

# Are You Rich?

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Date: 10 December 2023

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Come to our last sermon in Paul's first letter to Timothy. So if you have your Bible, you can open it up to chapter 6 of 1 Timothy. And this morning we'll be starting in verse 17.

For the past couple of weeks, we've been listening to Christ's instructions through Paul about money, greed, and contentment.

And last Sunday we heard Jesus command us to flee from greed and the love of money and instead to pursue these things.

Righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. And then Paul gave this solemn charge to Timothy to keep this command and he went into a bit of a reflection of who God is and gave a word of praise to God.

Well now in verse 17, Paul is going to come back for the last time to this issue of money. Let me read it for us this morning. Starting in verse 17.

[ 1 : 0 9 ] 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.

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 up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith.

Grace be with you all. I listened to the first few minutes of a sermon on this very passage by a pastor friend of mine from Nipawin, and he began by asking his church a question.

Are you rich? I want to ask the same question. Are you rich?

[ 2 : 4 3 ] These first three verses in our passage today contain instructions for the rich. Are these instructions for you? Or not?

Are you rich? Now the more I thought about this question this week, I realized it's not the easiest question to answer.

Many of us would probably answer no. After all, there are many people who have much more than I do. But if we're comparing ourselves to others, we also need to look in the opposite direction.

There are many more people in our world who have much less than I do. Probably most of you have heard some kind of a statistic at some time or another that the vast majority of North Americans are among the top 10% of people in the world when it comes to wealth.

But that statistic doesn't tell the whole story either. Some places in the world are a lot more expensive to live than others.

[ 3 : 55 ] Could be because of the availability of goods and services or because of the climate. Some households in the world have more mouths to feed than others. What about the small business owner who has substantial business assets but whose profit margins are thin?

What about debt? Is the person who drives a good car and has a good house but can barely afford to pay the bills and put food on the table because of the mortgage payment and the car loan payment, is that person wealthy or broke?

Statistics paint one picture but human realities can paint another. Some people are poor or struggling because of bad financial decisions or greed or addictions.

Others are poor because they've been taken advantage of or maybe they lost the breadwinner in their family and they can't find work. Some people are rich because they work hard.

They're skilled in things that are in high demand. Others are rich because they have cheated or stolen, taken advantage of others. Now the word used here for rich in this passage means to have an abundance either of money or of earthly possessions or both.

[ 5 : 27 ] So let's take that into the way that we asked the question at the beginning. Do you have an abundance of either money or possessions or both?

Another way to say it is this. Do you have more than you need? And if your answer is yes, then you are among the rich.

But even here I know we can rationalize, we can reason our way out of answering yes. We might say, well I don't have an abundance of money. Seems like the money goes out as fast as it comes in or even faster.

But what am I using that money for? Is it only for things that I need? Or is there a good chunk of my cash that's going towards stuff that I don't really need?

To scratch the itch of discontentment as we talked about last week. Just to bring increased comfort, pleasure, entertainment.

[ 6 : 35 ] It's quite possible that you could be making over six figures a year and feel nearly broke and like the money just isn't there. Is it that you're poor?

Or do you have a spending problem? Or we may rationalize in a totally different way. Perhaps you're very frugal and you only really buy something if you need it.

You might say, I don't have an abundance of possessions. I'm still using my great granddad's hammer that was passed on down and you hate to spend money. I don't have much by way of possessions.

But in the bank and in your investments, you've got quite an abundance. abundance. But I need all that for retirement and emergencies and old age and just in case.

Now don't get me wrong. It is prudent to put aside money for those years ahead when you become unable to work or for emergencies. But some people have above and beyond that an abundance.

[ 7 : 44 ] However you came to have it, if that's you, you are among the rich. To be rich is to have more than you need. That's what abundance means.

It means to abound, to have more than you require. And if that's you, Christ Jesus has something to say to you today through Paul.

Paul. He says, command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant. Paul's referring to pride.

When you have more than others around you, the conditions are ripe for pride to grow. I'm doing better than others.

I've got more than others around me. Why? Well, I must be smarter. I must be wiser. I must be better at managing money than they are.

[ 8 : 45 ] Or I've worked harder. Pride can creep into our hearts and can lead us to look down on others around us who have less. Jesus says, command those who are rich not to be arrogant, not to be proud.

In other words, don't pat yourself on the back and try to take all the credit for why you have more than others around you. As Paul said in his letter to the Corinthians, who makes you different from anyone else?

What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? Sure, you may have worked harder than others, but will you not give the credit for that strength and that ability to work to the grace of God that was with you?

So if you have more than you need, do not be arrogant, do not be proud. And he goes on, command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain.

Do not put your hope in wealth. For those of you who have an abundance, do you console yourself with it? Do you look to it and lean on it and take comfort in it?

[ 10 : 25 ] Do you see that number in your savings account or in your investment accounts as your security, your safety, your provision for future days? Or do you look at the stuff that you have, your possessions that you've accumulated as your pride and your joy, the things that will ensure that you have a good life in the days ahead?

Christ says, do not put your hope in wealth. Do not hope in your abundance. Why? Because riches are so uncertain.

They're not dependable. They cannot be relied on to guarantee your security, your safety, your provision, your happiness for the future.

God can take the earthly abundance away even faster than he gave it to us. Think back to the story of Job.

Look at what happened to the children of Israel when many successive years of famine came on the land, how quickly their wealth was given up just to stay alive.

[ 11 : 43 ] they went from living like princes to slavery. Look at the splendor and the wealth of the people in Israel during the days of King Solomon.

Said in those days silver was considered to be of little value because of how much of it there was in the land and yet it wasn't long before it was all gone and carried off as the spoils of war to other kingdoms.

In the same way today markets can collapse. Economies can fold. Commodities that were once valued highly can become utterly worthless.

Companies can go bankrupt. Natural disasters can strike and they can destroy our property and our possessions.

Governmental changes can occur. The purchasing ability of the dollar can dwindle. wealth is so uncertain. So don't put your hope in your abundance in your wealth says Jesus.

[ 12 : 52 ] Instead put your hope in God. 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.

Look to him as your security and your safety. your refuge and your rock in uncertain times. He's the one that provides what we need in future days.

And the Bible is full of wonderful examples of how God provided in a perfectly timed manner for his people for the needy for the poor.

Look at the life of David. One minute he was a prince. he was in the king's court. He was successful in every way. He was married to the king's daughter.

And the next moment he was on the run for his life. And he was asking for bread from the priest at Nob. Did he experience scarcity?

[ 13 : 58 ] He did. But did God provide for him all along the way wherever he ran he did.

And the Bible is full of stories just like his. What did David do in the midst of all that? We can read it in the Psalms. He looked to God. He put his hope in God.

He cried out to the Lord and the Lord supplied his need. This is true whether we have an abundance today or not. We should do the same.

Command those who are rich in this present world to put their hope in God. Is your hope in God? There's a reminder that comes with this.

Put your hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. This is maybe the last thing we expect Paul to say in this moment.

[ 14 : 58 ] Maybe we were expecting put your hope in God who calls us all to live a life of austerity. God cares more about our holiness than our happiness.

But no. Paul says speaking of riches and abundance God is the one who richly abundantly provides us with everything. He's not stingy.

He doesn't give us just bare minimum slim pickings. His provision to us is abundant. His giving to us is more than we need.

And it's not only so that we might give to others. We'll get to that in a minute. But His giving to us abundantly, His more than we need provision is aimed at our enjoyment.

Do you hear this? Put your hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. God wants you to have enjoyment from the things that He richly provides you with and gives to you.

[ 16 : 17 ] He loves you. He wants you to be happy. He wants you to delight in and be satisfied with the good things that He's filled this earth with. So it's not wrong to have possessions.

It's not bad to have good things, to have means. God's the one who's given those things to you. And He's done it for your enjoyment.

But as we'll see now, the abundance He gives is not just for our enjoyment. It's also so that we might use it to do good and to meet the needs of others.

Verse 18, command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

So God gives abundantly or richly to us, and He has two purposes in it at least. One, for our own enjoyment, and two, so that we can out of that abundance do good and give to others.

[ 17 : 24 ] And I like the way Paul, he seems to want to work the word rich into everything here. To those among you who are rich, command them to be rich in good deeds.

To be rich in good deeds. It's as though Paul is saying to all of us who have an abundance, don't just ask, what can this abundance do for me?

Oh, I have this much money, what can I do with it for myself? Rather ask, what good can I do for others with this abundance that God has given me?

Be rich in good deeds. That's the kind of riches we should strive for. What good can I do for others with this abundance that God has given to me?

And notice, he doesn't get too specific here. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds. it's pretty generic, pretty general.

[ 18 : 27 ] I mean, there's all kinds of good that we might do with the abundance that God has given us. Are we looking for those opportunities with intentionality?

I think these words are really powerful. It's almost as if Christ is trying to flip our view of money and possessions upside down. If having money is our goal, then the question that we're going to ask is, what's the bare minimum that I must give away to be as God wants me to be?

But if doing as much good as possible is the goal, being rich in good deeds, suddenly we got to ask a different question. What amount should I keep for myself and for my family, for our own needs?

Command them to be rich in good deeds. Paul tacks on two more commands here.

rich in good deeds and, he says, be generous. Be willing to share. There's a bit of a flow here if you read the passage in one go.

[ 19 : 59 ] And we see the same flow in other places in the New Testament. We're commanded to love as Christ has loved us. We're told to forgive one another as God has forgiven us.

And here we see that we're to be generous. Just as God has been generous to us. He has richly, abundantly provided for us. And we're to take now out of that abundance and be generous.

Give abundantly to others. Be willing to share. Would we receive the abundant rich provision of God and then be stingy and closed fist towards others.

That word generous is I mean we throw it out and we say it, we understand it. I looked it up in the dictionary because I thought you know what does it really mean? What's the way that, what's the thing that we should be thinking of here?

And it said to give willingly more of something than is strictly necessary or expected. To give abundantly.

[ 21 : 22 ] To give willingly more than is strictly necessary or expected. to give abundantly.

And so we come back to that first question that I asked earlier. Are you rich? Do you have more than you need?

Do you have an abundance? If so, Christ's command to you is this, give willingly and generously, abundantly to others.

Share out of that abundance with others. Accomplish as many good things as you can without abundance. In this way, they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

here, these words of Paul hearken back to what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. Probably you're familiar with that passage. Matthew chapter 6, 19 and 20.

[ 22 : 34 ] Jesus said, 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.

Well, how do we do that? How do we store up treasure in heaven? Paul tells us some of the ways that we do that in this passage here in his letter to Timothy.

By doing good, by giving generously, by sharing with others who are in need, in this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age.

So the good deeds that we do in this life really matter in eternity, in the age to come.

There's something good in them, something from them that lasts into eternity. And Paul uses this language of a good foundation here.

[ 23 : 50 ] If you were going to build a house next year, first of all, wow, that's a lot of money. That's a big investment. That's a huge undertaking.

Would you go cheap and save money and just pop it right on the dirt? Probably not. Or would you just get some old wood and shove it under there and make a little bit of a thing for it to rest on?

Probably not. Would you pay the money and have a proper concrete foundation or basement poured? Lord? I think we all understand the importance of having a good foundation when it comes to earthly houses.

But do we know the importance of having a good foundation when it comes to our heavenly home in the coming age? Do you know that how you live here and now matters in the coming age?

being generous, being willing to share, being rich in good deeds? It's like doing work on your foundation for the age to come. I'll just read it again.

[ 25 : 02 ] In this way, they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age. What kind of foundation are you laying for the coming age?

For the life that comes after this one? We got on this subject a little bit in Adult Sunday School last Sunday, actually. There are real rewards that God holds in store for those who, by faith, do good with what he has entrusted to them.

There are real rewards which God holds in store for those who, by faith, do good with what he has entrusted to them.

Now, that doesn't mean that we have to do a certain amount of good works in order to be saved or to go to heaven. We get that as God's gift simply by faith and by asking God for forgiveness and believing in Jesus.

But there are real rewards that God holds in store for those who, by faith, persevere in doing good works in this present world.

[ 26 : 18 ] And I hope that we maybe can dig into some of that in future, in other passages. These words are intended to motivate us. He's saying, lay up treasure for yourself in heaven by doing these things, being generous, willing to share.

If we think back to what we heard a couple weeks ago, the stuff that we have now, our abundance, our possessions, we can't keep them.

death will someday separate us from all of it. And so don't just focus on adding to that and having more of that. These things may be treasures to us and truly God has given them to us for our enjoyment.

But when that day comes, we breathe our last. It's not ours anymore. And so instead, focus on storing up for yourself treasure in heaven.

A treasure that you can never lose. That's not uncertain or affected by the things that go on down here. Focus on laying that good foundation for yourself in the coming age.

[ 27 : 38 ] page. Paul ends this letter with a final charge and warning to Timothy.

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith.

He ends his letter by charging Timothy to guard what has been entrusted to his care. Quite literally, guard the entrusted deposit. Now this is not Paul's life savings that he's talking about, that Timothy's keeping for Paul under his bed.

That would be ironic, after what Paul just said. What is this entrusted deposit? Paul actually reveals it to us in his second letter to Timothy. Second Timothy chapter one, verse 13.

Paul writes to Timothy there, what you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.

[ 28 : 53 ] Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. So the good deposit, the entrusted deposit, is the sound teaching that Timothy heard from Paul.

It's the gospel. It's the good news about Jesus and all the teaching of Christ that goes with it. That Paul is an apostle of Christ Jesus has given to Timothy. And so here as he draws this first letter to a close, Paul is saying, guard that message, that teaching, that truth.

Preserve it. Protect it. Don't let it be lost. Don't let it slip away into the background. Don't let it become confused or mixed up with all these other ideas and false teachings, these controversial speculations of others.

Keep this truth about Jesus as the main message, the marching orders of the church. knowledge. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge.

Another warning from Paul concerning the ideas and teachings of the false teachers. Just turn away from those things, Timothy. Stay true to the deposit from Christ which I have given to you.

[ 30 : 11 ] That other stuff is not knowledge. those who profess these ideas which oppose the gospel and oppose the words of Christ, they've departed from the faith.

So don't listen to them. Turn away from them. Stay true to that good deposit, that gospel, that truth that I have given to you.

And he closes with grace be with you all. A blessing. May the grace of God, may the giving kindness of God be with you all.

So for those of you who have an abundance, what will you do with it? Are there good deeds that God has been laying on your heart that are yet undone?

Are there people that you know could be in our midst or could be outside of these walls, in our community or family? Are there people you know who do not have an abundance and are struggling just to pay the bills and keep food on the table?

[ 31 : 27 ] But if I give away the stuff that I've received or the stuff that I've earned, how will I have enough for me and for my family? Is your hope in the Lord?

Or is it in what you have? My grandparents often said, often say this to me, they say, you can't out give God.

God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He owns it all. Everything. Will he not supply your need just as he does the birds of the air and the critters of the field?

And so I hope and pray that with what we've heard this morning, we don't go home today and say, well, that was convicting and then just do nothing about it. What real, tangible action will you take this Christmas with the abundance that you have?

What real, tangible action will you take in this year ahead of us, 2024, with the abundance that you have received?

[ 32 : 37 ] We are stewards, managers, all of us. And the King will come back someday and he's going to ask what we have done with what he's entrusted to us.

May we all reflect the grace and the generosity of our God well on that day. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for these words that you've given to us. And yes, we admit that they are challenging to us. They strike deeply into our hearts because we do live in a culture that is all about greed, having more, having better.

And so I pray that you would do your work in us by your Holy Spirit, that you would teach us the way of contentment and that we truly would be willing to give generously and to share with those who are in need.

Do that work in us, we pray. Make us to shine and to reflect your glory for the glory of Christ. Amen. Amen.