

Contentment in a Greedy World

1 Timothy 6:6-10

SERIES: Seven Simple Truths About Life

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July 26, 2009

TCUMC – 8:00, 9:15 & 10:30am

I. The greed problem—our culture and us too.

Let's read 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 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.”

Greed. This is not a mysterious problem in our society as of late. The recent recession has been a reminder of the sinful human tendency toward greed. We live in a greedy world.

How much is enough? For most people there is no answer to that question? How much money, possessions, property, power...on and on? How much is enough? In almost every situation our human selves tell us

enough is certainly more than what we have got right now. Our society is stuck in the rut of “more.” We need more money, more space, more flexibility, more security, more comfort. We are all members of the “more is better” club. We live in a greedy world.

Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline* explains this well. He says,

“Because we lack a divine Center our need for security has led us into an insane attachment to things. We must clearly understand that the lust for affluence in contemporary society is psychotic. It is psychotic because it has completely lost touch with reality. We crave things we neither need nor enjoy. ‘We buy things we do not want to impress people we do not like.’ ... We are made to feel ashamed to wear clothes or drive cars until they are worn out. The mass media have convinced us that to be out of step with fashion is to be out of step with reality. It is time we awaken to the fact that conformity to a sick society is to be sick.”

One of the reasons we are ok with this constant desire for “more” is our twisted sense of reality. Do you know that since you are sitting here today you are one of the richest people in the world? We are sitting amongst the wealthiest group in the world. I suspect that the recession has hit some

here hard. Some of your retirement accounts shrunk dramatically, but for a moment I want you to consider yourself by a different standard. The people sitting around you are more wealthy than billions of people all around the world. Consider these facts...

- As of 2004, the U.S. economy is larger than the next 6 biggest economies combined.
- The State of California is actually the 5th largest economy in the world.
- 3 Billion people in the world live on less than two dollars a day
- 1.2 Billion people in the world live on less than a dollar a day.
- As Americans we spend 6 times more a year on soft drinks than the entire Gross domestic product of Kenya.
- The entire budget of Cambodia is only 500 million dollars which is millions less than we spend on golf balls in America each year.
- Peru has a budget of about 9 billion dollars which is about half of what Americans will spend this year on Cable TV service.

WE ARE RICH!!! Can we wrap our minds around that for one minute? We grow up with a certain sense of reality because of the place of our birth, but the reality we know is not reality for a large majority of God's children on this earth. Whether we grew up with almost nothing or an abundance, as Americans we all are more wealthy than the majority of the world. As Americans we think sacrifice is not eating out twice in the same

week. For a large part of our world sacrifice is walking dozens of miles a day just to have clean water. Do we somehow think we are better off because we deserve it?!?! I don't know about you but I didn't get to choose where I was born? The thousands of children that died today from starvation didn't choose that. Their lives didn't end that way because they somehow deserve it. No they died today because their lives happened to begin in a place with far less opportunity than what we know. WE ARE SO RICH!!! We need to wake up to the reality of this world and not live in a little bubble like we have got it so bad.

And yet somehow, even after thinking about those statistics, I still...I still find myself dealing with greed. We have SO much and still we want MORE! This morning I want us to take a hard look at ourselves and that is not always a fun thing to do. We are all worried about the horrible greed on Wall Street...and rightly so, but what about the greed you and I exhibit everyday. Wall Street greed is just on a larger scale and more visible because they have more money to play with. What about the times we cut out our financial gifts to the church or charity but still find money for vacations? I am convicted that many times I neglect to give money to the starving and yet I still find money to spend hundreds of dollars eating out every year? What about the times we spend \$5 on a single coffee drink

while at the same second there are people in another part of the world who are dying because they don't have clean water to drink? None of those things are bad in and of themselves, but we do them without even a consideration of the reality of our world. And we spend so much and still think we need so much more.

Our greed doesn't seem so bad because we are not talking in the millions of dollars. But God's judgment isn't only for wealthy CEO's. Greed isn't measured in millions of dollars it's measured in the heart!

You know greed is not a new issue. Greed has fueled sinful behavior since the very beginning. Just look at the Bible and you will see a book filled with greedy people...

- Adam and Eve—they just have to eat the one thing they can't have! They have an entire beautiful garden paradise that God has given them and still they want more.
- King David was a rich king who could have whatever he wanted and still he decided he needed more and slept with another man's wife. Everything wasn't good enough...he needed more.

- Judas walked on the earth with Jesus himself. He spend time with the Son of God...he saw him do so many miracles. And still he sold his soul for 30 pieces of silver.

That is just a small sampling of the greed we find throughout scripture. People throughout human history have been plagued by greed. Why? It doesn't have anything to do with money. Adam and Eve didn't even have money...greed is a heart issue.

II. Greed is not a money issue; it's a heart issue.

Greed is not a problem with money or material property. Greed is completely a heart issue.

The evidences that money or things won't satisfy are all out there...and yet we still live in constant want of this or that. We hear constantly that money doesn't make you happy. We see lives like Michael Jackson who had all the fame and anything anyone could ever want and was still obviously lacking. We hear about sports stars with millions of dollars who are caught up in crimes and adultery...obviously still searching for something. We see actors commit suicide in the peak of their careers who have all the fame and fortune one could hope for. AND STILL, MANY

TIMES, WE LIVE OUR LIVES THINKING THAT WE ARE ONE MORE PURCHASE AWAY FROM HAPPINESS.

One of the most popular pop artists of the last 10 years is John Mayer. He has written a song that I think really is the anthem for the heart problem that leads to greed. Here are some lyrics from his song called *Something's*

Missing:

I'm dizzy from the shopping malls
I searched for joy, but I bought it all
It doesn't help the hunger pains
and a thirst I'd have to drown first to ever satiate

Something's missing
And I don't know how to fix it
something's missing
And I don't know what it is
At all

Friends...check. Money...check.
A well slept...check. Opposite sex...check. Guitar...check.
Microphone...check. Messages waiting for me, when I come
home...check

How come everything I think I need, always comes with batteries
What do you think it means

Something's missing
And I don't know how to fix it

We all live in this state of yearning for something to fill us.

Unknowingly we try to buy our way to significance. **Greed is rooted in our desire for the “something more” in our lives.**

Look again at the verses we read from 1 Timothy. Verse 10 gets miss quoted very often. It does not say that money is the root of all evil. What it says is, “the LOVE of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” See the money itself is not the issue. The issue is what you LOVE. It is a heart issue. Greed comes in when we love money and possessions and status more than anything else.

There is a story in the gospel of Mark about a rich young man. He asks Jesus, “What can I do to inherit eternal life?” The young man tells him that he follows all the commandments. Jesus then gives him tough instructions. He says, “Go sell everything you have and give it to the poor and then you will have treasure in heaven.” At this the young man, who had great wealth, turned and left saddened. Here Jesus strikes at the root of the issue. The young man’s money wasn’t the issue, it was his heart. Jesus asks him to die to that which he loves so that he could love God most of all. Greed is a problem that occurs when our love is in the wrong place.

All throughout the scripture you see Jesus talking about greed and contentment. Jesus wants us to stop trying to get more, more, more, and trust in God. God calls us to contentment.

Proverbs 16:8 tells us, “*Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice.*”

Proverbs 30:8 tells us, “*Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.*”

And of course our main passage in Timothy today starts, “*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*”

Contentment is really about who or what we love the most. When Jesus was asked about the most important commandment he said, “First love God, then second, love other people.” Essentially he said you were created to love—love God and love others. Money and stuff is meant to be used, not loved. The problem is that in our sinful world we end up switching these roles. Instead of loving God and people, and using money and stuff; we end up loving money and stuff and using God and people. We use God like a giant ATM that we can give a list of our wants. But really we were created to LOVE God.

Something’s missing in all our lives. We desperately search for something to fill us. Sometimes we turn to more money and more stuff, but those things will never satisfy.

This is the key...listen to this...the thing we desire is not something God can give us, but it is God himself. **The thing we desire is not**

something God gives us, but God himself. We were made to love God.

When we love money more than God we begin to creep into a life of misery.

As Christians many times we tend to live a “Jesus Plus” lifestyle. We think the key to happiness or being content is Jesus...plus the perfect job. Or Jesus...plus enough money to be comfortable. Or Jesus...plus a nicer car. NO NO NO! Contentment doesn't come from Jesus plus anything! It's just Jesus!

Fill in the blank for yourself right now. **I would be happy if I just had _____.** NO YOU WON'T! Now cross that out because it won't work. Whatever you wrote...I don't care how admirable...ultimately nothing other than Jesus can satisfy.

Jesus said to the woman at the well and he says to us this morning, “I am the living water that will quench your thirst. I am what you are looking for. I am the way to contentment. It's me. It's not me plus a bunch of other stuff. It's just me. Are you thirsty? Are you weary? Are you searching for significance? Are you looking for joy?” “It's me! It's me!” Jesus says. Jesus himself is the water that will quench your thirst.

Have you been searching for something more in your life? Have you been spending more time seeking what God can give you? Or seeking God himself?

III. Jesus is the secret to contentment.

I think if we are honest we would all like to be content. We want to be satisfied with what we have and where we are at in life. Yet contentment seems to be something at the end of an imaginary rainbow—always just out of our reach.

Here are some truths about contentment:

1. **There are no simple steps that lead to contentment.**

Contentment is exclusively a heart issue. It has nothing to do with what you have or don't have, but what or really who you love.

2. **Contentment is absolutely counter-cultural.**

3. **Contentment comes in our identity as God's child.** God's love only will satisfy! Not status, money.

4. **Contentment does not come in simply learning to live with less it comes in learning to love Jesus the most!**

When we learn to love Jesus the most...really love him the most...everything else pales in comparison and we are not left with a constant drive for more. We already have the "more" in life—intimacy with

the living God of the universe. That's what we were created for and that's what we are searching for!

The Apostle Paul is a great model for us of contentment. He is the one who wrote this passage in 1 Timothy that says, "*But godliness with contentment is great gain.*" He also said in Philippians, "*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*"

These statements come from a man that by most standards shouldn't be content. Listen to a summary of some of Paul's hardships listed in 2 Corinthians 11. Paul says, "*I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.*"²⁴*Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.*²⁵*Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,*²⁶*I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger*

from false brothers. ²⁷I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.”

This is the same man that says I have learned to be content in every situation? How? How can someone who suffered so much and owned so little wealth be content? He found his satisfaction in Jesus Christ alone!

Paul also said in 1 Corinthians, *“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”* And he said in Philippians, *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*

And finally hear these words from Paul in Philippians 3, *“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him...”*

For Paul, life was all about Jesus! Jesus was his strength. Jesus was his sustenance. Paul had learned that he needed Jesus more than security or food. Paul found contentment by learning to love Jesus the most.

This morning you can find contentment. It won't come in more money. It won't come in the perfect job. It won't even come if your family is finally at peace...even though that would be wonderful. This morning you need to know that the only place you can find contentment is in Jesus himself. Learn to love Jesus the most.

Quickly, as we wrap up...you may be asking how. How do I really love Jesus that way? Here is your key action step...spend time with him! Spend time with him! You can't learn to love someone you don't know very well! God is desperate to get your attention. While we are busy scurrying around trying to find something to make us feel good he is constantly by our side waiting for us to slow down and realize his constant presence. Spend time with God this week. Spend time talking to him in prayer. Spend time reading his written words in the Bible. Spend time talking about God with others. The more time you spend with Jesus...I promise the more you will learn to love him.

If contentment is really about what we love the most, is it really a surprise that we learn to love money more than God? We spend more time in shopping malls than we doing reading God's word. We spend more time watching TV and inundating ourselves with materialism and commercials

than we do in prayer. It's no wonder that we learn to love the world more than Jesus...just look at where our time goes. Spend time with God this week and learn to love Jesus the most.

And one more action step as we talk about greed and contentment. This is a challenging thing to ask. This week look at your budget if you have one...or write down a typical month's expenses. Then while looking at those numbers in black and white, ask yourself this question, "If someone else were to look at these numbers would they be able to tell how that I am a follower of Jesus?" "Could someone see the way I spend my money and tell I am a Christian?"

Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Greed fills our world and you and I are not immune. It's not really a money problem, though, it's a heart problem. We will spend our entire lives searching for something more in life to fill us until we realize that something is not money and it's not possessions. It's not even some blessing God can give us...it's God himself.

Jesus said, "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full...I have come...It's me...It's me." It's Jesus...he is the way to

contentment. Run to him this morning and you will have exactly what you are looking for.