gave this promise, *"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32) Look at the cross. God sacrificed his own Son so that you would have forgiveness and eternal life. If God gave his Son, he is not going to be stingy about other things. Our eternal future is secure in Christ. This promise assures us that our earthly future is just as secure in God. That promise is so certain that King David said, *"I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread."* (Psalm 37:25)

Instead of loving wealth, let's learn how to use wealth the way God wants us to. Since God gives us everything we have, let's learn how to use that wealth in a God-pleasing way. Paul wrote, *But to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.* He didn't give wealth just for people to throw it away. So how does he want us to use it? First, for our own enjoyment. Notice that he puts this first. God doesn't give us wealth to hoard it while we live in poverty. He gives wealth to enjoy. *"Refusal to enjoy it is as much a sin as misuse, waste, or overindulgence."* (R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of Colossians Thessalonians Timothy Titus Philemon*, p. 729) It's okay to have the cabin by the lake, the nice house and to go out to eat. If God has given you the wealth to afford those things, there is nothing wrong with enjoying that wealth.

But we don't stop there. Paul has more instruction for our wealth. *Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.* Those with wealth have a greater responsibility to do good with the wealth they have. *"[The wealthy man] can be in only one room at a time, wear only one suit of clothes, sit only in one chair, eat only one meal at mealtime; but with his wealth he can reach out in a thousand directions and work good."* (Lenski, p. 730) If you are enjoying your wealth, that's great. But what good are you doing with it? How are you helping others? What riches of good works are you accomplishing with your wealth?

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. The life that is really life is not found with a fishing pole or fancy clothes. The life that is really life is found in the word. When we use our wealth to build up the treasure of God's Word for ourselves and others, we are using our wealth for real life.

Wealth can be deceitful because it leads us to confuse ends with means. Wealth is not an end in itself. It is just a means God has given us to help ourselves and others grow closer to our Savior. When we use our wealth to lay that foundation for ourselves and others, we are using it well.

So, what is your attitude toward wealth? Is it safe to say that materialism has impacted each of us and our attitude toward wealth. So, may we return to our baptisms in repentance every day, and may we come to the Supper this morning to be embraced with Jesus' forgiveness. *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."* (2 Corinthians 8:9)