



ST. MATTHEWS  
*Experience God's Family*

**Sermon Title: The Good life.**

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Have you ever dreamed of the good life? I know I have.

Wouldn't it be nice to live in a world, where you don't have to stress about how you're going to pay your bills every month?

Maybe you've dreamed of winning the lotto.

Just by the way, the lotto website itself will tell you that your chances of winning the grand prize of the lotto is 1 in 14 million. Did you know that the odds of you becoming an astronaut are greater than your odds of guessing all the right numbers in the lotto. Your odds of being struck by lightning are much greater. Your odds of being struck by lightning and then being killed are much greater.

But winning the lotto is probably an extreme example of what you may call the good life. But I think generally, we'd all like the life, where you can live comfortably. And not have all of this monthly financial stress. Because there is this belief out there, that if you have no financial stress, everything else will be ok.

And I think most of us in this room, have seen how financial stress can lead to other stress. When it's a still a week before pay day and you look at your bank balance and you're not quite sure where all the money has gone. But you can't afford to do anything or buy anything.

Or maybe you work on a commission based income, where you're waiting for that big deal to come through, and everything is hanging in the balance until that happens. And that creates tension.

And we often think that because lack of money, and ability to pay bills, and lack of ability to live comfortably, often leads to stress, then we often think the opposite is true if we have money. Which means that we are relying on money to solve our problems.

Let me try and put it another way. When we're in a financial quandry, our goals become money based, because money is what we need to get out of the hole that we're in. But in sense that's putting a plaster on the problem. We're not getting to the root of the issue.

So if I'm greedy and materialistic, and I've got myself into a financial state that I can't manage, and someone comes to me and says here's a million rand to help you solve your money problems. Yes I'll be able to pay back money that I owe to people. But that doesn't change my heart.

In fact what it may do is make me more greedy and materialistic.

The reality we don't have people giving us millions. And what often happens, is we spend our entire lives, waiting for the good life. This year's going to be tough, but next year, I should be able to pay off the car that I'm driving, and the boss will give me that raise he's been talking about for so long. Next year that big deal is going to come through, and we'll be ok financially.

But it never happens. You're never quite living the good life as you imagined it to be. And the problem with our idea of the good life being resolved with money, is that we're looking to wrong things to solve our problems and our issues.

There is danger for anyone who looks to money as the great problem solver in their lives.

I want you to open your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 6. You may recognize some of this passage. Some of this passage is often misquoted, but this passage teaches about the good life in the true sense.

Look from verse 6.

<sup>6</sup> *But godliness with contentment is great gain.* <sup>7</sup> *For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.* <sup>8</sup> *But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*

You know when a verse starts with “But” then something has come before that. So just to fill you in, Timothy has been talking about false teachers, who don’t agree with the sound instruction of Jesus. In other words he’s talking about people who for some or other reasons are teaching their own ideas about God. These are all ideas that may all seem very attractive. But Paul says that anyone who teaches this way is conceited and understands nothing. (vs 3)

That tells you something about who our authority should be. If you go to any church, including this one, one of the first questions you need to be asking about the church is: who is the authority here? Is this church teaching it’s own ideas, even though they’re ideas that may make me feel good about myself? Or are they ideas that agree with what the Bible teaches. Is the Bible the authority? Is the sound instruction of Jesus, is that the authority?

To teach from any other authority, is conceited and understands nothing. And if these false teachers aren’t using scripture and sound doctrine as their basis, you’ve got to question their motive for doing it.

Just take a look at 1 Timothy 6 and verse 4. *He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions* <sup>5</sup> *and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.*

So watch out for people who are only concerned about these things. Controversies, quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk etc. They love to cause division, they love to look for arguments. Paul describes them as being robbed of truth. and they’ve got a financial motive for what they’re doing.

And this isn’t an issue that is limited to the first century. I cringe when I turn on the TV sometimes on to so called Christian TV programs, and they have these guys, who all they ever do is ask for money from people. And they claim to do it in the name of Jesus.

Now it’s not wrong for churches to ask for money (before you misunderstand me), it’s the way the economy works, you need money to run a church. And I suppose if your church is on tv you need more money because you’re producing tv programs, and that’s all very legit.

But often on many of these TV shows, the emphasis is on prosperity. Give money and God will make YOU rich. Give money to us and God will make you prosper in a financial way.

Eg. Telethon on DSTV.

Their motive isn’t the gospel. Their motive isn’t the kingdom, their motive is to line their own pockets. Be weary of that.

So, in verse 6, Paul has just been talking about these false teachers who have money and all sorts of wrong things as their motives. But now he goes on to talk about what our attitude as Christians should be towards money.

So basically there are those who see godliness as a means to financial gain. But that’s not godliness. So in verse 6 he says that godliness with contentment is great gain.

We often talk about being kingdom minded. That we need to have a kingdom mindset. You need to have a kingdom mindset, you need to see money and wealth for what it is. It’s something that is fleeting.

And Paul says this in verse 7. "For we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it."

Apparently that's an ancient proverb there that Paul is quoting. But it's true isn't it. Anything you gain in this world financially, or materialistically you can't take it with you. It stays here.

Or the country song version which says, "i've never seen a hearse with a trailer hitched"

There's the story of the family who go to the reading of the will of the father of the family. And they say to the lawyer, "how much did he leave?" and the lawyers response is: He Left everything.

If you think that your purpose on this earth is financial gain, you've misunderstood what godliness is. But if you can learn to be content in all situations, because you know you have a heavenly father who has your best interests at heart, then you have an understanding of what godliness is.

Donald Guthrie in the New Bible Commentary:

*The important element in verse 6 is contentment. Godliness in itself brings great satisfaction. The Christian Gospel provides an adequate basis for contentment.*

As Christians, the God of everything, has taken care of you and me. He's taken care of your eternal well being, through the death of Jesus on the cross.

We are able to live our lives in relationship with him, because of that. If we have the proper perspective , which I know we don't always have, but if we did, we should be more than content. *Godliness with contentment is great gain.*

Look at what he goes on to say in verses 8 and 9.

*But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. (9) People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus is doing is telling his disciples about being part of the kingdom, and finding their contentment in the kingdom, which is more than this world. In Matthew chapter 6, He tells them not to store up treasures on earth, but to store up treasures in heaven, in other words invest in the kingdom, and not in yourself and your material desires.

And he actually goes on to talk about the fact that money can be your master. Money can be your boss. And you can't serve 2 masters. Especially if the one master is Money and the other master is God.

Why do we spend our lives chasing the money carrot that gets dangled in front of us all the time. We're willing to do anything for it. We're willing to compromise our relationship with Jesus for it. and if you're not careful, you'll end up sacrificing your relationship with Jesus for money.

There is danger for anyone who looks to money as the great problem solver in their lives. Look at what Jesus says in Matthew 6 vs 25-27.

Look at Matthew 6:25

<sup>25</sup> "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup> Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life<sup>[a]</sup>?

<sup>28</sup> "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how

*God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Who are you relying on to be the great problem solver? Money, your own means. Or are you relying on the king of the kingdom.

So getting back to 1 Timothy chapter 6 verse 7, he's basically saying we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it, but if we have food and clothing we will be content with that.

So why is it then, that we can never have enough. Why is it that we want more than the basics? And I'm talking from the position of my own heart as well. It's like I'm never satisfied.

Look at Paul's warning in verse 9. And he's talking here about people who never have enough, and the danger of just wanting more and more. Look at verse 9.

*People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

Look what happens to people who want to get rich. Look at what happens to people who want money to be their great problem solver. Paul says here that they fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

When I think this passage I think of the drug trade, I think of prostitution, I think of child trafficking. All feeding off weaknesses that we have as human beings whether it's drugs or sex addiction. Feeding off human weakness.

When I was young and still deciding what to do with my life, people would ask me, "what are you passionate about?" I was pretty passionate about trying to find out what career I should be going into.

And when I think about drug dealers and child traffickers and pimps. I don't think they went into those careers because they were passionate about those careers, But the money was the clincher. There is money to be made, when you feed off people's desires and addictions.

There some of you here tonight, who haven't decided on a career yet. Don't let money be the driving force behind your career choice. Of course there are times when you need to take a job that you may not like because you have to feed yourself, and clothe yourself, and if you've got a family you'll need to feed and clothe them.

But be very careful about choosing something that you have to compromise your faith, but you justify it, because of the money, because then you're showing that money is your God.

I've singled out those extreme and obvious cases where people are doing all sorts of evil, for money. But what about the more subtle. Lying when you're making a sale. Getting involved in a lifestyle that compromises your Christianity because you know that'll get you ahead in business. What about always chasing the next big deal and never seeing your family as a result, and you justify it because of the money.

What about ignoring God's call on your life to be involved in ministry, full time or part time, but you don't want to because you're too busy making money. You just can't give up what you would consider to be the good life.

Look at verse 10.

*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

Money is dangerous. The love of money is deadly. It can lead to all sorts of bad things happening, but the most deadly thing of all that the love of money can do is cause you to wander from your faith.

My question to you tonight is how much do you love money? Do you think that if you just had that little bit more, you would be fine. But then when you look historically at your situation, you've always longed for that little bit more, and when it's come, you've still wanted more and more, you're never satisfied.

Are you willing to compromise your relationship with Jesus.

Paul carries on this talk about money, and tells Timothy what the real good life is. He tells Timothy what he, as a Christian Leader needs to do, and what we need to do as well. And this is the antidote for you and I. For those of us, who have looked to money as the great problem solver, this is the antidote. Look at verse 11.

*But you man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

Flee. Run away from the love of money and the evil that it causes. Rather pursue righteousness, godliness, and faith, endurance and gentleness.

If you're a selfish, greedy lover of money, try pursuing these things this week. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life. In other words get perspective please. This life where money is available is only a minute fraction of eternity. It's a fraction of your eternal life.

And there's a lot of good stuff in the verses that follow, but if you skip to verse 17, there is hope for you if are rich. It's not the money that is evil, it's the love of money that is evil. Look at verse 17.

*Command those who are rich in this present world (there's the perspective thing again, it's only in this world that those riches are worth anything) 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.*

*18. 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.*

If you're rich, don't put your hope in your wealth. Don't look to money as the great problem solver. It's too uncertain. Rather put your hope in God, he's the great problem solver, he's the one who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

If you're rich, be rich in good deeds, be generous, share. By doing that you're investing in the safest investment, the coming age. That is how you take hold of the life that is truly life.