

## Midweek Message

*“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.”*

*(1 Timothy 6:6-8 ESV)*

This past Sunday we looked at the Apostle Paul’s teaching on contentment and how this is something we need to learn just as he did. Contentment isn’t something that’s easily practiced, especially in our current culture where we’re constantly being bombarded with commercials about all the stuff we should have to keep ourselves happy and satisfied. I don’t know if you realize it but in almost all of the one-hour programs we watch there are at least 20 minutes of commercials. It’s no wonder that even believers have a hard time living with contentment in life.

In the above passage from the Apostle Paul’s letter to Timothy, he’s warning his young son in the faith of the dangers being propagated by false prophets who are focused only on what they might gain from their efforts. In other words, they use their position of teaching as a means to gratify their own sinful cravings for personal prominence and the pursuit of worldly gain. The Apostle Paul’s admonition, within that context, is that one’s true godliness would result in genuine contentment with what God has provided and all that He’s doing in one’s life. Easton’s Bible Dictionary defines contentment in this way:

Contentment is a state of mind in which one’s desires are confined to his lot whatever it may be. It is opposed to envy, avarice, ambition, anxiety, and repining. It arises from the inward disposition, and is the offspring of humility, and of intelligent consideration of the rectitude (righteousness) and benignity (benevolence) of divine providence, the greatness of the divine promises, and our own unworthiness; as well as from the view the gospel opens up to us of rest and peace hereafter. (Parentheses are mine)

Now, that’s quite a mouthful, I know. And if you’re like me it will take you some time to decipher all that’s found in that paragraph. The main point, however, is that genuine contentment is a virtue brought about by our new life in Jesus by which we submit ourselves to God and trust Him to do all He’s promised us in His Word. So, let’s just take a look at few truths regarding contentment.

First, contentment doesn’t mean complacency. In other words, it’s not a type of fatalism by which we sit still, letting life go by, doing nothing with our lives, as if we have some false belief that “what will be will be” as the saying goes. Scripture is very clear in that we are called to live our lives in accordance with every command of God and that certainly includes our spiritual growth in grace. The Apostle Peter makes this very clear when he says, *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18 ESV)*. God expects us to put forth the effort to grow in our faith, to become mature believers such that we can stand in the truth without falling off the path on which God has placed us. We should be discontent and dissatisfied in our personal growth and especially the sinful ways we fail. Our greatest desire should be that by our thoughts, attitudes, actions, feelings, and words, we should strive to glorify God. The Apostle Paul tells us, *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.” (Romans 6:12-14 ESV)*. As we all know, that certainly requires effort within God’s grace to us.

Secondly, contentment stands in opposition to covetousness. The real issue in our lives is what I pointed out when I began this message and how the sinful nature within us continues its influence and assault by bringing dissatisfaction in regard to personal pleasure and possessions. Materialism is a huge issue in our culture today and believers really aren't immune from its enticement or its message that in the ways and things of this world we'll find lasting satisfaction. In fact, the Apostle John tells us quite plainly,

*“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”*

*(1 John 2:15-17 ESV)*

You see, it's really all about our relationship with God and how our passion in life is to be about knowing, loving, and glorifying Him. If our hearts are divided, if we're looking to the world for our contentment instead of finding it in God, then the Apostle John is telling us there's a real issue with our faith and our relationship with the Lord. Now, that doesn't mean we shouldn't have or even enjoy some of the pleasures found in our world. In fact, the Apostle Paul tells us, *“As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17 ESV)*. God richly provides us with many wonderful blessings in this life and it's good to be able to enjoy them. However, as the Apostle Paul continues, we're also to share God's blessings with those around us who are less fortunate, which then becomes a “good foundation for the future.”

Finally, contentment that lasts can only be realized in our absolute trust in a sovereign, kind-hearted, compassionate God who is full of grace, mercy, and love toward us. You see, as God's people, those who've truly come to faith in Jesus, our hope in life will never be fulfilled in this world or the things of this world but in our trust that God is doing all things for His glory and the well-being of His people. As the Apostle Paul tells us, *“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6 ESV)*. Even in this time in which we're having to remain in isolation from each other God has a good purpose and a plan He's moving forward that somehow fits into the over-all movement of human existence toward the day of complete redemption in Jesus. I honestly can't tell you why this time of crisis is necessary, but I do know we wouldn't be facing it if God didn't consider it essential for the progress of His Kingdom. God is doing amazing things in our world through this pandemic as He's using it to get people's attention with some of them being drawn to Him by the conviction through and power of the Holy Spirit. God is doing amazing things in the lives of His people, His church, as we're now coming to realize what's really important as Christian love is being expressed for others in new and exciting ways, and a new passion and devotion to the Lord is building like embers to a flame.

Although it's certainly true that “God is going to do what God is going to do” and Scripture tells us that none can stay His hand, because of who He is we can find contentment. However, that doesn't mean we give up on pursuing life and enjoying all that God is, all that He's promised, and all that He's doing in and through us. We're to go about our lives as God has determined knowing that when all is said and done we're able to trust God's providential work in this world and in our lives because we know that “all things work together for good” for all of us who've come to faith in Jesus.

***Pastor Mark***