

Listen. Reflect. Move.

I Timothy 6:3-20

Intro

Over the last month we have had the opportunity to reflect upon stewardship themes that have been generally umbrella'd under the theme of 'Live Simply'. This theme is drawn from the I Timothy 6:18-19 which states, 'You are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for yourself the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that you may take hold of the life that really is life.'

All things considered...those are really important and yes, powerful sentiments.

But it is when you begin to allow those thoughts to be enveloped by more of what Paul was saying to Timothy (as Paul was the mentor of Timothy in Timothy's leadership in the greater church), that these important and powerful sentiments turn into reminders (of how Jesus has called for his disciples to live) and stepping stones (on how to get there).

Listen for the reminders: teach (and therefore know) godliness; contentment empowers greater wealth than riches will ultimately provide; cherish and foster the faith that you have been blessed with.

The stepping stones? To start with, we are provided the following: 'pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life'.

All of a sudden, 'live simply' has a little more meat on the bones.

But none of that matters if we aren't willing to hear, and I mean really hear, what is being proclaimed. So let us listen, reflect, and then move. The scripture reads this way.

I Timothy 6:3-20

³Whoever teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is in accordance with godliness, ⁴is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words. From these come envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, ⁵and wrangling among those who are depraved in mind and bereft of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; ⁸but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. ⁹But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

¹¹But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁶It is he alone who has immortality and

dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

17 As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, ¹⁹thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

20 Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; ²¹by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith.

Grace be with you.

'Listen. Reflect. Move.'

A couple of weeks ago, Pastor DeVries described the time when he watched a concert, or at the very least a documentary, on the music group the Momma's and the Papa's. He talked about how much he enjoyed the program...and then it just stopped and all of a sudden he was looking at multiple telephone operators (seemingly) chatting away with people on the other end of those phone lines contributing to their local PBS station so as to keep this sort of programming available.

Well, I heard what he said...and if it works so well for PBS...then it will certainly work for us, here at Three Bridges Reformed Church? Right? Members of consistory waiting for you to call so that we can reach a certain number of dollars because the 'show won't go on' until a certain number is met.

And remember, as a preacher, they teach you early on that if you can't convince 'em of what you're talking about in 2 minutes, then just keep talking because surely 102 minutes (or was it 202 minutes?...Heh, don't we live off Rt. 202...do you see a connection here? 202 minutes of preaching...right off route 202...I do!), well, in any case a longer amount of time you spend talking will allow your point to be understood!

So, as Pastor DeVries recommended, we are not leaving until we have all the money that we need!

No? You're not going there? Neither was I.

And thankfully, neither was Pastor DeVries, or Paul, whose words we are able to hear the Word of God through this morning.

No, what we hear from Paul to Timothy, to us, is to live simply.

And, as we chatted about prior to the reading, he provides us a few reminders and absolutely some stepping stones as well. These reminders and stepping stones are wonderful directions of what it means to be a good steward, individuals who give of their time, talent, and treasure in ways that the will of God is done and the kingdom of God is built.

So let's listen and reflect upon the reminders.

First off, teach godliness.

Now I get it, we hear that one and there tends to be a collective reaction of 'duh'.

But the truth of the matter is that in order to teach godliness (and again, this is a responsibility of all those who claim their faith in Jesus as savior), we have to have a real appreciation of what godliness entails. One of the techniques that Paul uses to guide us to what it is...is by reminding us what it is not. We hear that this morning as Paul states that godliness is not, 'conceited, understanding nothing, or having a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words.'

Now obviously Paul is speaking directly about the people that Timothy has come into contact with, but his council is no less informative. People who exclusively focus on themselves, who are unable to admit when they are wrong (or, at the very least, might not be as right as they purport to be), and focus on the letter of the law as opposed to the spirit of the law are individuals who are either struggling to know what godliness is or have out and out turned away from it.

Instead, God calls for us to love our neighbor. That's what we need to live. That's what we need to teach. If we are quibbling over who are neighbor is (you know, that 'sinner' over there), then we are missing the opportunity to serve as the stewards God has called us to be.

Our second reminder, 'contentment empowers greater wealth than riches will ultimately provide' is one of those mirrors that people of faith struggle with regardless of whether they have the trappings of wealth or not. Why? Very simply, the contextual underpinning of contentment (or lack thereof) can intertwine into the lives of all people: those with, and yes those without.

With contentment, you are able to see and celebrate the blessings of God that you have (and that is regardless of the worth assigned to those blessings by the wisdom of the world).

Without contentment, you are perpetually longing for that which you don't have even if what you have causes others around you to be jealous.

So as you look in the mirror, are you content...or do you covet? Those who covet are focused on themselves (and you know what we just said about that!). Those who are able to find contentment are able to serve God all the more freely.

The last reminder, 'cherish and foster the faith that you have been blessed with', is a simple statement of 'don't take what you have been blessed with (your faith in Jesus) for granted'. As disciples of the risen Christ, we are called as good stewards to put our faith into action. We have put the call out there in multiple ways over the last few months that we need to broaden that understanding of 'faith in action', but whatever that means for you (because it is different for all of us), you need to engage in it. Cherish and foster your faith. As you do, you will grow into becoming the good steward of all the responsibilities that God has placed before you.

Those were the reminders.

The stepping stones?

'Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness' can all be wrapped up into its postscript: 'Fight the good fight of the faith'. These stepping stones allow you 'to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for yourself the treasure of a good

foundation for the future, so that you may take hold of the life that really is life.’ By reflecting on the reminders that God places before us, and stepping forward and fighting the good fight of faith, we are able to move all that much closer to living simply.

Life, and being a good steward, a good caretaker, of that life isn’t about getting the best deal (‘well, if I give this amount of money I get a mug ...but if I give this amount of money I get every single song that they ever released!’), or feeling like you have to give because if you don’t you are going to be looked down by anyone.

No, it’s about fighting the good fight of faith so that we are able to live simply.

So, with all that now stated, it’s time to put the phones away (and everyone breathes a sigh of relief!).

However, we are going to pull a few other things out so that we might be able to have the opportunity to take some actual steps in fighting that good fight of faith to live simply.

We’re going to do that by doing our offering differently this morning.

Instead of the ushers coming to you, you are invited to step forward. In the first basket you are invited to place your regular offering. In the second basket you can place your estimated giving cards. In the third basket, you are invited to place the joy or concern that you have written down. Even if you don’t have anything to place (which is okay!), you are invited to come forward and pray silently, for yourself, for this community of faith, for the joys and concerns that you are with you...but you haven’t felt comfortable yet putting out there to others.

Once you come forward, you are invited to find a place to stand around the outer aisles of the sanctuary. As we sing together and then join in our concluding prayer, be sure to take a few moments to look around at all those who are walking with you as we have all listened, reflected, and are now moving toward a life that allows us to live simply, serving God by loving the world as He first loved us.

As we listen reflect we have the opportunity to move and move in a direction that allows us to live simply. Think about your life, make choices that allow you to move in that direction, being a good steward of all that God has blessed you with.

After Sermon Prayer

Holy Lord, as we listen to You through Your Word, we are reminded of who we are to become and how we are to live. Help us to reflect upon these calls, and then make the choices that allow us to abide ever closer with You. Lord, let it be so. Amen.