

Sermon on Contentment and Generosity

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Sunday October 3 2021

Our passage today focuses on two things, contentment, and attitude towards money. Paul makes a direct link between them. He goes straight in there with the statement, 'godliness with contentment is great gain'. So 'be as much like Jesus as you can and be content with what you have' is the message. Jesus goes on to talk about the desire for riches being a temptation and a trap and gives us the much-misquoted proverb, "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." And warns that, "some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and given themselves many griefs".

This should cause us to stop and reflect on how content we are with what we have. Do we ever look at other people and wish we had what they have? Do we have an attitude of gratitude? By any measure everyone here is in the top 20% of wealthiest people in the world. 80% of people in the world have less than £7 a day to live on. 1 in 3 people in the world do not have safe drinking water. I could go on, but the point is not to make you feel guilty but to remind you of how very blessed we are in so many ways.

God cares very much about our attitudes about the things we have and what we do with them. Being rich is not in itself a sin or even necessarily a bad thing, but obviously being greedy and selfish is. Interestingly there have been studies done by psychologists and research teams that back up how it seems to be harder for rich people to be content, generous, and compassionate.

A study in *Psychology Today* showed that the children of wealthy parents had a higher risk of experiencing depression, anxiety, eating disorders and substance abuse. Researchers also found that, as we get richer, we may become less ethical and less empathetic, since wealth instils a sense of

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freedom and the wealthier we are, the less we care about other people's problems and feelings.

By contrast, psychologists at the University of California at Berkeley and San Francisco found that people on lower incomes are better readers of facial expressions and more empathetic.

God cares about our hearts. He wants us to be thankful, content, and generous not dissatisfied, greedy and mean.

How much money is enough for you to live on? How much should you give away, to the ministry of the church and to other charitable causes? That is really between you and God and none of my business. Some Christians, including some people here believe they should give 10% of their income to the ministry of the church and give to other causes as well. The Church of England suggests 5% to the Church and 5% to other causes. But as I said it is entirely between you and God. Some people give more, some less. What is God asking you to give? John and I ask God what He wants us to give regularly through the Parish Giving Scheme and we mostly ask Him about what we should give to other causes and check with each other what we think He wants us to do, although sometimes of course one of us is just moved to give something spontaneously. It is really important though to give joyfully and freely without any resentment. If you are going to resent what you give, then it is probably better not to give it! Generosity is one of the fruits of the Spirit. We should be growing in generosity, learning how to be more generous as we grow in our faith.