

Pursuing God Instead of Gold

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[0 : 00] Amen. We've been going verse by verse through 1 Timothy.

! We're in chapter 6, and this morning our text will be chapter 6, verses 6-10. If you don't have a Bible, there are Bibles in the pews that you can use.

And if you don't own a Bible, please take that Bible home with you today as a gift from our church to you in our hopes that you'll continue to be reading the Word of God. But for now, would you stand with me?

As we honor the reading of God's Word in 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 6-10. But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.

But if we have food and clothing with these, we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

[1 : 14] For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? In Luke 19, Jesus meets a tax collector named Zacchaeus as he was journeying into Jericho.

In verses 2 and 3, Luke tells us a little bit about Zacchaeus, that Zacchaeus was rich, that Zacchaeus was short, and that Zacchaeus was wanting to see who Jesus was.

But the crowd surrounding Jesus was large, and since Zacchaeus was small, he ran ahead and he climbed into a sycamore tree. As Jesus walked under that tree, he looked up, he saw Zacchaeus, and he said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry, come down, for I must stay at your house today.

Zacchaeus wasn't sure who Jesus was. We can infer from that that he had never met Jesus prior to this day, but he must have heard about Him and what people were saying about Him.

[2 : 39] Why else would he be seeking Him? While Zacchaeus wasn't sure who Jesus was, Jesus, being God, knew where Zacchaeus was, up in a tree.

He knew who Zacchaeus was. He called him out by name, and he knew what Zacchaeus needed. He invited himself to stay at his house. The crowd also knew who Zacchaeus was, but they didn't think that Jesus should meet with Zacchaeus at his house.

They said, he, Jesus, has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner. We can infer from that comment that the crowd didn't really truly know who they were, because they were sinners too.

But Zacchaeus sinned in ways that were more visible in their community. He was a tax collector. People in his community viewed him as a traitor, because he collected taxes for the Romans who ruled them and whom they hated.

People viewed him as a thief, because the Romans permitted their tax collectors to take extra money for themselves.

[3 : 54] And so these people, you have to understand, were disgusted by Jesus' decision to associate with a sinner like Zacchaeus.

Luke doesn't record the conversation Jesus had with Zacchaeus between the events of verse 7 and verse 8, but Zacchaeus' actions in verse 8 and Jesus' response to those actions in verse 9 make it clear that Jesus would have confronted Zacchaeus about his sin, particularly, I think, his love for money, which tempted him to cheat and to steal from his neighbors.

Jesus would have told Zacchaeus about himself, that he is the Son of God, that he is the promised Messiah, the Savior who came to save us from our sins. Now that Zacchaeus knew who Jesus truly was, that knowledge caused him to re-evaluate what he valued, which prior to knowing Jesus was money.

After this meeting, verses 8 through 10 say, Zacchaeus stood and he said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.

And Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham, for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

[5 : 27] Zacchaeus repented of his sins, he was saved, he was transformed, and the wealth that he possessed no longer had possession of him. Jesus set him free from his sin, free from his love of money, which wasn't capable of satisfying him, and bringing him the contentment that he now possessed in knowing and trusting in Jesus as his true treasure.

Zacchaeus learned the principle that Paul communicates through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in our passage this morning, and the main idea is that true contentment is found in pursuing Jesus, not in pursuing money.

True contentment is found in pursuing Jesus, not in pursuing money. At this point in this letter, Paul exhorted Timothy to teach and urge these things in verse 6 to his congregation.

Teach and urge these things in the church to the people of God. These things refer back to the instructions that he's already given for the church. They also refer to what Paul just emphasized about identifying and exposing false teachers in the church who use godliness as a means of selfish gain.

The gain they seek is fame and fortune for themselves. Instead of emptying themselves to follow Christ, they empty others to serve themselves. Paul wants to steer Timothy away from that trap by reminding him of the true source of great gain, which is godliness with contentment.

[7 : 09] So Paul contrasts here two principles and their outcomes to encourage Timothy and his church to pursue the kind of treasure that brings contentment as opposed to the kind of treasure that brings discontentment.

And Timothy was urged by Paul to teach these things, to pursue God instead of gold. Jesus preached about this in his Sermon on the Mount.

In Matthew 6, 19 through 24, our Lord said, do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness. No one can serve two masters, for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

[8 : 22] You cannot serve God and money. This is just one of the many passages in the Bible that warn us against the love of money.

Why? Well, our passage today answers that question. But I think it boils down to how both believers and unbelievers are tempted to view money as a savior instead of God.

We are tempted to think, both as believers and unbelievers, that the answer to our problems is more money. We are tempted to think that more money will bring less stress, less anxiety, less worry, and greater contentment as a result.

But closer analysis reveals that the opposite is true. That money can't buy true and lasting contentment, and that a life spent pursuing money is a life that God says is tragically wasted.

Do you want to waste your life? Hopefully, in your mind, your answer to that question is no. Who would want to waste their life?

[9 : 50] Friend, the Bible says that if you think that the problems you are facing and the things that are causing you to feel stressed, anxious, and worried can be resolved by having more money than the Bible says that you are wasting your time and you will waste your life pursuing something that will not bring the reward that you seek and the true contentment that is found in pursuing the true treasure, the true savior, Jesus Christ.

True contentment is found in pursuing Jesus, not in pursuing money. In our passage today, Paul shares two principles and contrasts their outcomes which either lead to true contentment or devastating discontentment.

And so I pray that today God will give us eyes to see and ears to hear what he has to say to us in his words so that we don't waste our time, so that we don't waste our lives pursuing a savior that

cannot save and that will not bring true contentment and that instead we will pursue the savior who does save and who does give true and lasting contentment both in this life and in the life to come once this life is over.

So the first principle we see from our passage this morning is that pursuing Jesus brings contentment with great gain. Pursuing Jesus brings contentment with great gain.

Again, in the beginning of verse six, Paul says, but godliness with contentment is great gain. The word translated as godliness in verse six is from the Greek word eusebia.

[11 : 38] It's a word that describes a God-centered way of life marked by reverence, devotion, and obedience to him. It's a condition where right beliefs are united with right behavior.

The Bible says that when God saves a person, he regenerates them. The Holy Spirit indwells them and transforms them with new desires which produce new actions, a new way of thinking, a new way of living.

We can look again to Zacchaeus as an example of the life transformation that comes through salvation. Zacchaeus gave away the money he once treasured because now he had a true and greater treasure in Jesus Christ.

This new way of thinking produced a new way of living. He let go of what he once held on tightly to in obedience to the one who now had a grip on him.

Like God, Zacchaeus became a generous giver. His new pursuit of Jesus resulted with a new desire to act like God.

[12 : 55] Godliness results from the pursuit of holiness. Peter talks about the pursuit of holiness in 1 Peter 1, 13 through 16.

He writes, therefore preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct since it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy.

In Romans 13, 14, the Apostle Paul talks about holiness as putting on Christ and denying our sinful flesh of what it desires. Jesus said that the pursuit of holiness is an essential aspect of what it means to be one of his disciples, of what it means to follow him.

In Luke 14, 27, and then in verse 33, Jesus said, whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Verse 33, so therefore any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

The pursuit of godliness, holiness, is not some kind of next-level Christianity. It is Christianity. It is Christianity. If God has saved you, he's changed you, and with that change, he's given you new desires to know him more, to serve him more, and to be more like him as you desire to be less like your old sinful self.

[14 : 37] When we realize what we have in Christ and how the Holy Spirit is at work in us, sanctifying us, and making us more like Jesus, we learn to be content.

The Greek word translated as contentment is autarchius. A variant of that word appears in 2 Corinthians 9, 8, where it's translated as sufficiency in the ESV, and it's a passage that talks about giving cheerfully.

2 Corinthians 9, 6 through 8 says, the point is this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver, and God is able to make all grace abound to you so that having all sufficiency in all things, at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Paul's point here is that when a Christian gives to others, in this case, when they give their money, their treasures generously and cheerfully, to the Lord to support the work of advancing his kingdom, they are making a statement to the church, to the world, about what they truly value and what or who truly has possession of them.

They give because they realize what they've gained in Christ. They understand that they are stewards of the things that God owns, and he owns everything, and he has graciously given himself to them to meet their greatest need, which all the money in the world cannot buy and can never purchase.

[16 : 20] John 3.16 says, for God so loved the world that he gave. He gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Christians can be content and should be content because God the Father graciously gave God the Son who willingly gave his life as an atonement on the cross, dying in our place for our sins, that by faith in him we receive forgiveness, we receive Christ's righteousness, we receive eternal life. Christians are content because they know that God owns everything, they know what God has given them in Christ, and they trust that whatever God takes away from them ultimately achieves the greater good.

Romans 8.28 says, and we know that for those who love God, all things, all things, this means all things, work together for the good for those who are called according to his purpose.

For a Christian, knowing what God has done for you, knowing what God is doing in you and through you, should bring contentment, which Paul describes at the end of verse 6 as great gain.

[17 : 47] Again, the Greek is helpful for us to see how great the gain of godliness with contentment is. The Greek word translated as great is *magus*.

which is the origin of our English word, *mega*. In our culture, we use the word *great* loosely.

Somebody might ask you, how was your day? You say, it was great. Somebody might say, how was that meeting that you were in last night?

And you're like, yeah, it was great. We use the word *great* so much that it's lost its greatness.

It's lost a sense of its magnitude. And you could read this verse about godliness with contentment as great gain and miss the magnitude of how great this gain is.

[18 : 49] Godliness with contentment, Paul says, is *mega* gain. It's abundant gain. It's enormous gain. It's epic gain.

Because being in Christ means your possessions no longer have to have possession over you. You won't waste your life pursuing earthly treasures because you know that they aren't sufficient to satisfy your true need and your new desires that you have in Christ and for Christ.

friend, is that true for you? What if it isn't? What if it isn't? In verse 7, Paul reminds us of a reality to help us gain a true and right perspective of material possessions to help us to realize the great gain, the *mega* gain in the unwasted life that is spent in pursuing Jesus and godliness.

In verse 7, he says, for we brought nothing into this world and we cannot take anything out of the world. Those of you who have had a baby, you know that when a baby is born, they don't bring any possessions with them.

They're not born and they say, and it's not like here comes the diapers and here comes the bottles and here comes the crib and here comes the burp rags. They don't come with any of that stuff.

When a person dies, likewise, all the possessions that they have stay behind and someone else ends up taking possession of those things.

[20 : 29] Paul's point is that earthly treasures are locked into time, they are locked into space. And so, why waste your earthly life pursuing money to buy things that you can't keep?

they have no value in the life to come once this life is over. Once heard an illustration from Dr. Allen, the president of Midwestern that really helped me have a better understanding of how much value money really has. So, let's say, for example, that all of us here this morning that we go on a cruise.

We're on a cruise, we're having a good time, and then our shipwrecks. But we all survive, we all wash up on a deserted island and say that we're, you know, after we've made the help sign and done all those things and hope and prayed that somebody would come and find us, we realize a long time has gone by, years even go by, and this is where we're going to end up living.

And so, we build huts and we embrace the island life. But there's work for us to do in our new community, and so we start working.

[21 : 44] Some of us start fishing, some of us build and repair things, some of us climb trees and gather coconuts or mangoes or whatever is on our island, and all of us find different jobs to do.

We realize that in order to buy and sell and trade with one another, we need some kind of currency, and so we start using seashells as money.

Say one of us has a business where they amass a huge stockpiles of seashells. They're the wealthiest person on the island. They have enough seashells to buy whatever they want on our little island.

And more years go by, and we're all convinced that we're never going to be rescued. This is where we're going to spend the rest of our early lives. We've all resigned to the thought that we'll live the rest of our lives on this island.

then one day, a ship comes to our rescue, and we're all brought back home. What do we do with our seashells?

[22 : 51] We could take them with us, and we could go try to put them in the bank. We could go try to buy a house and say, hey, here, sacks of seashells. I want to invest this in the bank.

I want to convert this over to dollars. I want to buy this house. I want to buy this car. What are people going to think about us? You're crazy. How foolish. In Luke 12, 15 through 21, Jesus taught a parable to illustrate how foolish it is to spend your life pursuing money and trusting in it for the things that you should look only to God for.

And he said to them, take care and be on your guard against all covetousness for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

And he told them a parable saying, the land of a rich man produced plentifully and he thought to himself, what shall I do? For I have nowhere to store my crops. And he said, I will do this.

I will tear down my barns and build larger ones and there I will store all my grain and my goods and I will say to my soul, soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years, relax, eat, drink, be merry.

[24 : 09] But God said to him, fool, this night your soul is required of you and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.

If you know what you have in Christ's salvation and if you spend your life pursuing Christ and sanctification and holiness, you will be able to put the right valuation on the things of this world and be content with what you have.

You won't waste your life, you won't waste the time you have in this world between your birth and between your death, pursuing treasures that perish, pursuing things that in the next life have no value.

And you'll be able to distinguish between needs and wants, as Paul says in verse 8. But if we have food and clothing with these, we will be content.

The person who is truly rich in this world knows Jesus savingly and is content with what Jesus has given him to be a steward of. Whether they have a lot or they have very little, in Christ they know they have something that money can't buy.

[25 : 23] Paul talked about this in Philippians 4, 11, 13, and one of the verses that is most often misquoted and misunderstood. He says, not that I am speaking of being in need for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

I know how to be brought low. I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Paul learned he had come to know that whether he had a lot or he had little to nothing, whether he had an abundance to meet his needs or struggled to find enough money to eat, his situation didn't change his view of Jesus.

It didn't change his attitudes towards Jesus. He pressed on knowing that in following Jesus, in obeying Jesus, in serving Jesus, he would be strengthened by Jesus who is his true treasure. Pursuing Jesus brings contentment with great gain. That gain is being content in knowing that having Jesus or Jesus having you is enough.

[26 : 35] That contentment, that gain in pursuing Jesus, knowing he is enough, keeps you from experiencing the truth of our second principle, which is that pursuing money brings discontentment with great pain.

Pursuing money brings discontentment with great pain. Let's look at the beginning of verse 10 before looking at the other sentences that come before and after it.

Verse 10 says, for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. I've heard people misquote this verse and they say money is the root of all kind of evil.

That's not what this verse says and that's not true. The root of evil is sin, not money. It's the love of money, not money itself that is the root of all kinds of evil.

This is what sinful people do. We take an object like money, which is like, I think money is like 25% linen and 75% cotton.

[27 : 36] That's what it's made of. We take an object like that and we give it supreme value. We give it ultimate worth and it's our sin nature that gives it this kind of valuation and it's our sin nature that desires it, that loves it, that looks to it as a savior, that looks to it to determine our own worth,

which leads us into the trap of worshiping it instead of God.

Loving God through faith in Jesus Christ brings contentment because we are loving who we were created to love, which is God.

But loving money brings the opposite because it cannot satisfy us in the way that only loving God can. Loving money cannot save us from our sins.

In fact, loving money causes us to sin. Verse 9, but those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. Love of money makes people greedy and stingy. If you base your identity and your self-worth on how much money you have, you are eager to keep it instead of give it.

[29 : 00] Love of money tempts people to lie and to cheat on their income taxes. Love of money leads people to gamble what little they have in the hopes of striking it rich.

Love of money tempts people to covet what others have and be envious and jealous of their neighbors. Love of money tempts people to steal from others. Love of money leads people to murder people, either to cash out on a life insurance policy or receive an inheritance or something else.

Love of money tempts nations to go to war with other nations to take their resources. There are a lot of people in jail and in prison today because the love of money has plunged them into ruin and destruction and I've only mentioned a few of the many ways that we see this truth reflected in our world.

But that isn't the worst thing that the love of money tempts us to do. At the end of verse 10 Paul says it is through this craving this love for money that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

So I've talked about how the love of money tempts people to sin against other people but the Bible makes it clear that all sin is ultimately committed against God.

[30 : 22] Psalm 71 says God is a righteous judge and a God who feels indignation he sinned against every day. It is not a sin to have money it is a sin to love money because loving money ultimately leads us to sin and wander away from the faith wander away from the truth and to love something that brings pain instead of loving God and receiving the eternal gain of heaven.

Those who love money Paul says pierce themselves they hurt themselves in their pursuit to acquire it and even if they get it even if they get it they will suffer the eternal pains of hell forever.

In Matthew 16 24 through 26 Jesus said to his disciples again if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me for whoever would save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Now listen to this for what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

To answer Jesus' rhetorical questions what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul what shall a man give in return for his soul? The answer friends is nothing.

[31 : 54] It profits him nothing and there's no matter if he has it all it's no use to him when he stands before the Lord in judgment for his sins.

He cannot buy his forgiveness. You can have it all but if you haven't trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior you and I say this in love you have nothing.

nothing to give to God to save your eternal soul because God owns it all. God has it all. Look at the words Paul uses to describe the pain that pursuing money brings.

He describes it as a snare. Senseless and harmful desires. He says he describes it as plunging into ruin and destruction and then he describes this love what people do when they love money as piercing themselves with many pains.

What he's describing is a trap isn't he? which reminds me of a rabbit that got trapped in one of our batting cages in college. One of its back legs was trapped in one of our nets and the more that it tried to wiggle free the more it entangled itself and seeing that there was no way for it to escape it pierced itself.

[33 : 17] It had gnawed its trapped leg down to the bone. Even if it not its leg off it would have died.

So it's basically killing itself and trying to set itself free. And though it was alive it was basically dead. dead. Now I wish I could tell you a nice happy ending to that story about how we all got together we prayed for this little rabbit we got him untangled we nursed him back to health and he became our mascot and he ran balls out to the umpire for us.

No. I don't know what happened to that rabbit I know it ended up in the garbage can and I know that it was dead.

Whether our coach put it out of its misery or it suffered in the garbage can I don't know but it died. Friend if you are pursuing money if you love money if you believe that money is the answer to your problems you have a bigger problem.

Like that rabbit caught in that net you may be alive but without Christ you are dead in your sins. [34 : 38] But the good news is is that while we couldn't bring that rabbit back to life Jesus brings dead people back to life.

And he's had you here to hear his word to warn you about the great pains that come when you pursue anything other than him in this world.

I read John 3 16 God is a giver God gave graciously of his best he gave his son who gave his life on the cross to atone for our sins to purchase us to redeem us to rescue us to save us and if you know that truth then you have enough because you have the Lord and no money can buy what Jesus has done for you what he's given for you and it's not about how much good things you do to earn your salvation look there's nothing you can do to earn it the good things we do we do as a result of what God has given to us and so if you're here this morning you don't know the Lord that's the invitation for you he's calling out to you to turn from your sins to turn from the wasted life that ends in the trash heap that ends in eternal hell and to be saved and to be rescued and to be set free from your sin for Christians this is how we should respond adjust by living your life like Jesus is gain live your life like

Jesus is gain Zacchaeus' life after his salvation changed the way he viewed his wealth didn't it he gave it away to the poor he gave back to those whom he stole from he lived like Jesus was gain and it should be no different for anyone whom the Lord has been gracious to save with what you have view yourself in the role that you truly have which is a steward not an owner open handed Lord whatever you put in here I'll use for you whatever you take out to God be the glory live your life treat your possessions as if Jesus is truly gain Timothy will have more to say about this later on I'm gonna go ahead and read those verses verses 17 through 19 as for the rich in this present age and friend you live in the United States of America you are rich no matter how poor you think you are charge them not to be haughty not to let their hopes on the uncertainty of riches but on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy they are to do good to be rich in good works to be generous and ready to share thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future so they may take hold of that which is truly life there's only two things that we have to give to God we give him our sin and we give him our praise for taking away our sin and we live our lives on this earth that he's created knowing and living like Jesus is gain and how we live for him and how we worship him because we know the truth that Christ is gain that pursuing holiness pursuing [38 : 39] Christ likeness is the best way to live until that day when we stand face to face with our Lord and we hope to hear him say well done good and faithful servant one last thing before I pray I know many of you are aware of the passing of a great saint a great warrior of the faith John MacArthur one of one of the things that he said that will always stick with me and I hope to be true of my life is I want to be useful not successful if you pursue Christ if you pursue holiness if you seek the greater mega abundant gain you'll be useful and the Lord will be pleased with your life let's pray Lord forgive us that so often we think that having more money having more earthly treasures will bring us contentment that can only be truly realized in you

God forgive us that so often in our lives as your people we forget that we are stewards and we act like owners forgive us Lord that so often we think that the answer to our problems is more money and not pursuing you more Lord I'm sure that many of us have prayed to you asking for more money thinking that that's going to be the solution to all of our problems but Lord our great problem is our sin problem and you in your grace in your love and being the giving God that you are have provided the means of our salvation and you provided it yourself through your son Jesus Christ so Lord help us to know that what we have in Jesus is more than enough help us to realize that what we have in Jesus is mega gain that we live and that we'll live forever because Christ has redeemed us from our sins that we live a life with purpose and meaning and pursuing you wherever you would have us go and so

Lord may we live as if you are the mega gain that you are and God for anybody here this morning who is who is caught in the trap of thinking that money and earthly possessions is the answer Lord we pray that you'd be gracious through your word to open their eyes to see the foolishness of their

ways and to rescue them from that path that leads to destruction that they would turn to you that they would know the hope of Jesus Christ and that they would know the peace that can only be found in him that they would know the true contentment that can only be realized through knowing Jesus and following Jesus in whose name we pray amen you