

Pentecost 18
1 Timothy 6:6-16
September 26, 2010

Dear People of God, because of Jesus, by faith in Him,

Contentment versus greed; pursue the one, run from the other. Those are a couple of the main points God makes to us with these words.

Greed is not a problem only for the rich. Greed is a serious problem for human beings, young and old, men and women, rich and poor of every people, language and race. Greed is a problem, a dangerous problem.

St. Paul writes to every Christian and he says to believers in Jesus, "Some people, eager for money, have wondered from the faith." There is no more horrible disaster than that. For such a person, it means he/she has gone from life to death, from justification to condemnation.

But faith in Jesus as God our Savior is the solution also to greed. One fruit from the God-created plant of faith in Jesus is contentment. Other fruits from the same God-created plant of faith are "righteousness, godliness, faith for daily living, love, endurance, and gentleness.

Faith in Jesus Determines Attitude Toward and Use of Money.

St. Paul addresses these words to Timothy. The apostle titles Timothy 'man of God.' Since Timothy was a pastor, we might think that 'man of God' goes with pastor. But actually it goes with every Christian, every believer in the Lord Jesus. In the Old Testament, 'man of God' does refer to the likes of God's prophets. But in the New Testament, it is a term for any believer in our Savior. In fact, in Greek, it is not even specific as to gender. It would be better translated 'person of God' or our beloved 'child of God.'

Every follower of our Redeemer is said to be a prophet, priest and king, all because of the Prophet, the High Priest, the King of Kings, Jesus Himself. Every believer in Jesus is created, reborn of God. Everyone who trusts in Jesus as the Savior from sin, death, and hell is a reborn son or daughter of the heavenly Father, a member of God's family.

It is important for us to know that Christians are the ones being addressed in these verses.

The very existence of every man of God, person of God, child of God is because of Jesus, the one and only eternal Son of God. That is Jesus.

It is the Jesus who made His good confession in front of Pontius Pilate that Jesus is the King from heaven, the King of God's saving truth. Even as He stood in front of Pilate, Jesus prepared to die on the cross under the sin of the whole world. When Jesus raised Himself from the dead that forgiveness was assured and proven for us. This Jesus who once appeared in the flesh humble to obey and to die for sinners will appear again, when God determines, on the Day called the Last Day, Judgment Day, Resurrection Day, the Day of the Lords. We, believers in Jesus, anticipate that day with longing, with hope, with joy. Then all the people of God, through faith in Jesus, will, body and soul, live forever in joy, in peace, in glory with Jesus.

God is the Giver of life to everything alive. He certainly is the Giver of eternal life to us forgiven sinners for the sake of Jesus' work on our behalf.

All this is our strength and motivation for living the new life of faith in Jesus.

Contentment is a matter of trust (faith) in Jesus and His Word. Contentment rests on this trust. Because we trust Jesus with our life, including eternal life, contentment says the very basic necessities of life are enough. Paul mentions food and shelter. And let us understand that this may be basic food and basic shelter, too. In Philippians 4, St. Paul says that he learned the secret of being content in any and every circumstance, whether having much or having very little. When Paul wrote that what was Paul's circumstance? He was in prison, in prison because he was telling people about Jesus and forgiveness and eternal life. So, his shelter was a jail. His food was first century prison fare, and Paul was content. What was his secret of contentment? It was reliance only on Jesus, trusting Jesus. Even when we lose job and house and most everything, let us be content; let us trust in Jesus as our Savior.

Godliness with contentment is great, mega gain, mega profit. How? It guards us against putting our hope in wealth. That is foolish and deadly, for we entered this world with nothing and we'll leave it with nothing. Money will leave us at death. It makes a very poor god.

On the other hand, contentment encourages us to put our sure and certain hop in God, the only real, permanent Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, alone immortal and glorious in and of Himself. I might, just in passing, mention that the last book of the Bible, the Revelation of St. John, names Jesus the Ruler of the kings of the earth, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and does so repeatedly. Jesus is God alright!

Godliness with contentment also allows us to enjoy what God does give us. The opposite of contentment is never being able to say 'enough' or "I am satisfied." This makes truly enjoying what we do have impossible, a terrible misfortune.

And finally, godliness with contentment enables and moves us to be generous and to share. This is truly the opposite of greed and stealing. This is God-pleasing. This is love in action.

Greed is trust in and love for something other than God our Savior. Greed is ever wanting, wanting to be rich, for example. A person does not need to be rich to want to be rich. But being rich does not equal contentment. Greed never wants to say "Enough."

To want more, always more, leads us into all kinds of temptations, life envy, like dishonesty, like stealing, even like idolatry. These are foolish and harmful desires because they are traps. They lead to ruin and destruction. Greed can lead to money-loving, one word in the original Greek. Money-loving lies at the bottom of many evils. In fact, is there an evil that could not have money-loving as its root? Greed is a "faith-in-Jesus-destroyer." In Scripture, faith in Jesus is the faith.

Instead, by faith in Jesus, pursue, continue to run after righteousness and godliness and faith for overcoming obstacles and temptations and attacks, and love and endurance and gentleness.

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Endurance reminds us that godliness with contentment isn't easy in this life. It is a constant struggle against sin, the world and the devil. We'll need to keep holding tightly to the life, eternal life, to which God called us, by faith in Jesus, which we also confessed when we were confirmed.

It is Our Faith in Jesus, or lack of it, That Will Determine Our Attitude toward and Use of Money. Amen.