

A Life that is Truly Life

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- [0 : 0 0] Okay, let's grab our seats and we're going to spend a few minutes in prayer. If you are new to Watermark, one of the things we love to do as a church family is to pray.
- And so every Sunday we take a few minutes to pray. And we often pray for ourselves and we often pray for another church outside of ourselves. Sometimes a church in Hong Kong, sometimes a church elsewhere.
- Julie, I wonder if we can get this slide up. I want to introduce this family to you. This is Sujith and Cheryl Jacob with their children, their three children.
- And I met Sujith and Cheryl two weeks ago in Taiwan. These guys are originally from India and they have been living in Oklahoma City for the last 20 years or so.
- And they are about to move back to India to go and start a new church in Mumbai in December. And so they are getting ready and organizing a team and a bunch of people to move to India with them to start a church.
- [0 : 5 9] And so we are going to pray for Sujith and Cheryl a little later. And so as we pray, I am going to be praying over the microphone. But I want to encourage you to pray with me. Join with me and agree.
- And under your breath you pray as well. So this isn't just me praying and you listening. This is us as a church praying together. Okay? Can we do that? Great. Great. So why don't you join me and let's pray together.
- Gracious and wonderful Father, we come before you this morning to worship you and to adore you, God. We've come to acknowledge that there's nobody like you.
- There's nothing like you, God, in all creation as we said. God, there's nobody as glorious as you. There's no one as holy as you. There's no one as merciful and gracious, God.
- And Father, we come not because we've got it all together, but we come just as we are. We come broken. We come with our issues and our hang-ups. And yet we've come to meet the glorious one and to find our rest in you, to find our hope in you, to find our peace in you.
- [2 : 0 9] Father, won't you open our eyes to see you more clearly? Father, as a church family, we want to know you deeply. We want to know your manifold dimensions, God.
- We want to know the depth of your characteristics. And so, Father, won't you open our eyes to see you? God, we don't just want to know you superficially. We want to continually grow in awe of you and be amazed by you.
- Father, I pray that we won't just be a worshiping community on Sundays, but throughout this week, God. Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday, and as we go to work and as we go to school and university.
- Father, won't we be a worshiping community? We pray, God. We pray that you'll be first and foremost in our hearts and in our lives. Father, won't you show us your glory, we pray.
- We want to see your majesty, God. Father, this morning we confess that our hearts, God, are so often turned in on ourselves. Often our hearts are more inward focused than we like to admit.

- [3 : 09] And, Father, if we are honest, we are often motivated by pride or unbelief. God, we get frustrated when things don't go our way. And it's because our hearts are turned in on ourselves.
- Lord, we confess this to you and we ask you to forgive us. And we ask you to change us. God, won't you soften our hearts and orientate our hearts towards you? God, we want to love the things that you love and we want to love them correctly.
- Help us, we pray, God. Father, we are often fearful and anxious because we trust ourselves more than you. Won't you help us to trust you? Father, this morning we pray for Chris and Fiona and the team in Turkey.
- Their last few days there, we pray for their safety and their protection. And just as they're coming towards the end of their trip, won't you continue to speak to them from your word? I pray your scriptures will come alive.
- God, won't you reveal more of yourself to each one of them? And we pray, God, that they do come back to Hong Kong safely. We pray for no hang-ups or issues or traveling frustrations, but that everything will go well.
- [4 : 12] Bring them back safely, we pray, Father, in these last few days. And this morning, God, we want to pray for Sujith and Cheryl as they look to plant Cornerstone Church in Mumbai. Father, thank you for their faith and their courage to move across the world to this unknown city for both of them and to start this new church.
- And we pray, God, that you give them courage. We pray for boldness, Lord. We pray, Father, that you strengthen their faith. When they feel like they can't do it, may they remember that you, God, can do it.
- God, we pray for their kids and for visas and logistics around the move. We pray, God, for finances. Won't you give them the necessary finances to make the move and to start up this church?
- And we pray for the core team, God. We pray for some people to go with them to help them start this church and to see a thriving church in Mumbai that will reach people for you.
- God, we pray that you prepare their own hearts for the challenges that are no doubt coming their way, for the difficulties. Lord, I want you to draw near to them. And so I really pray that you wash Sujith and Cheryl in the gospel, God.
- [5 : 15] May they know that their deepest treasure is in you and not in the things of this world. Father, then finally this morning we want to pray for Hong Kong and for our own leadership here, our civil leaders.
- Father, we're aware of what happened in the legislature and the council yesterday. God, we understand that as laws are being passed, these are complex issues.
- And there are people on many different sides trying to push for their agenda. God, we do pray for soft hearts. We pray for wisdom. And, Lord, we pray that above all that every lawmaker will seek the best for Hong Kong and not for themselves, God.
- We pray for our civil leaders that they really will be servants of the city of Hong Kong and the people of Hong Kong, God. We pray that they will seek to serve the city and not their own agendas, we pray.
- And so, God, as these things in the next few weeks get heated, we pray for wisdom. We pray for soft hearts. And we pray for you, God, to even be involved there. We pray all these things in your wonderful and powerful name.
- [6 : 19] Amen. Amen. Great. Let's listen to the reading of God's word. And then Ed is going to come and share the scriptures with us this morning. The scripture reading comes from 1 Timothy chapter 6.

Please follow along in your bulletins or on the screen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. But godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

For those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desire that plunk people into ruin and destruction.

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 grifts.

[7 : 29] Command those who are rich in this present world 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.

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 fully life.

This is the Word of God. Oh, great.

Well, first of all, I want to just wish all the mothers another Happy Mother's Day. My mom is just right here now. You guys are really—thank you, Mom.

You guys are really the unsung heroes of the family, so Happy Mother's Day. Today, we are going to be continuing this sermon series on money. Now, two weeks ago, Kevin preached about you cannot love both God and money, for where your treasure is, there your heart is also.

[8 : 59] Last week, Oscar was preaching, be on your guard against greed and be rich to God. I was very challenged by Oscar's sermon last week.

I asked the Holy Spirit, Am I rich to you? Am I rich to God? Am I generous? Do I really sacrificially give to God?

And the Holy Spirit was very convicting. He says, Ed, you receive your paycheck. You pay for school tuitions. You pay for rent for the apartment.

You pay for your fixed expenses, discretionary expenses, and you have a line item for charitable donations. But the rest, after you pay for all those things, you keep for yourself.

You put it into your nest egg. What would it look like if you shared that excess with me? What would it look like if you gave me 50% of that excess?

[10 : 01] Because it's my money anyway. To tell you the truth, I'm still struggling with that. Because money has such a big grasp in my heart.

And so it's very topical today. That's exactly what we're going to be talking about. Now, today's passage is from Timothy. And just a little bit of background.

It's the Apostle Paul writing to Timothy. And he says, Timothy is overseeing the Church of Ephesus. And one of the problems of the Church of Ephesus that was emerging was that there was emergence of teachers that were teaching false doctrines.

And some teachers were even using their religious positions to gain wealth for themselves. And so the Apostle Paul is basically warning the Church, be on your guard against greed, don't fall in love with money, and pursue a life that is truly wealth.

Why don't we go to the next slide? I have a slide on the first, the two points that we're going to be addressing. I think the next one after this.

[11 : 07] So three points that we're going to be talking about today. Christ's commitment, we're going to define that, and the folly, the foolishness of pursuing riches. We're going to be talking about your God-given wealth, wealth, and how that entails kingdom responsibilities, and the enemy's deception and plans to prevent you from living a life that is truly life.

First point, but godliness with contentment is great gain. Now, many of us in Hong Kong are looking for contentment in all sorts of things.

We've been told that it can be found in what we have. We've been told that it can be found in the experiences, maybe travel. The latest thing is, the latest New Age thing is mindfulness.

Mindfulness. But the Apostle Paul tells us the truest form of contentment cannot be found in those things, but only found in the person of Christ.

Jesus introduces the concept of Christ's contentment, basically contentment, godliness with contentment, or contentment in God, which is external, which is independent of external circumstances, but based on our relationship with God, contentment that is found in our relationship with God.

[12 : 27] Now, Paul summarizes this concept very well in Philippians 4.11, where he says, I have learned the secret of being content in every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Paul is basically saying, when Christ is your everything, everything else are little things.

It doesn't really matter whether you're richer or poor. The external circumstances don't really matter. For the Christian, Jesus Christ defines everything in our lives.

And that is why Paul says that's great spiritual gain, because our souls can actually rest in him. For the Christian, Christ defines our identity. It says in John 1.12, it says, yet to all who receive him and who put their faith in him, you have the right to be called children of God.

You are a child of God. When your identity is a child of God, you don't have to be defined by social media, how much you make, your achievements, even how you look.

[13 : 35] You are lovely and perfectly loved as a child of God. Christ defines our purpose. Our purpose is much, he gives us a purpose that is much greater than just living the good life.

Christ says, love others, love God and love others, and that's your purpose. And join in my kingdom redemption plan. And we'll be talking a little bit about that later. Christ also defines love.

The standard of love in which we're called to love others is defined by Christ. It's defined by the creator of this world coming down and dying for his creation.

That's the standard of love, and that defines how we love others. And it also gives us great freedom. freedom. Because in each of us, there is darkness in our hearts.

There are things that we have done or thoughts that we have that we're not proud of. But God says, Jesus says, if you repent to me, there is no guilt, there is no condemnation.

[14 : 37] There's no condemnation in Christ. And so you are free. When we accept Jesus into our lives, our souls do not have to bounce around looking for meaning, looking for significance.

Our souls do not have to be affected by the external circumstances, whether we got that paycheck rise or we didn't. Everything becomes defined and centrally tethered to Christ.

And that is what Paul means by spiritual gain. That is great spiritual gain. Now, the implication of Christ's contentment is that we're called to be also content with our material things.

So we're moving on. Paul says, for we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we should be content with that. God's key concern is that we don't fall in love with the things of this world that would distract you.

He knows how material things could have a sway in our hearts and he wants our hearts to be tethered to him and him alone. He even is also very clearly stated throughout the book of the Bible and even in Deuteronomy 8 where I think very, very clearly God speaks to Moses.

[15 : 50] He says, be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build the fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large, your silver and gold increase and all of you have multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God.

Now, Paul's argument for why we shouldn't fall in love with the material things of this earth is slightly different from the past couple weeks.

He's saying, this earth is not our home. This earth is not our final destination. We are souls created for eternity.

Our life here is just this much or even this much. And so, there is folly and foolishness in trying to accumulate stuff for this world during our time here. In Philippians 3, it says, but we are citizens of heaven.

And in 2 Peter, it says, we are looking forward to the new heaven and the new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness. happiness. When a wealthy woman died, a very wealthy woman died, one of the attendees in the ceremony at her funeral asked the minister, how much did she leave behind?

[17 : 06] The minister answered, everything. That's how much you're going to bring to your next stage. You're not going to take anything with you. You're going to leave behind everything.

And God's desire is for us to have a love relationship with Jesus that is not distracted by wealth. Indeed, if we have the basic necessities, clothing, shelter, we are called to be content.

Our true treasure is Jesus who leads us to take hold of a life that is truly life. Paul continues on. Again, he goes on and commands those who are rich.

he says, command those who are rich in this present world to not be greedy and to not hope in things that are uncertain, but to do good and be rich in good deeds, to be generous and to share with others.

The basic premise here is that there is kingdom responsibility with having received God's given possessions. In Luke 12, 48, it says, From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded.

[18 : 20] From anyone who has been entrusted with much, much will be asked. This is also reaffirmed in the parable, in Matthew 25, in the parable of the talents.

I'm going to spend a little bit of time here. In the parable of the talents, a master was going to go away for a very, very long time. And he had three servants and he was going to entrust the talents that he had or talents are basically bag of gold.

Different bags of gold to his various servants. To the first servant, according to their abilities. Now, to the first servant, he gives five. To the second servant, he gives two.

To the third servant, he gives one. Now, after a very long time, after he comes back, the first servant that had five talents said, I invested your talents well, your bag of gold.

Now I have five more. Ten. So, thank you. Here you go, master. And the master says, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little.

[19 : 25] I will give you much more. Come and enjoy the joy of your master. The second servant comes and says, master, I have invested your two talents and I got two talents more.

Here you go. And then, again, the master says, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with little. I want to give you much more. Come and enjoy the joy of your master.

And then, the third servant goes, master, I know that you are a hard man. You reap where you do not sow. You gather where you do not scatter.

You gather where you do not scatter. So, well, I hid your talent on the ground. Here, here's your one talent back. And the master goes, you wicked and slothful servant.

You should have at least, ought to have at least, put that talent in the bank so I get some interest back. I think, I'm going to paraphrase a little bit from Tim Mackey's sermon on this.

[20 : 24] Two reactions, initial reactions. The first reaction we may have is, is this master being a bit too harsh on that third servant? Is this master a harsh man?

And, you can see, and if you look at, if you look at how he reacted to the first two servants, you can see that that's not true. Because he says, well done, good and faithful servant.

He's actually really enthused that they've done a good job. He wants to give them even more. He says, you've been faithful with little. I'm going to give you even more. And then he says, come and join in my, come into the, enter the joy of the master.

And he said, come, let's celebrate. Let's come and celebrate. So, is the master really harsh as the third servant presents it? Or is, really, he is disillusioned about how he views the master?

The second point that you have is, well, maybe this servant is just incompetent. And so, again, maybe the heart master is being a little bit harsh because he's just kind of, maybe he's just like a guy who, you know, really timid and can't get stuff done.

[21 : 40] And, the master, and that's the key point. This is the key point. The master is not angry at the servant, number three, because he did a bad job.

The master is, calls him a wicked and slothful servant because he did nothing at all. He didn't do anything. He didn't even put the minimum, do the bare minimum, which is put the money in the bank to collect interest.

And that's the point. God desires us to invest his resources that he has given you, your money, back into the kingdom to redeem it in a broken world.

I mean, not to, not to quote a Spider-Man cliché because I do know there are people who work in Sony here, but, with great power comes great responsibility.

And that's what it's saying. Now, we just mentioned the concept of kingdom redemption. The concept of kingdom redemption can feel very abstract.

[22 : 44] Even though we pray, every time we say that our Father, we pray about it. He says, our Father, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

But the reality is this is not an abstract concept. See, the original plan for God was to create a world where Adam and Eve will have dominion.

So, he gave, he handed over the keys to Adam and Eve to rule the world in communion with him. Then, we chose, then, what actually happened was man says, thanks but no thanks, rejected God.

I'm going to run it according to my sense of good and evil, my understanding of good and evil. And so, the world becomes broken. God's redemption plan, the kingdom redemption plan, is to revert the broken world back into this original form through the work of his faithful, through the hands of his faithful servants.

It is a world where there is, where it's governed by love instead of fear, generosity instead of self-interest, cooperation instead of competition, joy instead of strife, patience instead of busyness, kindness instead of apathy, gentleness instead of harshness.

[24 : 06] You can see what I'm doing here. I'm just taking the fruit of the spirit, looking at the opposite ends. Now, what does kingdom redemption look like tangibly within our spheres of influence and watermark?

Kingdom redemption is alpha and young life going into the secondary schools of our Hong Kong, of Hong Kong, and giving purpose and identity to those youth that are lost and confused in this high-pressure world.

Kingdom identity, kingdom redemption is sons and daughters going into the streets of Wan Chai, rescuing ladies and even men from the sex trade and giving them a new identity in Christ as a son and daughter of Christ.

Kingdom identity, kingdom redemption is ICM going into meet the minorities population which have been overlooked by society and giving them care and attention.

kingdom redemption is ICF's program going into the campuses of Hong Kong and bringing the invitation of Christ.

[25 : 23] Kingdom redemption is watermark church. We're building up our members every week so that they can go out Monday to Friday to live with kingdom purposes.

Kingdom redemption is our purpose as a son and daughter of Christ. There is much joy in participating in the plans of the kingdom and it's God's desire that you join in this mission.

With the Holy Spirit as a guide, he calls you to participate in making investments for the kingdom to help redeem this broken world. But one big caveat, one big caveat, don't do it, don't make it a religious thing.

Don't do it because you think that that's what God needs from you. In Isaiah 66, he says, this is what the Lord says, heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

Where is the house you will build for me? Where will be my resting place? Has not my hand made all these things so they came into being? There's nothing that God needs. God created everything.

[26 : 28] So we participate in kingdom redemption not out of religious obligation. We participate because we love our Lord. We participate because how rich he has been through us by giving us Jesus.

We participate because there's richness and joy in having the Lord use our hands for his kingdom redemption purposes. And we participate because it is what we're designed for. You know, personally, I've been learning to surrender your finances to God is a journey.

As you can see from what I shared earlier, you know, the Holy Spirit continues to challenge me and convict me in terms of my giving. Two years ago, the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, how much would you, how much is a soul worth for you?

How much is it to you if we can bring one more sheep back to the good shepherd? How much is it to you if we can bring a lost family member back into the family?

It starts softening my heart. Now, the Holy Spirit obviously is convicting about, am I actually being rich about it? Am I actually being generous to God? So, everyone who's already on this journey of surrendering your finances to God, I pray that you continue and continue to surrender more and more and have the Holy Spirit convict you in your giving.

[27 : 54] But for those who haven't joined, I invite you to join. It's a wonderful journey. It's wonderful to see when you're, the wealth that you have is put to use in God's redemption, in God's kingdom redemption plan.

It's just like, glory to God. Yes. Now, just as we talked about how God invites us to participate in this kingdom redemption plan, the enemy, the enemy prowls and he's, it's like basketball.

His direct objective is to prevent you. He's the defense. He hates it when you are walking in his ways. And so, how does the enemy achieve that?

How does the enemy play defense against us? Very easy. In verse 9, it says, those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap. The enemy sets a trap that captivates our heart's desires and keeps us from desiring the things from God.

And oftentimes, these traps are so deceptive we're even unaware. Now, consider an animal trap. That's a funny story. I started looking up animal traps on YouTube and what they would look like and then now, this was on Trisha's computer, and now all these animal traps come up and advertise like she thinks she's going to try to buy an animal trap.

[29 : 18] But the animal traps, they're scary because they're hidden and they're camouflaged. Like an animal is just like walking by and then, like he doesn't even know he's walking into it.

They also feature different bait. There's different baits for different animals. And also, animal traps are strong. Once it's got the animal, you're not coming out. And that is how the enemy prowls.

The enemy prowls to set traps in our hearts to lead us to wander, to lead us into evil, which is evil as defined as the absence of God. I have to confess, when I first read this passage, my initial reaction was, well, I agree with that.

Money is the root of many evils. Yes, we all heard that. Yeah, agree, agree, agree. And then, when he says, when he addresses for those who want to become rich, I'm like, no, that's not me.

It's like, if you ask me straight to my face, is my life's goal to become rich? I can honestly say no. But, if you ask, if you ask me whether I want to get rich, I would say no.

[30 : 28] But, if you ask me, do I desire financial security and one day financial, you know, financial freedom? I would say yes.

Do I desire to be respected by society? I would say yes. Do I desire to provide a comfortable lifestyle for my family? And again, I will say yes.

I am not some of these things, but I am all of these things, and therein lies the deception of the enemy. He turns these good things, seemingly good things, but he makes them take hold of my heart, and he leads me to wander from my faith, as what it says in the passage.

In the area of financial security, I have this deep desire to stock up and build my nest egg, and that's partially because it's intergenerational.

I think my family and generations from above lived a really not an easy life, and so we're told to save, to be thrifty, to stock up.

[31 : 36] It's also partly Chinese virtues. Chinese virtues is teaching frugality, preparing for lean times. That's Chinese virtue, and maybe it's partially my experience in 2008 during the great financial crisis when I just saw peers and everyone just get axed, everyone losing their jobs, but the problem, but my desire to build my own nest egg is it directly contradicts with what God says.

Do I end up hoping in my nest egg, or do I end up hoping in God? It hinders me from being rich to God as I'm finding out because I'm so focused on this nest egg instead of his kingdom.

Whether I admit it or not, I desire to be respected by society. In fact, when I changed jobs three years ago, I bought a nice expensive watch. I wanted my peers and my clients to know that I've attained a certain level of success.

but here's the thing. Do I continuously seek approval from society? Do I continuously seek to achieve? Do I continually seek to get more money versus what God says?

My identity is in Christ. I am a son of Christ. I am lovely and perfectly loved by him. and I desire and I want my family to have a good life.

[32 : 58] I want a desire, I desire to give my family a comfortable life, one that is similar to what my parents had provided for me. But what if it, what if God's intention and purpose for us as a family is that to show him his most glorious ways, he wants us to downsize our lifestyle?

Am I ready to do that? The enemy has these deceptive traps in my life. Oftentimes, these enemies hinders me from living a life that is fully surrendered to God.

It can create burdens in me in hoping for things that cannot deliver. And it creates burdens that God actually wants to free me from. So the bad news is I can't free myself.

There's all these traps in my heart. I can't undo it. It's got me. But the good news is Jesus Christ came and can do what we cannot do for ourselves.

He let himself take the fall for all of our sins and be free so that we can be free from the trap of money. Jesus is the one who breaks down the traps, the doors of the traps.

[34 : 10] Jesus is the one who can change the desires of our hearts. Jesus leads us to a life that is truly life. Let's follow him and take hold of a life that is truly life.

according to Jesus Christ. We are not you my God keeping it what we have.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.