

Natalie W. Bell  
October 28, 2018

***Real Life—God’s Life***  
***1 Timothy 6:17-19***

Today our reading is from the first of three Pastoral letters from Paul. It’s from Paul to his young pastor protégé and frequent traveling companion, Timothy. Paul writes to encourage him in ministry, and uphold the character of the body of Christ, the church.

We pick up at the end of his letter, when Paul is reminding Timothy of what’s really important in life, especially when it comes to money.

I’m going to start by reading verses chapter 6, verse 6-10, then 17-19.

***Hear the Word of the Lord for you today:***

*<sup>6</sup> Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; <sup>7</sup> for we brought nothing into the world, so that<sup>[d]</sup> we can take nothing out of it; <sup>8</sup> but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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.*

*<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, <sup>19</sup> 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.*

So who bought a **lottery ticket** last week—when it was a 1.6 billion prize?

Ed bought us one!

And what did you **dream about** if you were to win that lottery?

I mean, after getting out of debt, **what would you do** with it?

We were dreaming about that elusive new sanctuary for the church, and an endowment, maybe setting up an educational foundation.....and helping family.

We thought we’d probably keep the house and just update it.

Can you even *imagine* being that rich?

Do you know anyone who has way more money than they need?

I have a billionaire cousin, and this young couple spends money in ways that boggle my mind. They are finishing an 18,000 square foot home costing about 7 million dollars. I can't even imagine.

***What would it feel like to be rich?***

Well, what if I told you that *you already are?*

We talked a little bit about this two weeks ago, because as Americans even those of us who are poorer, are rich compared to the rest of the world.

If you go to [globalrichlist.com](http://globalrichlist.com) you can find out exactly where you rank in the whole world according to wealth.

My \$50,000 salary puts me in the wealthiest .31% bracket!

I make over \$25/hour,

and most of the world lives on less than a dollar a day!

Amazing.

Of course, Americans are also *notorious for our debt*.

So the riches we have are not always enough to catch up to our expenses, much less any emergencies or disasters that can wipe us out financially.

Many people are just *a paycheck away* from losing homes, or cars.

Many do not have savings, or retirement for the future.

Which brings us to this conversation Paul is having with Timothy.

He knows Timothy is not wealthy as a pastor,

but he knows that he does have means,

and he has a church in Ephesus, full of people with means.

And that wealth---a term that most of us shy away from when talking about ourselves---that *wealth comes with temptations*.

The temptation is *to care too much* about the money.

Too much about the stuff.

Kind of like how Jesus told that rich young ruler to sell all and follow Him, because he knew how his heart was tied to his wealth,

Paul tells Timothy that those who are rich

(meaning most people hearing this letter read aloud in worship)  
 should be *careful with their hearts*—and realize the *temptation to love money*.  
 And that *love of money* is the *root of all kinds of evil, and suffering, and pain*.

Notice that Paul does NOT, Jesus does not, say that *money itself* is the root of evil.  
 It is the *LOVE of it* that causes so much harm and destruction:

<sup>10</sup> *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.*

I think we could all agree that *loving money causes problems*.

Even winning the lottery would probably not be worth it,  
 when you think about what temptations, trials, and decisions  
 would come with such wealth,  
 and what kind of crazy ‘friends’ and relatives would come crawling out of the  
 woodwork to find you!

There’s a reason that many lottery winners *go bankrupt* within just a few years!

But most of us don’t have a ton of money to worry about,  
 and most of us don’t ‘love’ money,  
 so *what do Paul’s words to Timothy have to say to us?*

What if the question is not do you love money?

Most of us would say NO.

What if the question is, what do you love *ABOUT your money?*

You know I was talking to the kids about some *shoes* I remember buying that were  
 expensive and didn’t fit well, and I don’t even wear anymore—but I thought they  
 would be great, so I bought them.

I was excited about those shoes a few years ago—and now I regret the money  
 spent on such things—things that are usually just collecting dust today!

*Got anything like that in your house?*

Don’t we all have those temptations—to *spend where it’s not needed?*

Don’t we all have the temptation *to use money unwisely?*

Don’t we all face the temptation to *go into debt* when we could choose to wait,  
 or deny the urge, or realize it is not a need?

It’s so easy—way too easy—to *click and buy, or swipe and buy, or hold your  
 phone up and buy* things today.

I can get caught up in buying a present for someone online, and suddenly I see things I might need...and before you know it the *cart has been clicked* and I'm out money that I didn't plan or need to spend!

Kind of like when I joke with the woman in the *checkout lane at the grocery*, about how I just come in here for *three items* on a list.... and somehow I'm leaving with \$100 worth of food!

We all know these temptations of money.  
And we all know how *easy it is to think that money can do more than it can do*.  
We feel *sad*, we shop.  
We feel *disappointed*, we buy something.  
We feel *tired of the old model*, and we get the new one.  
When we could just stop.

***What helps us do just that?***

<sup>7</sup>*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.*

What if we spent some more time thinking about how we put the HOPE we attach to money *to our faith in God?*

What would that mean?

What does it look like to *put our hope in God*---who *richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment?*

Sometimes people hear a pastor talking about money and they think---  
*they just want my money.*

*Or they want me to not spend my money!*

But Paul's letter reminds us that *neither is true*.

I'm talking about money because *Jesus and Paul thought it was important* for our faith, *NOT because this place needs it*.

*And no one is trying to tell you how to spend it.*

And isn't it interesting that *God is not saying 'DO NOT SPEND'?*

But rather, *God is the one who richly blesses* us with everything --to enjoy??

That's an awesome view of God when you think about it.

God is NOT a tightwad.

God is NOT greedy for your wallet!

***God doesn't NEED anything from us----God is a GIVER.***

But, is that *how we view* God?

***The one giving us riches, to enjoy?***

When was the last time you thought about your abundant blessings?

The things you've been given, to enjoy?

Yesterday when it was so sunny, I sat on my porch  
and started writing a list in my journal, of blessings.

And it just kept on going, and going, and going...

What are your blessings?

I have a family, a church, a job, a house, an education, a car...I have a beating  
heart...I am RICH. Rich, and where did it all come from?

***From God, who richly provides everything for us to enjoy!***

***Riches and Joy.***

Those are some things we might hear about in the world,  
but from a completely *different perspective*.

In the world *material stuff equal happiness*, or joy.

But in the world of Christian faith, *the riches of God equal joy*.

Some of that is material, and much of it is not.

That *word RICH* occurs several times today, and it's not just the riches we have.  
It's the riches that *God provides*.

We are rich! God is rich! And the result?

***Joy.***

***Enjoyment.***

Did you know that all throughout the Bible,  
when God talks about money and giving,  
and Jesus talks about money and giving,  
there is always talk of *blessing? And abundance?*

That's is *no accident*.

God richly provides everything—*for us to enjoy!*

***In Malachi 3:8-10*** God talks to people who are reluctant to tithe ten percent of  
their goods and money—God says this:

*Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, “How are we robbing you?” In your tithes and offerings! <sup>9</sup> You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! <sup>10</sup> Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not **open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.***

**An overflowing blessing.**

Do we realize that is what God wants to give us?

Overflowing blessing?

When that **rich young man** walked away sorrowful, because he could not part with his money, Jesus told the crowd it was harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God... but with God all things are possible.

To that, **Peter told Jesus:** “Look, we have left everything and followed you.”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news,<sup>[f]</sup> <sup>30</sup> who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—...and in the age to come, eternal life....Mark 10:17-31

Last week Gordon spoke on **Matthew 6:33**, where Jesus has just told his followers **not to worry** about their material needs.

He says:

**Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you as well.**

**All these things.**

**A hundredfold.**

**Overflowing blessings.**

These are the **gifts of God—do we realize it?**

Do we know **how generous God is** to us, and do **we give in the same generous spirit?**

Does our giving **mirror** the giving of God?

Are we **tithing** ten percent, or holding back?

Are we **giving first fruits**, the **best** of what we have, or just what's **leftover**?

And do we realize that *our giving leads to blessing? Now and forever?*  
Just like God's generosity blesses for generations to come?

Have you ever heard the term **ROI**?

I saw it in a news article and had to Google it. It's a acronym for  
**Return on Investment.**

Listen to Paul again:

<sup>18</sup> *They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share,*  
<sup>19</sup> *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.*

***How are we to live?***

We are to place our ***hope in the riches God provides***, for our enjoyment---  
and we are to ***do good.***

***Be rich in good works.***

Isn't that an interesting way to talk about doing good things?

Rich in good works—what does that mean ***in your life?***

We are to be ***generous,***

and ***ready to share,***

storing up ***treasures*** for the future to take hold of ***real life.***

What if we take all the riches God has provided us,  
regardless of what amount that might be,  
and we ***INVEST IT?***

What if we invest it with our dollars?

Our time?

Our talent?

What if we ***give now, and that generosity just keeps on going...forever?***

What does it mean for us to invest in ***people?***

What does it mean for us to invest in the ***church?***

In our ***community?***

Aren't those the kinds of investments that have ***eternal returns?***

***Heavenly treasures***—the kind that Jesus told us we should have?

If you help the ***Youth Café***, you are investing in the lives of 6-12<sup>th</sup> graders and  
their safe and welcoming place after school—where they get fed both physically,

but also emotionally and spiritually, with Sara's care and friendship, and the fellowship of other students!

Talk about an investment in the future.

If you help *Meals on Wheels* with your spare change, you are investing in the lives of disabled or elderly people who are literally being fed with food, but also with the smiles and friendship of those who deliver the meals!

If you support the *Pastor's Fund* you are investing in the lives of families who will have a roof over their head, instead of living out of a car, or worse.

If you give to the *ministries of this church*—  
you are transforming lives through Christian education,  
through the beauty of music and worship,  
through the power of the spoken word, and the sacraments.  
You may never know what your gift did in the heart of a *friend* beside you right here in this place, or a *stranger* who comes to visit.

Talk about some heavenly *Return on Investment!*

That's the kind of return that lasts forever!

*Jesus called it heavenly treasure...*

*For where our treasure is, there our hearts can be found. (Matt 6:21)*

Today you have a *small red paper heart* in your bulletin.

I want you to write down how you are BLESSED when you give.

It can be a word, or a phrase.

It could be the ROI—your return on an investment in Godly giving?

Just fill that out and drop in the offering plate today, it will go on our bulletin board.

Friends, hear the *Good News of the Gospel* for you today.

Our *God richly provides* us with everything, to enjoy!

When we place our *hope in those riches*, we find life.

*God's life.*

*Real life.*

May we all have the hearts to find such life,

And to that, all God's people said, Amen.