

November 8, 2009 1 Timothy 6:-10, 17-19

A farmer was harvesting his corn when he looked up and noticed an 18-wheeler rolling down the highway. "Wouldn't it be nice," he thought to himself, "to be out on the open road!" A young couple driving a sports car passed the truck. "Boy," thought the truck driver. "If only I were driving that nifty car heading out for a little fun." A little later the young couple passed a limousine. The young man turned to his wife and said, "If only we were riding in that limo. I could relax and let someone else fight traffic!" A few minutes later the limousine passed – you guessed it - the farmer's field. The businessman riding in the back of the limo thought out loud, "If only I were driving that tractor. I could be out in the sunshine and fresh air!"

Do you find yourself wishing you had someone else's things, talent, or lifestyle? The Lord teaches us in our lesson today, **"Godliness with Contentment Is Great Gain."** **1) Loving the things of this world is loss. 2) Loving the Lord Jesus is eternal gain.**

Our materialistic age makes earthly wealth the ultimate goal in life. Is it yours? **"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction"** (v. 9). We so often forget these two simple facts: We brought nothing into this world. We can take nothing out of it. This thought terrifies our sinful nature. It thinks, "I've got to get more and then I'll finally be happy and enjoy the good life!" This covetous desire leads people to cheat on their taxes, to gamble to try to get rich, to defraud others, to fail to properly pay their employees, to refuse to work faithfully because they felt they're not being paid enough. It leads some people to steal and rob. The very fact there is a Seventh Commandment "You shall not steal" proves owning personal property is a God-given right. He says, "Hands off – you don't have the right to take what I've entrusted to others!" Socialistic and communistic schemes which would deprive citizens of their God-given private property, forcefully taking it to redistribute it, are contrary to Scriptures. The welfare mentality gripping those who refuse to work and expect to live off the hard work of others is also a sin, for the Bible says, **"If a man will not work, he shall not eat...we command and urge (idle people) to settle down and earn the bread they eat"** (2 Thess. 3:10-13).

Do you remember what Jesus taught about the rich man and poor Lazarus? The purple and fine linen of the wealthy man offered him no comfort when he suffered in hell. But the beggar by faith in the Lord enjoyed eternal life in heaven. Imagine dying and standing at the gate of heaven face to face with God. At that time, will any earthly wealth do you any good? All that will count then is your faith in the Savior, Jesus, by which He will say, **"Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world"** (Matthew 25:34).

The Lord warns us that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Those who want to get rich, those whose goal in life is not to use their talents to God's glory and the welfare of others, but only to acquire wealth for wealth's sake, fall into a trap. The love of money snares them and ruins friendships, disrupts marriages, corrupts institutions within the state and the church. Greed leads to dishonesty, envy, theft, unjust lawsuits, perjury, murder, drug dealing, and even war. But far greater is the spiritual danger that comes from love for money. Those who love money think that God owes them whatever they want. Then they complain and grumble when they don't get it. People who exchange love for money for love for Christ wander from the faith. They will ultimately spend eternity in hell's eternal regret and ruin. **"What good is it," Jesus asked, "for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"** (Mark 8:36)

O God! Deliver us from the love of money! Paul writes, **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. Christ, God's eternal Son, became fully human to face all our enemies. Satan promised, "All this worldly splendor I will give you if you will bow down and worship me." What a liar! Like a courageous warrior wielding the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God Jesus responded, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only!" Never discontent, never complaining, never coveting any earthly thing, yet bearing the sin of the world, He to whom everything belongs, suffered and died in abject poverty. He died to suffer the punishment of our sins. He rose from the dead to assure us real life is by faith in Him. Eternal security is in the home He prepares for us in heaven, which we receive by faith in Him!

Put your hope in Christ as you continue to hear and believe the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Your baptism assures you that regardless of what you have or don't have in this life you are an heir of eternal life in heaven! The sacrament of communion points you reassuringly to the precious price Jesus paid to buy you back from sin so that you may belong to Him forever! Through the Gospel we hear and learn, the Holy Spirit pours out on us the riches of heaven – forgiveness of sin, peace with God, joy in good times and bad, the hope of everlasting life, and the ability to truly love God and love others. We have something richer than money, lasting beyond this life into the next, something Paul calls "the life that is truly life" -- all through faith in Jesus!

So as you pray for daily bread and work using your time and talents faithfully to serve the Lord, trust God will provide for you everything you need. We will use our earthly blessings as faithful managers of all He entrusts to us. Think of your life like a great ship, loaded with rich cargo to be delivered to many people in many places. God is the owner. You are the captain. Everything you have aboard, all your possessions, your talents, your blessings, your money, is cargo to be delivered. You don't own it. God does. But He's made you the captain of His ship, and entrusted you with the job to bring the ship to the right port and discharge the cargo. Use what God has given to bring your offerings to provide the church's gospel ministry and mission efforts; to care for your family; to pay your taxes; to provide for the truly needy. Many people think that happiness comes from getting things. If you want to be happy, remember what our Lord says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." With the Lord in our hearts and in control of our lives, money doesn't master us. Rather, we use it as a tool to serve our Lord. Through your God-given faith on Judgment Day you will hear Christ say to you, "**Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me**" (Matthew 25:40).

"But," you might be wondering, "won't I miss out on some of the fun in life if I live for Christ this way? Won't others take advantage of me and abuse my generosity and love?" Remember who is ultimately in control of your life! The whole course of world history, right up to the end of the world, and the smallest detail of your life are in your heavenly Father's hands. Your heavenly Father knows what you need. **Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well**" (Matthew 6:33).

"How much did he leave?" asked a man when he learned of the death of a wealthy business man. "Hmmm...I guess he left *all* he had," was the significant reply. He owned so much property – but in the end all he needed was the plot of ground for his casket. We brought nothing into this world, and we'll take nothing out. Loving the things of this world is a loss. Loving the Lord Jesus is eternal gain! Therefore, be content, for godliness with contentment is great gain! Amen.