

1 Timothy 6:3-16

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- [0 : 00] Well, it was 14 years ago, this very Sunday, that Holy Trinity Church celebrated its first stated worship service in Hyde Park.
- And so today, we break ground on what will be year 15, and pray that it will be a wonderful, wonderful year for us.
- Well, we have today and next Sunday to conclude Paul's letter to Timothy, known to us as 1 Timothy, before we commence our summer series on the Saul and David narratives that are found in 1 Samuel.
- And so we are looking forward to those wonderful stories in the coming summer. I wonder what you would say might be some of the most powerful things in the world.
- Things that by their very force have the capacity to overwhelm lesser powers.
- [1 : 20] Given that we're in Hyde Park, I'm sure that some might say that one of the most powerful things in the world is, of course, an idea.
- For there are ideas that are strong enough to hold one even in the face of death or to endure death.
- There are ideas that are imaginative enough to spawn items that alter the way we live, the power of an idea.
- What about the power of a tongue? The biblical writers speak of it. I think of it like white, hot words that are the fire fuel, by nature consuming individuals and families and countries, for good and ill.
- The power of a word. Very few things stronger. Very few things stronger. What about the power of sexual union? Where the most intimate of acts between a man and a woman has the capacity in and of itself to create life.
- [2 : 48] It is almost as godlike as one gets. Interestingly, all three of those things, the idea, the tongue, sexual union, they are things that are intrinsic to our person, our mind, our mouth, our members.
- What about those things that are external forces? The power of nature that can carve out a glorious canyon given enough time?
- Or can call down a tumult of water that is destructive beyond repair?
- What about the power of money? The accumulation of which can prosper an entire people above all other peoples? Or in the hands of one individual?
- One individual. One individual. One individual. Can bring honor and prestige. Can be used to harness productivity that would put thousands to work.
- [4 : 05] What an incredible force for good and evil. First Timothy, interestingly, when it talks about the power of the gospel, practically works its way in for nearly a third of its letter to the intersection between the power of the gospel and the power of money.
- Paul is one of the most potent forces at work in the world and in the church. Take a look. Open a Bible that you brought or one that's in front of you.

Paul has been having us look at practical lessons on the pursuit, the problem, and the prospects of money all throughout.

In other words, finance is a front-burner issue in the family of God. It has that much power. Take a look back at chapter 3.

You'll see the mention of this power in verse 3 in regard to one who would aspire to be an office of overseer. They are not to be a drunkard, verse 3, nor violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

[5 : 26] There it is, the power of money. Hardy in those who are vested with leadership in the church. Or verse 9, you find it again under deacons. Likewise, they must not be addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.

There at the close of verse 8. What about the lectures or sermons we've been seeing most recently all the way from chapter 5 through chapter 6?

The word honor of widows in verse 3 of chapter 5 dealt with financial remuneration and care and concern. Financial care for those who were truly widows indeed.

It had the power to sustain community and life. Or verse 17 where it talked about elders worthy of double honor and it connected it to an Old Testament text about not muzzling the ox.

The honor was not merely the esteem in which one was held, but the resources one was given to live with. Or chapter 6 and verse 1.

[6 : 33] It talked about the relationship of bond servants and masters being worthy of honor. That is, that you would do your work well even though they are financially benefiting from it.

Indeed, you should do that for they are brothers in Christ. It's a good service. And now here we are in our own text. We come again to the subject of money.

All the way through it will run to the close of the letter. The power of money. Avarice is the more dignified word for greed.

It's listed as one of the seven deadly sins. Because money in and of itself has such a power that the love of it is disastrous.

In the world and in the church. And here it is in our own text. The false teachers in verses 3 through 10 are demonstrated to have a motivation in all of their work for money.

[7 : 50] Take a look. There it is. At the close of verse 5. They imagine that godliness is a means of gain.

That's the actual motivation. So while he begins out in verse 3 about their different doctrine. About not agreeing with the sound words. About the marks that they will be. He underlines it all with their true motivation.

They imagine godliness is a means of gain. That they will get. That they will financially profit from being in the game of religion.

This is what he's going to say. When money is the goal of ministry, arrogance and arguments will be the given.

And a pulling apart of the community is all that in the end you will gain. Let's take a look. Look at the marks of one.

[8 : 54] Teachers primarily here. In the family of God. Where a love of money is their end.

There it is in verse 4. What are the marks? First, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

Arrogance. Arrogance is the mark of one who is being overrun with the power of money. You ever connect that in your own life?

Or do I connect it in my own? The lifting up of self is at times a manifestation or mark of a desire for profit.

I think of it in the sense of it makes us proud. I mean, I know it's absurd to think that money leaves you thinking you're better than other people.

[9 : 57] But it can very quickly happen that when you have money, you think you're better than other people. You think that those who have, well, obviously they know what they're doing.

We do because we have. Those who don't, well, obviously because they don't know what they're doing. And there's an elevation of self.

Let me put it just real, at the street level. I put five Ben Franklin's in your hand today. That's the picture on a hundred dollar bill. Five of them.

Fold them once. Put them in your pocket. Walk you out on 53. 53rd. How do you feel? Pretty good. I could spend one or two of them before I get home and still have three or four left.

Something happens when you have it. It lifts you. Arrogance is the first mark of one who has already been captivated by gain.

[11 : 06] Look at the second mark. They're argumentative. 4B. He has an unhealthy, and don't you love the irony of that word, given what he wrote in verse 3 about the sound words.

If people don't agree with the healthy words of our Lord. Now, these actually have an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions.

The first mark of one who has been captivated by money is arrogance. The second mark is they instantly become argumentative.

I begin to think about why is this the case. Why does someone who has a love for money necessarily find themselves in quarrels and in arguing?

I'm not sure of the fullness of why that is, but in some sense they become fighting people. They're fighters. People who love money, they're fighters.

[12 : 27] They're pugilistic. I used that word somewhere in the last week or two and somebody told me they didn't know what it was. But a pugilist is a boxer. They enjoy this.

They enjoy the fight. The reason for this is simply, as best as I can understand it, money often, when you have it, begins to be the leverage marks for control.

So when you have money, you have control. And you want to control what happens. Therefore, when other things are taking place, money becomes the weapon.

Arguments, controversies, quarrels, people vote with their money. It will be my way. After all, I own the highway. So how are you doing?

How am I doing in the household of faith? How would we begin to test whether or not we're succumbing individually to the sense that godliness is a means of gain, that I come to church and hear about faith, because if I come to church and hear about faith, it's going to lead to finance.

[13 : 40] I'm involved in ministry because if I'm good with God, I'm good with money. If I have money, then, well, God needs people like me, doesn't He?

Churches don't work without me. We begin to feel like this. The final thing, of course, then, is it pulls community apart.

You see that there? Look at verse 5. Constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth. That's it.

So when motivation, when your motivation in life, ministry or otherwise, is rooted in profit, that's the end motivation, you will be marked by pride and argumentative spirit.

And eventually, it will begin to pull apart community. It begins to isolate some from the others.

[14 : 48] Or constant friction is the way it's put there. And the effect, it seems to be, in the text, broadens beyond the idea now in Paul's mind that he's speaking merely about the pastor, but really what's happened among all the people.

When money gets in the way of things in church, it separates people. It breaks down community.

Let me put it this way. Anyway, the love of money, the end game, it is brutal all the way around. Now, why these words? Why this amount of space on money in 1 Timothy?

First of all, I just got to say I love it. I love the practical nature of the Bible in this epistle. You may have come and said, you know, I'm going to church now.

I want to get to know God. And then you've been here the last three weeks, and here's what you've heard. Good. You want to open the holy book? You want to know God? Well, in Christ, take care of your mother.

[15 : 53] And then God will be happy with you. In Christ, take care of your pastors as they are taking care of your soul. God will be fine with you. He'll be happy.

He'll sleep at night, and you should too. Don't be run by money. Does it get any more practical than that? Any greater takeaway?

Come to church on Sunday? Want a stronger relationship with God? The pastor told me, I want to know God. Great. Stop the pursuit of money as the end of life.

It'll always sell you up short. It'll lift you up when it shouldn't. It'll make you leverage things that you should be free with. And eventually, it'll pull apart relationships and isolate people.

Think of the... I probably shouldn't say this, but I will. Think of the way the Godfather ends. This is an old man by himself.

[16 : 59] In silence. Falling over into gravel. Dead. That's the end.

Now, in Ephesus, there's some indication that there was a more vibrant exchange between faith and finance. I mean, think of Acts 19.

You might want to turn there. These aren't the exact people he's writing against here, I don't think. But I want you to see, at least in Ephesus, where they had the temple to Artemis, the great goddess there, that when Paul went through Ephesus, there were issues with faith and finance.

Chapter 19, verse 23, beginning. About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the way. A man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen.

These he gathered together with the workmen in similar trades and said, Men, you know from this business we have our wealth. And you see and hear, not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods.

[18 : 25] And there is danger, not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worshipped.

And when they heard this, they were enraged, and they cried out, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! So the city was filled with confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them these others who were Paul's companions.

So, Ephesus was a place that was familiar with faith and finance. Interestingly in Ephesus, greed gathered people together in the world of faith.

We've already read though by Paul that over time it will pull everybody apart. So here he is, writing to Timothy, and he's wanting him to know the end game of avarice.

And here it is, it's laid out for you. Look at the latter half of the first part of our text, when it gets into the, Godliness with contentment is of great gain. In other words, to do the right thing before God, there is profit in that.

[19 : 38] It's not financial profit. Indeed, you brought nothing into the world. You can't take anything out of the world. There's no necessary connection between your financial gain and your godliness. Those two are never to be equated.

God might bless you, he might not, but there's no necessary relationship between godliness and gain. Indeed, you can be godly and have great gain.

By dwelling with him forevermore, even the poorest in the world might live one day in a mansion greater than anything we've seen here, or more illustrious than the one built for Artemis on a number of occasions, after it had been burned and torn down.

So what is the end game if money is your goal? There it is. Very clear. Verse 9 and following. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation.

That's where you're heading. There will be more temptation for you than others. Secondly, into a snare.

[20 : 46] You're caught. It will catch you. It actually holds you. You can't walk through that desire and not be caught.

You'll have more temptations away from God, more entrapments waiting for you. You'll end up in many senseless and harmless desires.

It's interesting. It actually begins to alter your wants. You'll have altered wants. And look at the nature here of the language.

It plunges people, now we're no longer into the pastor at all, into ruin and destruction. For, and here's the reason, for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

I love the fact that he uses root here. It just pulls you. It's from underneath. Things spring from it. All kinds of things spring from it.

[21 : 45] And they aren't good. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. That's the end as well.

The temptation is coming. The snares are inevitable. The wants are altered. The wandering from faith will be the lot of some.

And pierced themselves with many pangs. I mean, what a phrase. Self-inflicted wounds. Put on the nicest Joseph Abood suit.

Give me your cap-toed shoes with wax laces. Your Brooks Brothers white shirt.

Your Armani belt. Your Armani belt. Your Armani belt. And you look in the eyes of Paul like one who is stabbing themselves with a penknife.

[22 : 56] Self-inflicted pangs. Let me say this. I've seen it. I've been tempted by it.

I'm not immune to it. And we all need to be aware of it. I've seen it.

I've seen it alter wants. I've seen it wreck families.

I've seen it isolate individuals. I've seen it turn the meekest and gentlest into argumentative pugilists who are always right and suffer no others.

And in the church, well, that would be the end of it all. We wouldn't get through year 15. So, be forewarned, or in a sense, at least, no, no, this is a real power.

[24 : 16] It will not end well for you or for me if avarice is really taking root.

Well, let's turn to the latter half and we can do it quickly because I'm going to spend all of next week not necessarily on the problem of the pursuit of wealth, but the proper use of wealth.

That's reserved for us at verse 17. But before he gets to the proper use of wealth, and he speaks to those directly who are rich in the age in a productive way, verse 17, he speaks first to the man of God or to the pastor, verse 11.

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Flee that stuff. I think the phrase, O man of God, is particular.

By that, I don't think he just means here, but as for you, O reader. But as for you, O listener. O man of God is a, I don't want to say it's a technical phrase, because it's not used enough to be declared that, but it's Old Testament usages are reserved for those who are leading.

[25 : 33] So the man of God, in one instance, they are those who are ministering to God's family. They're not merely members of the family.

So I think when he says, but as for you, O man of God, he's basically saying, but as for you, O Timothy, as for you, O pastor, I'm going to talk to the people in a minute, verse 17, particularly those who are wealthy, but as for you, those who are going into ministry, flee those things.

Let me say a word to you. I don't know how old you are. Hopefully, we have people here who are contemplating a call to ministry in the household and family of God. Hopefully, we have young people that God will raise up to be pastors and teachers in our midst.

Maybe even one day, pastoring this very church. Hear it now. To be a leader in the family of God means you are a fleer of the things of this world.

You have to be. Flee them. And pursue instead righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

[26 : 34] Now, those are your ends. What a list. What a much better list than the lists we read of earlier in this chapter. Pursue. That is, pursue right living.

Pursue genuine godliness. Pursue faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

And then the three direct commands are given. Pursue. Well, what would that look like? If I am not to be motivated by money and I am supposed to flee it and pursue these things, how is that done?

What are the marks of someone, pastor or otherwise, who wants to combat what they have just read about in the opening half of chapter 6? There are three of them. Verse 10.

I am sorry. Verse 12. Fight the good fight of the faith. Definite article included. The faith. Fight the good fight of the faith. You are to be a fighter.

[27 : 34] It is not like, oh, I am a godly guy now, so I have to put all fighting away. No, you are a fighter. I wish Jane Austen were in the crowd today with all of her bumbling idiot pastors that she put on the page that gave all of us in ministry a terrible name.

What is the guy's name that drives me nuts? Mr. Collins. Huh! You are to be a fighter.

This has reference all the way back to chapter 1, probably in verse 19, where he is to wage the good warfare of the faith.

We want young people going into ministry who are ready to fight. Your fight will be big. Your issues will be different. We need stronger people five years from now than we did five years ago.

The issues are clearer, cleaner. The cost is higher. You better be able to fight for the faith. You better know what the faith is and what it isn't. And you better be able to wage war for what God has done in Christ.

[28 : 53] And all the attending godlinesses that come from it. The second mark. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

In other words, the greedy person is trying to grab hold of everything here. The anecdote is not to grab on to nothing. It is to take hold of eternal life.

It is to grab on with everything you've got. I am a crapper of that world. And he launches into this incredible thing about that.

That is what Jesus did. My kingdom is not of this world, he said before Pilate. I am taking hold of a different world.

I am not letting go. I am putting as much of that world into my pockets as I can. And then notice this, he just launches into this third one then.

[30 : 03] So you've got to fight, you've got to take hold. And then he says in verse 14, Keep the commandment unstained and free from the reproach until the period of our Lord Jesus Christ. He puts this mental picture before Timothy, that he is to keep this up until Jesus comes.

I mean that is the mental picture of the young minister. Fighting for the faith. Taking hold of that life for himself.

And keeping the commandment unstained, pure, with integrity. Until he sees him face to face. So you have that incredible launching of Paul, which he will display at the proper time.

He was blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in inapproachable light, who no one has ever seen or can see. To him be glory and eternal dominion forever.

He just put that right in front of Timothy. Instead of Artemis. Remember, Artemis was the giver of life and the sustainer. And what he puts in front of Timothy is, God as the giver of life.

[31 : 12] Artemis was the one who nurtured the world upon her breasts. God is the one who does that. Artemis was the bearer of light.

He says, Jesus dwells in inapproachable light. To him be honor. No more honor for any here.

Artemis was the ruler of the world. Jesus has an eternal dominion. That's what you're to be fixed on. So there it is.

The power of things in the world. I don't know how else to close other than to say, money has an innate power.

And it's stronger than any of us. And if God should so use your life to give you some of it, or much of it, you need to remember days like this.

[32 : 22] The love of it is a dead end street for you. You have to come back next week to know what to do with it. But until then, commit yourselves as an individual, and may we as a church, to be motivated by different things.

Find something else to motivate you. Find something else to motivate you. I would say, a higher power.

And beware of the marks that come subtly into our lives. Arrogance, an argumentative spirit, things pulling apart rather than together.

Am I living a life where I'm continually lifting myself up? I'm continually leveraging things to my advantage. I'm increasingly going alone.

All of those things are warning signs. Flee them. The church will be healthier for it. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for today, our gathering.

[33 : 32] And we do pray that you would help us to be motivated by proper things, and to have this mental picture in our mind of standing before the Lord Jesus Christ.

I mean, when we stand before one another, well, we can look good. But when we stand before Jesus, all of our wealth matters nothing at all.

So help us to come into his presence rightly as we should. In Jesus' name, Amen.