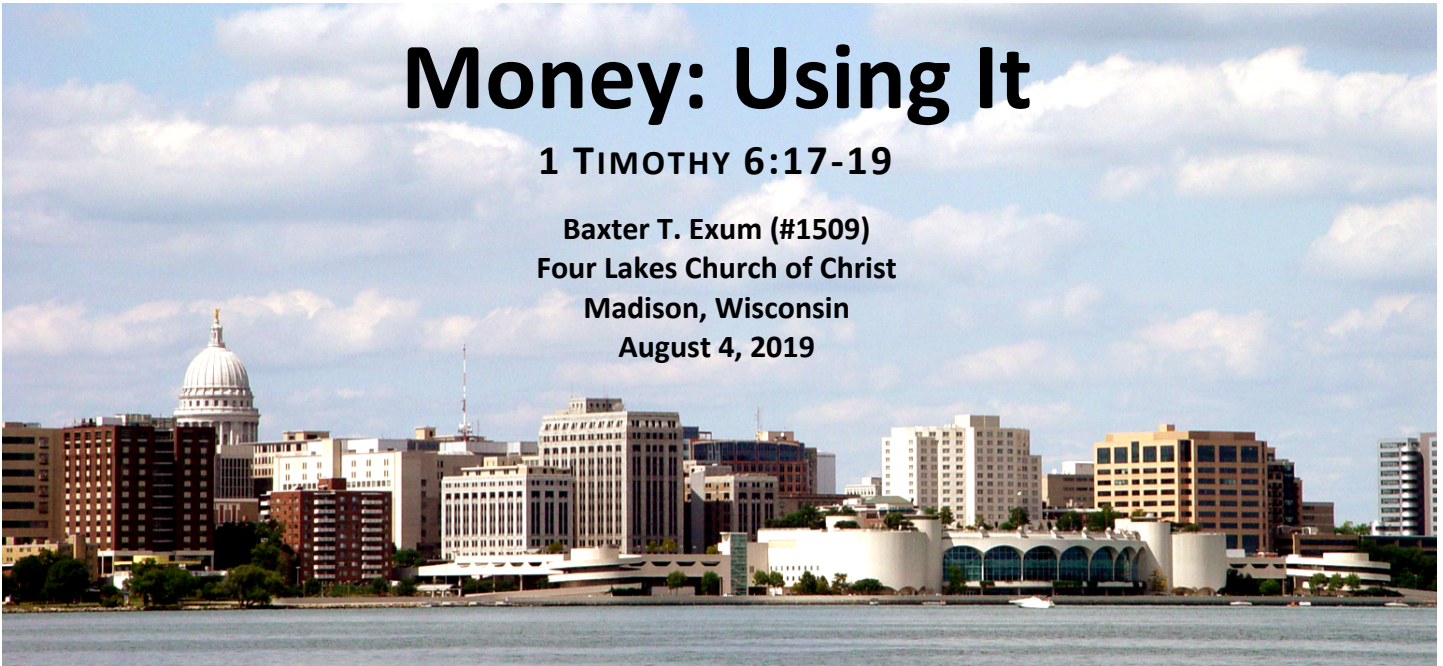


Money: Using It

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

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This morning we continue in our series-within-a-series with another passage from 1 Timothy 6 on the subject of money. If you were here with us last week (or caught it online), then you might remember that we looked at the idea of GETTING MONEY. We learned that more wealth does not necessarily lead to happiness, we learned that stuff is only temporary, we learned that our real needs are actually quite simple, and we learned that a desire for more and more can very easily lead to sin.

This morning, we continue with another aspect of this as we look at Paul's inspired advice concerning how we USE our money. The passage is 1 Timothy 6:17-19 and is found on page 1860 in our pew Bibles. As we make our way there, I need to make just a few comments concerning exactly who needs to be paying attention to these words, because as we get to 1 Timothy 6:17, we find that Paul tells Timothy to give a command to certain people who are ***"rich in this present world."*** Right there, many of us may be tempted to breathe a sigh of relief! Because, after all, very few (if any) of us will think of ourselves as being ***"rich."*** And so we might go into this passage assuming that it is aimed at other people, "Yes, those rich people, they need to do this, this, and this with their money!" We think of Bill Gates or Warren Buffet. Or here in Madison, we think of the Frautchi family or any number of others, and the temptation is to think that today's passage is aimed at them. Last week, we learned that to be happy, most people (on average) feel that they need to make roughly twice what they are making right now. And we might be tempted to think the same way concerning what it means to be rich. A rich person is somebody who makes more than I do!

However, before we start thinking this applies to other people and not us, we need to stop by and visit globalrichlist.com. Globalrichlist.com is a website that will tell you exactly where you rank among the wealthiest people on earth. I plugged in an average yearly salary of around \$80,000 here in the Madison area, and the site very quickly calculated that someone making \$80 grand a year is in the top 1/10th of 1% in terms of income around the world. I backed off the average salary a bit, and took it all the way down to the poverty level, as determined by the federal government. The poverty line for one person here in the U.S. right now is a yearly income of around \$12,500. For someone making \$12,500 per year, that person would still be in the top 13% of the wealthiest people anywhere in the world. So, before we dismiss today's text as applying to OTHER people, let us please remember that the poorest Americans rank among some of the wealthiest people in the world. We are the rich.

So, with this in mind, let us please look very carefully at Paul's words to us - 1 Timothy 6:17-19,

¹⁷ Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

As our tradition is, I want us to apply this passage to our lives today by looking at a brief series of very practical observations. What do we need to keep in mind as we use and as we manage the wealth that God has given to us?

- I. **One of the first things we notice comes right away in verse 17 as we find that we, as the rich of this world, are to AVOID THE SIN OF PRIDE.**

In fact, Timothy is to *"instruct,"* he is to issue a *"command"* to the rich of this world, that they are *"not to be conceited."* As some of the richest people in the world right now, we need this warning. With wealth comes great danger. Many times, when we get something, when we obtain more, we feel good about it. We get a raise, we get a new car, we get a new pair of pants at Goodwill, or whatever it is. When we obtain more, we feel good. But the danger is: We become conceited. It was my education that led to this. It was my hard work that allowed me to get this new car. It was my brilliant intellect that gave me the power to get this shiny new canoe that my neighbor does not have. There is a feeling of accomplishment and pride. And in a sense, this is okay. We work hard, and good things happen. But then again, there is also perhaps a danger of starting to look down on others. Paul, though, warns us that we are *"not to be conceited."* We are not to look down on others for not having the wealth that we have.

This mirrors God's warning to the Israelites. As they were getting ready to cross over into the Promised Land, God gave a special warning in Deuteronomy 8 (11-14, 17-18),

¹¹ "Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; ¹² otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, ¹³ and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, ¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ... ¹⁷ Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' ¹⁸ But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

And so instead of being conceited, we are to remember that God is the one who has given us the power to make wealth. He gives us the strength, the personality, the wisdom, and the skill to make a living. And when we end up among the richest 1% anywhere in the world, we are to be extremely careful to remember where this wealth came from. So, first of all, don't let it go to your head. We are not to be conceited.

II. The second big idea here is that WE MUST PUT OUR TRUST IN GOD AND NOT IN OUR RICHES.

As Paul says, we must not put our hope *"in the uncertainty of riches."* Riches are uncertain. As Jesus says in Matthew 6, *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...."* We know from our own personal experience that riches and possessions are uncertain. Brand new houses and cars have problems. Money comes and goes. Our clothes wear out. The stock market actually goes down sometimes! Riches can be stolen, homes can be destroyed by fire, retirement assets can be devastated by inflation. In fact, no matter how much stuff we have, there are infinite scenarios that can play out where any one of us could end up broke and homeless by this time tomorrow.

We think of the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12, where Jesus told the story of a wealthy farmer who said to himself, *"Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry."* He made big plans to tear down his barns to build bigger barns. And yet, as we know, the man died that night. And the point of that story is what Jesus said in Luke 12:15, *"Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."* We are not to put our trust in the uncertainty of riches, but on God.

III. The third very practical lesson here is that WE ARE TO ENJOY WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO US.

As Paul says in verse 17, we are to, *"...fix our hope on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy."* So, we are given permission here to enjoy the wealth that God has supplied. We need to be thankful, we need to be humble, we need to put our trust in God and not in our wealth, but we do have the reminder here that God has supplied us *"with all things to enjoy."* God has given us food (and bacon), and clothing, and air conditioning, homemade ice cream, and cheese. God has given us transportation, and he has blessed us with some amazing places to go. He's given us homes, and jobs, and friends, and children. He has given us clean water. It always amazes me that with the flick of a finger we have warm running water. But just the fact that we have water that is safe to drink is amazing. So many blessings!

From time to time, businesses will do inventory. Several months ago, my daughter was in an accounting class and came home excited to tell me about all the ways of doing inventory. I had no idea there were so many ways for businesses to account for the stuff they have on hand, from an accounting point of view. Perhaps there is a value to us doing our own inventory, going through and listing some of these good things that God has given us to enjoy. Sometimes we sing the song, "Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done." As Paul says, we are to, *"...fix our hope on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy."*

IV. There is a fourth and final lesson for those of us who are rich, and that is, WE MUST ALSO BE GENEROUS AND READY TO SHARE.

"Instruct them to do good, to be rich and good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed." When we have everything we need, when we are rich, it is so easy to turn our attention inward, to focus on ourselves. Back in the 1980's, sociologists started describing a trend known as "cocooning." We know what a cocoon is. Cocooning is where we do that to ourselves. We stay home and surround ourselves with our stuff, and technology, and we avoid interacting with the outside world. We are okay, and so we assume that

everybody else is okay. But Paul gives the reminder that we need to be using our wealth to actually do good. Like the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, we can waste our money on an extravagant lifestyle, like the Rich Farmer in Luke 12, we can pile up our money while people around us are suffering. Or, out of our respect for God and because of our love for others, we can do what Paul is telling us to do here, we can be ***“generous and ready to share.”*** We can reach out and actually help people in need. This is within the realm of possibility. We aren’t commanded to end world hunger, we cannot eliminate homelessness, we cannot fix poverty, but Paul tells us to do something, and we are to be ***“generous”*** with it.

Right now, we have two awesome opportunities here at this congregation - one where there’s more work than money involved, and one where there’s more money than work involved. So, we have two very good options, or we might even be able to do both. On one hand, we have the clothing give-away coming up this coming Saturday. We’ve done this for years, where we collect clothing and then distribute it free, to anybody who needs it. No questions asked. As we get ready for this, several will get together right here in this building at 11 a.m. tomorrow (on Monday morning) to sort some clothing. We’ve been sorting by size for several months now, and we were all caught up about a week ago, but some more items have come in since then. So, if you can distinguish between small and large and men’s and women’s clothing, we have an opening for you tomorrow morning at 11! This is a ***“good work.”*** Then, on Wednesday, we have what we lovingly refer to as “Cardio Night.” After class, our mission is to bring all of the clothing upstairs and to stage it here in this room. It takes maybe 20 minutes, but it helps so much. And then on Saturday, we also have a chance to jump in. Some get here at 7 a.m., help us get it set up, and then leave. That’s awesome. If you can stay and interact with our guests, that’s awesome as well. Or if you can get here as we are wrapping it up at 1 p.m., that would be very helpful also. We’re not talking about amazing feats of strength, there’s no super intelligence required, but we have a good thing going on, and it takes all of us to make it happen. And usually we have more than a hundred family units who come and benefit from it. You might notice that on the card and on the banner on the front of our building, we have a scripture reference, 1 Timothy 6:17, ***“Instruct them to do good, to be rich and good works, to be generous and ready to share.”*** We put this out there not to brag about how righteous we are; quite the contrary, we put this out there to let the world know that we are doing this because God, in his word, has commanded it. We do this in the name of Jesus.

The second opportunity we have going on right now is the school supply drive for Kennedy Elementary. As most of you know by now, years ago we learned that there were more than a dozen homeless students at Kennedy. Kennedy is right there, just a few blocks over. If it weren’t for some houses, we could see it from here. There are kids in this neighborhood who live on a friend of a friend’s kitchen floor, and some of them come to school hungry with no supplies. We can help that. We had a list on the bulletin last week, it’s been in our slide rotation today, we have extra lists on the bulletin board in the entryway. We’ve done this for several years now, and the school is extremely thankful. This isn’t physically demanding, but it does take money. You can go to Wal-Mart or Staples, or you can go online. You can get your phone out, and have these things show up at your house tomorrow. About a week ago, we sat down with the list, my wife told me what she would appreciate as a teacher, we clicked a few times, and those items are now sitting under the coatrack back there. But the emphasis here is that if we are rich (which we are), we need to rich in good works, we need to be generous, and we need to be ready to share.

Over in Ephesians, Paul writes to this congregation where Timothy is preaching, and he explains that the purpose of having a job is to help those in need. He says, ***“He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.”*** The purpose of earning a paycheck is to share it.

Conclusion:

This morning, then, we have looked at Paul's instructions for those who are rich - that is us.

- If we are conceited, we can change - no longer looking down on the poor. It is very easy to have a condescending attitude.
- If we trust our stuff more than we trust God, we can change that, too.
- If we are so busy getting new stuff that we don't really enjoy what we have right now, let's refocus, and let's enjoy God's blessings.
- And if we are blind to the suffering that is going on right here in this neighborhood, we need to open our eyes and share - either with time, or money, or both. Get involved this week. If you have more money than time, find somebody here and give them some cash for a Staples run.

God's command to the rich is not that they become poor, but God's command to the rich is that they use their wealth properly. We are the rich. And this is something we can do.

By obeying Paul's command here, we are storing up for ourselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that we can take hold of that which is life indeed. There is another life coming after this one. And we prepare for it by putting God first. If we haven't yet obeyed the gospel, the first step is to hear the word of God and to understand what sin is and what God did for us in sending Jesus to live and to die in our place. We accept his offer of salvation by turning away from sin, by confessing Jesus as the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. If we can help in any way, we hope you will let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com