

Authentic money matters

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[0:00] I think I'm on, on the microphone, thank you. Good morning everyone. It's still morning for another 20 minutes, so I don't have to say afternoon yet.

I was almost just going to give you an update. Some of you who know us, know our daughter is living with us and family, and I was almost going to put a picture of building work, but all it would have been would have been rubble on the front garden, half torn down chimney breasts.

But anyway, at least the chaos has started, and something like mid-June we come out of a more busy patch. So if you're thinking of us, do pray for us.

Yeah, let's come to 1 Timothy chapter 6, and we've been reading verses 3 to 10. And this is where I want to go.

So we will go through, the first part of this is about false teachers, and there is that lovely comment, I think it had a few ums when it came up, godliness with contentment comes out, and the theme is clearly around being happy in God with a simple life.

[1:13] And I suppose you might sit quietly on your own and think that's quite easy, but actually this world is very against being happy with a simple life.

It's very against it, and we'll touch on that as we go through it. But I did want to divert back into something that I was privileged to preach on. It was nearly four years ago, so there might be some information.

I want to go back into Matthew 6, and it's the bit about storing up treasures on earth or in heaven. Because I think it's very relevant to the whole theme of money.

And then we'll just sum up, perhaps a little bit more at the end, about our consumer culture and what we have to resist. So let's move on. That's roughly where we're going, with a little diversion at point 4 into Matthew 6.

So I want to draw attention to these false teachers. That's where we start, isn't it? Let me just find my place.

[2:18] 1 Timothy 6. The first few verses. It starts with this phrase, which Mark did include in our reading.

These are the things you are to teach and insist on. Now, you could quickly say, is that to do with what's gone before or what's about to come?

And I think the short answer, without getting too involved, is it's a bit of both, isn't it, really? That there's been a lot of talk about elders and their qualities, widows and their godly qualities and how they should be honoured, slaves.

There's all of this good talk about godly teaching that's gone before, but also there's more to come. But let me just point out that the background you should be able to remember from some of the earlier talks.

Timothy was in Ephesus. And if you don't know anything about Ephesus or can't remember it, one unusual thing is it had an enormous temple to this god Artemis, or I think the Romans called her Diana.

[3:25] Enormous temple, probably dominated by women, that town at that time. And I think we learned that some of the trouble in the background, which led to very specific talk, you know, limitations, I think, on women, there were likely some very troublesome women.

And it's quite possible they were among these false teachers. That's not cut and dried. It might have been other people, but they were certainly influencing in a bad way.

And if we are just being factual about what we have picked up earlier in 1 Timothy, certainly in verse 3 of chapter 1, we were hearing about false doctrines, myths and genealogies, people who were encouraging argument, controversy, and that's come up in our reading today, hasn't it?

And not advancing God's work. So we've come across them there. And also, if you look at 4 verse 1, there's this talk about hypocritical, 4 verse 2, hypocritical liars, and they were forbidding marriage, and they were saying, it's very important you don't have this sort of food, and that sort of food.

Well, actually, God has made so many lovely things for us to enjoy, and it's just important that we remember to be thankful, and not take things for granted. So this was some of the trends of the false teachers that we have heard about.

[4:55] So we then read in verse 3, if anyone teaches otherwise, and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ into godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing.

So the whole body of teaching of the apostles, that we need to come to Jesus for our salvation, and we've touched on all this godly teaching, which is about servanthood, which is about being humble, which is about honoring those in need, all of that kind of godliness and teaching.

If people are teaching something else, then it's to be, you know, they don't know anything. That was one of the first things it says about them. Other teaching.

The second thing we notice about the false teachers, they have this unhealthy interest in controversies, and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions, constant friction.

Now I think we know about this, don't we? In all kinds of groups, people often are listening to meetings, and all they can think of at the end is to moan about how they could have done it different, and to encourage, oh, I didn't agree with that.

[6:18] And instead of, you know, mutually learning to talk, they just stir up trouble. So they were divisive, these false teachers. They didn't tend to bring the people together, they just tended to split them apart and get them all arguing.

But they also thought, just at the last bit of this, about the false teachers, it says constant friction between who have robbed people of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

So that was, it would seem their take, that actually following godliness would get you rich. Now exactly how that all worked and how they were getting some financial gain, we're not quite sure. But we do know, we've touched on this big temple, dominated the city, and this attracted no little business for the locals. No little business at all.

And I will read to you, just to give a little context, from Acts 19. I just want to read a bit about the silversmiths who were working in Ephesus.

[7:31] And it just gives a, Paul was, Paul had been giving them grief. Let me just read what it says. Acts 19, 23. It says, about that time, this is actually Paul's second visit to Ephesus, there arose a great disturbance about the way.

A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, bought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there, called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said, you know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business.

And you see and hear how this fellow Paul had convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus, and is practically the whole province of Asia.

He says, that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. So that was provocative, wasn't it, to these established businesses making their money.

So, but then Paul picks up, if we go back to 1 Timothy, if I leave my place, goes back to the thought of this gain.

[8:45] So if the false teachers thought godliness was a means to financial gain, there was this beautiful statement that comes, but godliness with contentment is great gain.

Now, can you just see, keeping that simple, how he's saying that godliness is gain, yes, not financial gain.

The implication is it's a spiritual gain, and it has to have this contentment with it. So he is using the phrase, but he's turning it a bit on its head. Godliness with contentment is great gain. Back in, we have come across godliness being mentioned earlier, back in 4, chapter 4 and verses 7 and 8, it says physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for this life and the life to come.

And where else have we heard about being contented in the Bible? I've given you the clue out there, haven't I? But Paul said this, he said, I know what it is to be in need, I know what it is to have plenty, I have learned the secret of being content, and it's the same word, I've just given you that Greek root there, the same word, in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or want, I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

[10:18] So Paul, in his own walk, had learned something, no matter what was going on in the outside circumstances. Mark reminded us, you might have had a bad night, you might have been feeling quite victorious this morning, whichever one it is, Paul had known in these different situations to be able to be content in God.

And then, in verses 7 and 8, it goes on to talk about the contented poor, for we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it, but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Now, again, that's easily said, isn't it? But in our culture, and particularly in the West, the relatively affluent West, relatively speaking, I just say that, I suppose if you just, if you plonked yourself in the middle of a rather poor African country, this might not be such an issue really, because you look around and you don't see many people with much more than you have, and you don't see things that you want to suddenly think, oh, I want that, I'm sad that I don't have it, and make you restless. But, what does Paul do? He brings them back to this simple principle, it's ever so simple, isn't it, that when you came into the world, you were naked. Have I got to that yet?

Yeah. We brought nothing into this world, we come naked, and then we depart, we leave everything behind. Simple logic here, so that gives quite a context for what you're going to do in the middle, doesn't it?

[12:06] What is the point in thinking you can, because you can kind of build on things thinking you're going to last forever, and you don't, you leave it all behind. But if we have food and clothing, it says in this verse, we will be content with that.

And just a little bit more information about some of the words there. The word for clothing is more literally a covering, so it probably includes the idea of shelter or house.

So it's the essentials, isn't it? Some food, something to wear, something to, you know, if we have that, we should be content. It should be enough.

So this is a challenge, the contented poor. There's also Job, who said, naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart.

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. So, it sounds a little bit, doesn't it, like there are lots of things in life that you might like to have, bring a degree of happiness, and God is almost trying to squash it all, saying, you can't have that, you can't have that.

[13:23] Well, is that what God is like? Is he just wanting us to be miserable? Let me just remind you more generally about the fact that, sorry, I missed that question, but yeah, do you struggle to be happy with this simple lifestyle?

And we have been talking about it. It helps to remember that God is happy, that God is not a misery. God is a happy God.

Now, we actually came across this earlier in 1 Timothy. It just talks about the glory of the blessed God, a word we hear in Psalm 1, a happy God. God is actually, God who made us, God who made this world.

He is happy. So actually, for us to want to be happy, as creatures made by him, is perfectly legitimate. We just need a little bit of guidance, because not everything we think will make us happy is going to.

But God does know what will make us happy. And it says, I'm stealing a little bit of a verse from, I think David Sculler's got next week, but God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

[14:40] So things are provided for us to enjoy. And that shorter, Westminster shorter catechism, man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

So let's not give the impression to anybody that if we're Christians, fundamentally, we don't do this and we don't do this and we sit at home and we're just miserable because God has given stuff for us to enjoy and life, to have life in all its abundance.

Now I want to divert and if you were here nearly four years ago, some of this will be a little familiar, but I want to turn with me to Matthew 6 because we will come back, the last bit is a warning, we will come back to the end, but I just want to take another diversion.

Matthew 6 is very relevant to this whole theme of treasures and what you look at, what you want, but I will just read it.

Matthew 6 and verse 19, let me just read this passage and I just want to go through this as well because it's, I think, so relevant. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and vermin destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moths and vermin do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[16:18] The eye is the lamp of the body, if your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness? And then this next verse is very similar to the last bit of our passage. No one can serve two masters, either you will hate the one and love the other or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and money. So it says, do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth. But what kind of treasures are they?

I'll give you some pictures. Perhaps, as I say, we will touch on our consumer culture and TV and the things that are thrown at you, but even if it's not your immediate neighbour, you see images of people who live in total luxury.

They have a mansion with a beautiful lake. They probably have a team of gardeners keeping it all looking wonderful. They have treasure in unlimited amounts of wealth.

[17:31] Not just an ordinary car that can keep you warm and get you from A to B, but a flash car that can go really fast. Yeah? I wouldn't have thought that two-seater would be very good if you're trying to bring two or three people to church.

These two-seaters are not very good for that, are they? Well, what about one of those? I wouldn't even like to guess what that sort of big yacht would cost with a swimming pool on the back, but the thought that perhaps my house is big enough, I can land a helicopter on it, and I can just, you know, go off.

Treasures. Does it not tempt you to think that if I had all this money, I could have all these things and I'd enjoy them? Does it tempt you?

Sorry? A lot of cleaning. There you are, that's a very perceptive comment, a lot of cleaning.

Probably got a team of people doing it. So why not store up treasures like this?

Well, they certainly have a limited life. Now that's primarily, well, things do wear out or they need maintaining, but actually your own life is limited, so one day you might have them for a while, but you leave them behind.

[18:48] But perhaps the strongest thing is, this is the idea of it's for yourselves. For yourselves. Sometimes people have been blessed with things. If God has blessed you with things, well, do your best to share those joys with other people.

That's more the point, isn't it? But if you just indulge in your own wealth and just all these little things that you just want to give yourself pleasure, for yourselves is self-centered.

The whole business about the Christian life, the servanthood, wanting to bless other people, and Matthew 5 reminds us, blessed are the merciful. So treasures on earth, and again, stealing a little bit from next passage, but it's so relevant to this, command those, this is in 1 Timothy 6, 17, command those who are rich in this present world, but the principles are so important to this idea of wealth, command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant, not 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.

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way, they will lay out treasure for themselves. as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Two principles nice and clear in there. Put your hope in God, not in material things, and the more material things you have, the more easy life is, the more temptation, it's really quite simple, the more temptation there is to forget God, to think these things will always be here, it just comes, and I don't really need God because I've propped up by all these things, and use the material things of this world in the light of the world to come.

[20:56] So the treasures in heaven, what kind of things could they be? One or two, anyone want to shout out one? Treasure, eternal life, yes?

I've written down a few others, I'm just thinking about perhaps deep in your heart and how you learn to respond and behave in this world, but to act justly, to walk humbly, to love mercy, that's actually from a verse in Micah, but it does describe having a heart that is wanting justice, not just wanting gain for myself, I'm more wanting that something was done right, that we have that right view of ourselves that doesn't puff up, and that we love, we're frequently and we've heard about it in Ukraine and all across there are people in need, and it's absolutely right that we are moved to want to help where we find people in need, and very much a matter close to God's heart, spreading the gospel.

These are things that if you fill your time and energy with this, these are treasures that are for the world to come. Why are they better than those on earth?

They last forever. But go back to that point, these make us happy. Now I think there is a shift you know, when you're a young Christian, quite new in this, you're probably still at that point where you kind of just want this faith you have to help you, and I think as you go on and you mature by God's grace, and God's spirit lives in you, you soon learn to just love the things he loves, and he loves to give out and bless other people, and actually you are truly happy when you are serving and giving. Yes, at times the sacrifice seems almost the last straw too much, but there is a joy in helping others, and God is very much of that nature, loves to reach out.

[23:09] So then note the progression from that bit in Matthew 6, storing up treasures, it says there where your treasure is your heart will be also, but it also says in verse 24, you can only serve one master, God in heaven or money, and they kind of pull in different directions, but it talked about heart, didn't it, where your treasure is, your heart will be also.

How important is your heart? What is the heart? I use it to, it's the deep part of you that really affects your whole motivation of what you're interested in and what you give yourself to. and Proverbs 4 reminds us of its importance, that above all else it is to be guarded, and think hard about that as you think about in this Western culture what bombards you on the TV or on your phone or in adverts wherever you see them.

Above all else guard your heart because it's the wellspring of life. and there is this helpful thing about the eye being the lamp of the body.

It says if your eyes are healthy or good your whole body will be full of light. If your eyes are unhealthy your whole body will be full of darkness. I think there was when we touched on this a while back there was this idea that back in those days when they didn't understand how sight worked they actually probably thought that some light came out of your eye.

[24:53] That might make a bit more sense that if you think your whole body is full of darkness that nothing good can get out. But the word for healthy or good can mean generous or it's a singleness of purpose.

Just a few other verses here about eyes. My eyes have grown dim with grief. That's in Job. The Lord hates haughty eyes. That's in Proverbs. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened. That's in Ephesians. The eyes are the gate to the heart. So what you spend your time looking at, dwelling on, it eats into how you are.

It helps form how you are within. And if that light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness? So if we don't keep our heart healthy, we go blind, the eyes of our heart healthy, we go blind.

So yes, physically you know how to walk out the door and around the corner, but actually in terms of what really matters in life, you don't know where you're going. It's not physical.

[26:10] This is so counterintuitive and the reason so many pass by the Christian faith because it's about being sure about what you do not see.

Faith is about being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. That we trust in a God who is spirit, a God who is not visible. all. But we've learned to depend on his promises.

We've seen in his word that he's proved so many things and we are certain about what he's said about the future, about the fact that death is not the end, about the fact that he will look after our souls, our hearts.

Even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. That's in one Peter. Even though you don't see him, this is the spirit's work.

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things out of your law. So this is just a slight diversion but it is very relevant to what's going on in the heart and what you value. So when you use your eyes what do you see, where do you linger?

[27:20] And I am very fond of casting crowns as a group and there's just that verse, be careful little eyes, it's like a children's song, what you see, it's the second glance that ties your hands as darkness pulls the strings.

Be careful little eyes what you see, for the father up above is looking down in love. Excuse me, oh be careful little eyes what you see.

so then, and this is the last part of Matthew 6 and we're going to go back, you cannot serve both God and money.

You will love the one and hate the other. You can't embrace both. So then we're back in 1 Timothy and it reinforces the same things.

This is just verses 9 and 10 at the end. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

[28:39] Some people eager for money, and there were certainly some in Ephesus, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. So let me just touch on a few things in our culture that might, I touched on the fact that perhaps this is harder for us in the West because I think we are bombarded by things.

our culture tells us very differently that actually you need to be happy, you have to have this. Any old advert, this will make your life better.

And then there's something else. And you're not quite complete until you've got this as well. I mean, when you stand back and think about it, it doesn't make sense, does it? it's all bombarding us.

Mass production in factories and desire for maximum business profits has fueled the rise of advertising. We have a lot of it in our culture, don't we?

I want to read, or perhaps I can recommend a book, John Benton. It's actually quite a close friend of Phil's, very helpful to Phil at his younger stage, but he's written a book, this is actually 20 years old, so it may be a little out of date, Christians in a Consumer Culture.

[30:11] He did a lot of work on this, and I just want to pick up the rise of advertising. I just want to read a page, if I get the right page, 101. I'm going to lose it now.

Here we are. This is just touching on how advertising started in America. Studying around this subject, the rise of advertising, of the consumer culture, led me to read about the industrialization of America.

The United States is the leading nation of the Western world, so its history has relevance to us all. It says, until the 20th century, most American homes were sites not only of consumption, but of production.

People made things at home. As late as 1850, six out of ten people in the USA worked on farms. They made their own tools, their own furniture, they grew crops, they looked after animals, they were self-reliant.

Then along came the industrial revolution and everything changed very quickly. As the factory system and mass production came to dominance, it displaced home production.

[31:33] Factories took over. People began moving from the land into the cities. The economic system of the factory could produce many more goods than the existing population in America, with its habits of self-reliance and frugality, actually wanted or needed.

or could afford to consume. One example was a cigarette manufacturer. He bought two cigarette making machines and he went into production.

He found that almost immediately he could make 240,000 cigarettes a day, which was more than the entire USA market smoked in one day.

The point I'm making is that such overproduction became the rule, not just the exception, throughout the economy, not just in cigarettes, but in all kinds of things.

And here with the advent of industrialization, there emerged this huge gap between production and consumption. The obvious question that arose was how that gap was going to be closed.

[32:39] Simply speaking, two options. You either wind down the production and the profits, or you teach people to consume more than they actually need.

advertising. So if you haven't really thought about it, that is the rise of the big business of advertising. And if you're good at making adverts, I think you get good fees on it.

But do you get the whole point that people out there who have got big machinery making things, they don't really care whether you need it. They just want you to buy it, and they will keep on massaging that you're not quite ready and you're not quite complete until you've got this.

So we need to be pretty careful about what we listen to. And of course when we're tired, and these adverts are very clever, they still wear you out, don't they?

Constantly massaging a feeling of dissatisfaction with life as it is. So it says that the cure is to buy the product and feel much happier, but it's a lie.

[33:46] now I only, in case it's interested you, but I also, he mentioned some things in here about TV. Now I know some people in the church have decided they're not going to have a TV, or perhaps if you do have one, you don't spend ages and ages in front of it.

But it does point out that we are so used to having it in front of us. He makes some quite biting comments about TV. TV, he uses the palindrome, no, not palindrome, where you use the first letters of a word, video.

The world of the visual, the world of the instant, the world of the distant, you see things there that are actually far away, so they don't really hurt you, but you see them. The world of entertainment, the world of options, unlimited choice, now I won't go into those, but there is the visual one, because you see it, the idea is that it's real.

But actually, photos are selected, images are selected, and they don't tell the whole story. So there are lots of things about TV that we just need to be careful about, and certainly if you spend much time in front of it, we need to be careful about.

So I will just sum up, I think this is a very challenging area. Where have we been? Certainly we need to be aware of false teachers, teachers.

[35:14] Are they teaching things other than the Christian gospel, other than the Christian way of life? You know, you might not be super clued up on the detail of doctrines, but if you do see a group that says they're Christians, it's not a bad thing that if they are humble, serving, glorifying God, you know, these tests are quite a good test that there is something quite reasonable going on there because the false teachers tend to divide, they puff up the leaders, the leaders want just to get rich.

So that was about false teaching. We don't see a lot of it like threatening us in our church, but we certainly see, if this consumer culture, we certainly see a lot of other stuff bombarding us that is false and lies.

And actually, the other thing about consumer culture, there's an overload of information. We don't know how to think straight because so much is coming at us. Put your hope in God, not material things.

Use the material of this world in the light of the world to come. Christians can have a simple life and be content.

When you realize that the world is trying to just persuade you otherwise, but the Bible is quite clear. If you have God's spirit and you are walking and sharing your life with your brothers and sisters, this is plenty of opportunity to be content.

[36:46] And very important in this, when you see our culture that is driven by other people who must have this and must have that. And then, of course, you know what happens to so many people in work.

They take on more better paid jobs with longer hours so that they can have all these things. And then they're worn out. And it's a very powerful witness for a Christian to be thinking, yes, of course I need certain things, but I don't need all these things and I will not take on so much that I'm squashed and heavily burdened.

And then the last verse I just want to leave you with is in Proverbs. It says, give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.

Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, who is the Lord? Or I may become poor and steal and so dishonor the name of God.

So I think there's quite a bit there for us to think about even in discussion tonight, but I'll leave that there. Thank you, Mark. Thank you.