

Yeah, that was really a bad idea. So.

The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

Whoever loves money never has enough. Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.

Can we talk about sports betting for just a minute?

What? You know, I have always loved sports. I still do. But I tell you, it's not the same anymore, is it, with gambling and nil and all that stuff? In 2018, the Supreme Court struck down a law that opened the floodgates for sports gambling.

And now we live in a time where you can not only bet on whether your team will win or lose, you can just bet on anything. You can bet on an individual player's performance. Will she score 20 points or more than 20 points? Or fewer than 20 points? Will the first pitch of the second inning be a ball, a strike?

And when you can bet on something that specific, corruption is just pounding at the door. Let me in. Hey, we can make lots and lots of money, everybody. And the doors are open wide. Last year, NBA player was banned for life because he intentionally kept his point total lower than the expectation.

And as a result, the bettors won money and he got a \$5,000 kickback. All he had to do was miss a few shots, fake an injury, leave the game early. Money was made. Two Major League baseball players were federally indicted for providing inside information to help gamblers win \$60,000 as they bet on an individual pitch. And so if he would pitch this ball instead of a strike, first pitch of the second inning, the bettors would win \$60,000 and he would get a \$5,000 kickback.

And that's what Luis Ortiz did. That pitch combined with another pitch, \$60,000, \$5,000 for him. So no one has to throw the game anymore. Just one player manipulating one stat. That's all it takes for money.

It's greed. It's greed. And the crazy thing to me is the people doing this in my mind make an obscene amount of money. Luis Ortiz had an annual salary of around \$800,000, and he literally throws it away for 5,000 bucks. Doesn't make any sense, but ancient words are ever true.

Whoever loves money never has enough. Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. I don't gamble on sports. I don't gamble on anything. I don't buy lottery tickets.

I'm not judging you if you do. But I was just raised that all gambling was wrong. Anybody raised that way, okay, we're all older, of course.

So I was raised that we were not even allowed to play carnival games at the Persimmon Festival. Because those games came straight out of hell.

And if you played those games, you were on a slippery slope to poverty, ruin and destruction and probably eternal damnation. My parents never said that, but, boy, that was the implication. It was clear that I was not going to be playing any games. And when my kids got the age, it's like, okay, go ahead.

Yes, it was extreme legalism, but it was based on something. It was based on something. That's true. And it's the idea that you should work for your money. And it was also a very deeply biblically rooted move against greed.

Against greed. The Oxford Dictionary says that greed is an intense and selfish desire for something, especially wealth, power, or food. So greed is this selfish desire for money or things. And in the Bible. The Bible makes it pretty clear.

If you are greedy, it just means you don't trust God and his desire to take care of you and his ability to take care of you. And so greed is a really poor replacement for God. It's an idol and it's a poor one. The writer of Hebrews makes a connection here. The writer says, keep your lives free from the love of money.

Be content with what you have. Because. Because God has said, never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. Be content with what you have. Am I content with what I have?

Yeah, maybe sometimes with some of it. What about you? Content with all you have. Contentment based on trust in God's care. Contentment is the opposite of greed.

Several times in the Bible, one way or another, it says, be content with what you have. So I want to think this morning a little bit about greed and contentment. So greed is this restless craving for more. More money, more possessions, more experiences, more status. It's a life oriented around accumulating more.

It says, what I have is not enough. It's not enough. I want more. The Bible says that's idolatry. Colossians 3:5.

Don't be greedy for a greedy person is an idolater worshipping the things of this world. Well, contentment is the opposite of greed. Contentment, rooted in faith, rooted in trust, says, what I have is enough because God is enough. So contentment is this quiet confidence in God's ability and his desire to take care of us. God provides us with what we truly need, and it does not consist in the abundance of possessions.

Jesus says in Luke 12. So contentment brings peace and joy. And it's interesting, it leads to gratitude. Or maybe gratitude leads to contentment. And.

But those two coupled together then lead to generosity.

Our text today is first Timothy 6, 9, 19. And so Paul is writing to Timothy, his younger friend, who Paul is a mentor to Timothy, and he's writing to him. Timothy's working in the city of Ephesus, and it's a challenging job. Ephesus is a large cosmopolitan city with lots of things and lots of wealthy people. And some of those wealthy people are in the church.

And so Paul is telling Timothy how to handle that. And he's saying, listen, I want you to have the right attitude as you deal with things in the right way. And so he then says, listen, I know there are some preachers and teachers who are just in it for the money. And they put on a good show and they really put on a front, but they're really in it for money. They're greedy.

And so he says this. These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way of becoming wealthy. So then Paul provides a corrective.

He says, this is the greedy thing. And he kind of expands the conversation to really talk about greed and contentment. And so listen carefully what he says, because I think it's really important. He says, true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it.

So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people craving money have wandered from the true faith and have pierced themselves with many sorrows. But you, Timothy, you're a man of God.

Run. Run from these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have declared so well before many witnesses.

And I charge you before God, who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate, I charge you that you obey this command without wavering. Then no one can find

fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. For at just the right time, Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only Almighty God, the King of all kings, the Lord of all lords. He alone can never die. And he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him no human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will.

All honor and praise to him forever. Amen. Now teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God who richly provides us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good.

They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need. All always being ready to share with others. By doing so they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future that they may experience true life. So here's what's going on. Paul is warning against an intentional desire for more.

It's the more, the more mindset that leads people into temptations and desires that in the end lead to ruin and destruction. And in Greek it's very graphic. He says it's self inflicted. You're just ruining yourself. You're stabbing yourself when you have that desire for money.

And the key to overcoming it, he says essentially is contentment. Contentment, learning to be satisfied with what we have and with what we need. We came into the world with nothing. We're leave the same way. I think Paul would just say, hey, just keep it simple, okay?

Just keep your life simple. Just keep it simple. Paul pauses. I think Paul's got a little ADD when you read him, he's like, he's on a thing and he says, oh, wait, wait. And so I think he's riding along talking about money and then he says, oh, I need to tell Timothy something.

So it's kind of like if he were talking to Timothy, he'd be talking about money. And then he'd say, wait a minute. And he grabs Timothy by the shoulders, he says, look at me Timothy, I gotta tell you something. And when he says that, he says it to me and to you as well. And so let's listen very carefully.

He says, timothy, you're a man of God. You're a man of God, so just run from greed. There's just so much there you want to run from from it. Run toward contentment, which shows up in faith, love and gentleness and perseverance. Timothy, you know this.

It's all about Jesus, about living in his kingdom with the kingdom economy. And Jesus is going to return one day. King of Kings, Lord of loads, hold on to this. This is what you hold on to. Hold on to eternal life.

There will be hard days, there will be rough days. There are going to be days when you want more and you're going to feel like you just have to have more. He said, just persevere through that. Persevere through that. Fight the good fight with gentleness.

And then having done that, Paul turns back some final thoughts about money and people who are comfortable with money.

Paul does not condemn money.

I don't think he has any problem with people having money. He even says it's for our enjoyment. God blesses us so we can enjoy it. But he does say a few things to those who are comfortable and more than comfortable with their resources. He says, don't be proud of how much you have.

Don't put your trust in your money.

It's unreliable. I watch the stock market, okay, Trust God. He richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Use your money to do good. Be generous.

Help those in need.

These are investments in a glorious, secure future. Echoing the words of Jesus and Matthew 6, lay up treasures in heaven. Paul's not attacking money. He's not condemning hard work. I think if he were in our culture, he would not be opposed to wise planning.

He wouldn't be opposed to careful investing. I don't think he'd be opposed to any of that. He's just warning us about the subtle shift that happens in our heart when money stops being a tool and starts being a treasure, when it stops being a servant and becomes master. So contentment is the key. And the good news is contentment can be learned.

It's something we can learn. You know the story of Paul. He ends up in prison in Rome, and he's not sure if he's going to live or die. And he has such a wonderful attitude about it. He says, to live is Christ, to die is gain.

But when he's in prison in Rome, the Philippian Church, one of his favorite churches, I think, says, hey, we need to send a care package to Paul. So they get some money together, I think maybe some lip balm and some candy bars and, I don't know, some stuff. And so they send a care package to Paul by Epaphroditus, a guy named Epaphroditus. And so Paul receives that gift, and he's very grateful for the gift. But he has an odd response.

Maybe he sends back a letter with Epaphroditus and he says, you know what? I'm really appreciative of your gift, but I didn't really need it. And he says, why? He says, I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Contentment then is not based on what you have or what you don't have. Contentment is not based on anything outside you. It's not based on external circumstances.

It's not based on situations. It's not based on anything outside of you. Contentment is based on who you are. It's based on your identity, who you are in Christ. Contentment is resting in the fact that Jesus calls us his brothers and sisters, that God calls us his beloved children.

Contentment says, I can do all things. I can handle all things through Christ who gives me strength. He is enough. Contentment is Christ centered, not circumstance centered. It leads to peace, joy and confidence.

It leads to a healthy mind. It leads to a healthy mind. Contentment grows when I practice gratitude for what I already have. Greed says, not enough. Contentment says, thank you.

Thank you. Gratitude is one of the simplest and most powerful ways disarm greed. Contentment grows when I loosen my grip and practice generosity. Greed tightens the fist. Contentment opens the hands.

Paul says to tell the Tim. Paul tells Timothy to tell the wealthy, listen, be rich in good works, be generous and be ready to share. So generosity is the practical training ground where contentment is formed and maintained. Years ago, I developed three statements that helped me think about money and possessions. And I thought they came from Richard Foster, but I could not verify that.

So. So they're not mine. They came from somewhere. But anyway, they're really helpful to me and the three statements. And I think about this a lot.

All that I have is a gift from God. All that you have is a gift from God. I would challenge you to say otherwise. And so if it's a gift from God, I'm going to hold it lightly, not tightly. And if someone is in need, I'll share with them.

I want us to do something this week in light of some questions I'm about to ask. And the questions are, how can I practice generosity

this week? That flows from gratitude for what I have. Who can I bless this week? Where can I share?

What can I give away? You know, probably most of us in the room are fairly comfortable, but there are several people in the room that are not. And so I would challenge you to look around, get some Walmart gift cards, some gas gift cards, and just quietly give those to people. Just practice some generosity and see, see how that works in your life. Contentment grows when we practice generosity.

And as we remember our True security. Paul says, I learned the secret of being content. And the secret was not some technique. The secret was a person. A person.

Whether he had plenty or little, he still had Jesus. Still had Jesus, and so do we. Contentment is not about settling for less. It's just about trusting the one who gives us exactly what we need. All right, I know someone will say, I'm not greedy, but honestly, I don't have enough to pay my bills.

So, yes, I want more. I need more. I hear you. It's a tough time. I think the new trendy word is affordability, and it's tough.

And I remember those days. I listened to Dave Ramsey a lot. I listened to him yesterday. He's got a whole bunch of people now, which is better. Dave's kind of mean sometimes, but when I listen to that, almost everybody that calls in can do something to improve their situation.

And it's not easy. It's often very difficult. And so there's that.

We are developing a stewardship team here. I don't know. I'm not sure what we're calling it. Tim, do you know what we're calling it? Where's Tim?

Went to Starbucks. I guess. What I think we need to do better than that.

Stewardship squad. Makes me think of the mod squad back in the 70s. Anyway, half the room has no idea what I'm talking. Anyway, we're going to have some people who are going to look at all things financial through the lens of biblical teaching and generosity. And it's not going to be, you need to give more money.

It's not that at all. It's. It's going to be, say, how can we help you become good stewards of what you have? So we've got Ron Blue at Bloomington, and God Owns It All. It's kind of like Financial Peace University.

Hopefully, we're going to start offering some things next year that

will help all of us just understand our money and those kinds of things better. So I'm looking forward to that. Tim last week confessed that he's not perfect when it comes to finances and trusting God about all of it. And I'm the same. Very much the same.

And probably you are, too. I am past the traditional retirement age, but I enjoy what I do, so I don't see a need to stop unless Sean tells me I need to stop.

But sometimes I think about it.

Most days quite content. There you go. But some days I think, you know, hmm, could I. Could I retire? Do we have enough?

Could we make it? I watch a lot of YouTube videos about retirement. I just kind of find them interesting. And the numbers that some of these people present as the amount you need, it's like, what? That ain't gonna happen. For a preacher and a school teacher, that's just not gonna happen.

But I also know, and I look around and I see people, and I've known people all my life. You know what? They're fine. They didn't have much. God took care of them.

Everything's fine. And so when it comes to money, it's really easy to fall into the what if stuff. That leads to anxiety. What if this happens? What if that happens?

Just relax. And it's also easy to look backward and say, I should have, I could have saved this. I could have, should have done this. I just say, just let all that go. Live in the present and don't feel the guilt and shame of the past.

Don't feel the anxiety of the future. I would just encourage you to live in the present. Learn to be content with what we have. Because contentment is based on trusting God, based on trust in God that he'll take care of us. He will never leave us, he will never forsake us.

He uses other people to bless other people. How God works. He uses people to do things. And so he may be calling you today. How can you bless somebody in this church or outside of this church?

What could you give to them financially or in other ways? What could you do to bless? So I would say be open handed, be blessed, and be a blessing. As we come to communion this morning, everything we talk about, have talked about today comes into sharp focus. Greed says, take more.

Jesus says, this is my body given for you. I'm giving you my life. Greed says, hold tightly. Jesus doesn't consider equality with God

something to be grasped or held onto, but empties himself, opens his hands on the cross, wide open, holding nothing back. Greed promises life, but leads to sorrow.

Jesus lays down his life to give us true life. Second Corinthians 8, 9 says, you know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sake, he became poor so that by his poverty he could make you rich. So at the table, remember, you are fully loved, you're fully provided for, you're never abandoned. And our deepest need has already been met in Christ.

So as you take the bread and drink the cup, I would encourage you to say something like this, Lord, you are enough. And because you are enough, what you provide is enough. So let's remember him with grateful open hearts and open hands. Father thank you for teaching us about contentment and generosity. We look at you and it's amazing how generous you are.

Especially when we look at Jesus and the gift that you gave us and he was willing to let go and give and so help us to be people who are generous. That springs from contentment and gratitude. And this time of the year especially we're reminded of that. So just help us to be open minded, open hearted and open handed as we go through this season and just help us to learn that secret. And that secret is Jesus.

Thank you for this bread. Thank you for this cup. It's in Jesus name we pray.

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