

Community Church of Issaquah  
July 21, 2024  
Being Content with Our Life  
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Do you think the writer of the books of Timothy was able to look centuries into the future and know exactly what would be happening in the year 2024? Each time I read this passage I am overwhelmed with the relevance of it to our world – to my own life. Every day I am confronted with the reality of what has been labeled Christian Nationalism. Does that sound familiar to you? Does this verse ring a bell with you? “If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing.”

It has never been my task to determine what exactly is meant by ‘different doctrine,’ I am often alarmed when I hear or read about those whom I believe to be following a much different understanding of the teachings of Christ. Recently a friend of mine who comes from a much more conservative denomination than ours was sharing that he had resigned not only his role as pastor but had chosen to leave the church all together. He explained that when he had preached a sermon from the Beatitudes, several leaders in his church came to him in protest. They had asked him why he had preached about something so irrelevant. When he replied that those were the teachings of Christ, the leaders demanded that he stop preaching about things that didn’t matter.

Though this is certainly surprising and caught me completely off guard, this is not uncommon today. Many men and women are being forced from their ministry roles due to the leaders of their churches who want to hear the messages being preached by those who seek to force their own view of Christianity on others. If we were to present these verses from First Timothy to them, they would certainly brush it aside as meaningless. The most frightening thing about his current trend is that it is at the core of the political agenda that is causing more anxiety and concern than I have ever witnessed in my life and my 60 years of ministry.

The continued words in the verses from the passage from Timothy are even more profound awakening. *“He has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between those of depraved mind and deprived of the truth who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.”* The Gospel I preach and the doctrine you and I believe are not like that at all. Yet in today’s religious world, the meaning of Christianity and following the teachings of Christ have developed such wide chasms between churches and individuals that it is frightening me to think where this divide will lead us.

The words in these verses that jumped out immediately as I was studying this passage are these: “Who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.” I began to ask myself the question, do people actually believe that if they believe in God their earthly lives will be overwhelmed with riches?

Sadly, I already knew the answer to that question. Not to criticize any minister, but I wonder sometimes about those who proclaim to be evangelists and messengers of God who live in multi-million-dollar homes, have their own private planes and helicopters, and even possess yachts. One of these men was asked once if his church would open its doors to the victims of a hurricane in their city, but he declined. Then when asked if his church would contribute to the unhoused crisis that was growing there, again the answer was no.

Timothy addresses the subject of godliness and gain quite boldly. He writes, "Godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment." I love that verse. We are assured that when we are following the Word of God and the teachings of Christ, we become godly people of strong faith. And that alone in itself is reward enough for believers. Living the life devoted to Christ has its rich reward when we acknowledge our Godliness and are content or happy with that truth. Just loving and following Christ should make each of us content with our lives.

But there was another part to this lesson, and it has to do with our contentment with our lives and what we have built into our own devotion to Jesus Christ. Our gain of godliness has little to do with the material world we have built for ourselves and our family. Hear this: "For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either." I used to smile and giggle a bit every time my dear friend Kay would say, "You can't take it with you, so you might as well spend it now." Do you find the truth

in that? It is true. As Kay would say, “I can’t even take my gold fillings of my teeth with me.” Neither can we.

Verse 8 clarifies this for us with the words, *“If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.”* Those are lofty words that are a struggle for many of us to adopt as our motto in life. As we happy with the simple things like food and a comfortable place to live? Or do we seek more than that. Perhaps we should listen to the question and answer of the salesperson who asked, “Did you need anything else?” And the response is often, “It’s not about needing, it’s about wanting” and wanting leads us into the world of temptation.

From time to time, I will buy myself one lotto ticket with the hope that I’ll quickly become a millionaire. Sadly, in the 39 years I have lived in Washington State, the only time I have won anything was a whopping \$4. That is the only winning I have been humbled to receive. Perhaps I should pay attention to the next verse in our passage today. “But those how want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction.” It seems wise for me to give up my hope of winning millions since the very pursuit of that does not profit me in the least.

However, in our world today, money and riches seem to be the greatest measurement of success or contentment. All too often media posts a list of the world’s wealthiest individuals with staggering numbers that my small brain cannot grasp. I didn’t even know there was a number called ‘trillion’ until someone told me that it was on the list

– tens, hundreds, thousands, millions, billions, then trillions. That’s an incredible number of zeroes if you ask me.

The warning about this search for wealth comes in the last verse of our passage today. *“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith.”* How do we learn to be content with what we have without longing or wishes for more? That is certainly a difficult struggle for even strong followers of Christ. Do I wish I had more resources to easily pay the staggering bills from medical providers? Yes. Do I wish I were wealthy enough to outpour a generous gift to the unhoused? Yes. Do I wish I could drive into a new car dealer and drive away with a new automobile whose air conditioner really works? Yes.

Am I working hard to simply be content with the life of godliness I strive to achieve? That is my goal in life. Christ urges us to learn to live in contentment with what we have been given. Whether our purse is large or small, the message of today’s Scripture is clear – learn to live a life of gratitude for what you do have. Perhaps we should all more often include in our personal prayers some words of thanksgiving for the goodness we have received both materially and spiritually. I will need to ask myself often, ‘Are you content?’ Though every day will not bring a positive answer to that question, my hope is that more and more often, I will treasure the gifts I receive for being one who always seeks to follow the true teachings of Christ Jesus. I hope that same thing for you.