

FULLY FUNDED 2 – SERMON SERIES
1 TIMOTHY 6:6-10,17-19
MAY 29, 2016

I want to tell you the story of two men buried in Egypt. Both were men of great wealth. Both were men referred to as a son of God. Both men died at a young age. One man was a prince of Egypt. He became Pharaoh by succession at the age of nine. It is thought that he ruled for about ten years before coming to an early death. This King, King Tut, was discovered in his tomb. This is regarded as one of the most amazing archaeological finds ever. The tomb was the perfect picture of opulence and decadence. The tomb was filled with countless treasures and overlaid in gold. There were golden tombs inside of gold tombs and treasures upon treasures. Down the road from King Tut's tomb, lies the body of another man, William Borden. William Borden was the heir to the Borden dairy fortune. He was to be a millionaire, but upon high school graduation, Borden's graduation gift was a trip around the world. It was on this trip that this young Christian man saw hurt and poverty of a material and spiritual nature. Borden decided on this trip that he would be a missionary who would carry the good news of Jesus Christ to the Muslims of China. One of his good friends was known to express dismay at this decision lamenting, "He is throwing himself away as a missionary." His friend said this because Borden had the whole world at his fingertips, amazing wealth, an education from Yale, and this is how he would spend his life? Upon graduation from college and graduate school, Borden flew to Cairo, Egypt to study Arabic so he could share the word of God with the Muslims of China, but he never made it there. After only four months, Borden contracted spinal meningitis and died. The man who could have had it all, lay dead in a foreign land.

The life, death and burial of these two men say everything about them, and the one feature that distinguishes them, contentment. King Tut never attained it, but William Borden did. King Tut was buried with all the gold, treasure, pomp and circumstance that a person could imagine. This typifies a life hungry for more. Even with no air in his lungs, the picture that we see in his death and burial is the consumption of more. Borden on the other hand, was a man who could have had it all, lived the American dream, but he forsook it all to follow Christ. Now he experiences true reward and joy in heaven. The difference between these two men is contentment.

Contentment is one of the most sought after commodities in human history. Contentment is a close cousin to satisfaction and the two are built on a similar desire to be at rest with who

you are. To be at ease with what you have. To be happy with what you do. Contentment is really the art of practicing satisfaction. The problem is of course that contentment isn't really a commodity. It cannot be bought. It isn't something to be materially obtained but rather spiritually arrived at. How do we find contentment?

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Paul addresses this very issue in his letter to Timothy. A church had been started in Ephesus, and a young pastor named Timothy was put in place to lead the church. Ephesus was a religious city long before Christianity showed up on the scene. Ephesus was a huge bustling port city known as the supreme metropolis of Asia. It was a cultural, political and economic hub of Asia Minor because it was at a strategic hub in the shipping lanes and it brought people from all walks of life and all of their faith beliefs. The Roman governor of the region lived in Ephesus and there was a great deal of political clout. There was a massive library called the Library of Celsus. There was a great deal of education and cultural advancement. Ephesus was also home to the temple of the goddess Diana. Diana or Artemis as she is sometimes called was the goddess of fertility and also of hunting and strength. The temple of Diana was home to countless prostitutes whom people could worship with. The amount of money given to Diana or changing hands at her temple led to her temple being called the Bank of Asia minor.

Just think about it for a moment, a port city with advanced culture, lots of education, innovation, sexual decadence and a ton of cash. Does that sound like anywhere you have heard of before? If Rome was like our modern day version of an East coast combination of power like New York City and Washington DC, then Ephesus was the like a combination of Los Angeles and the Bay Area. In the midst of all that power, sex and money, people were looking for contentment in all the wrong places, so Paul encouraged Timothy to continue to preach the gospel in the midst of the darkness.

This is the second week of a short series called "Fully Funded." Being fully funded in retirement, in work, in life is the carrot and the stick that drives much of what we do. This week, I want to talk about contentment and cash because the two go hand in hand. Paul knew this because Jesus knew this. People have been searching for satisfaction since back in the Garden of Eden. We have mistakenly pursued it over the millennia through multiple dead end avenues, not the least of which is the accumulation of cash. I try to talk

specifically about money and faith for a few reasons. 1) Jesus talked about it often. He didn't talk about it because he or God is hard up for cash. Jesus knew that our heart and our cash are usually nestled up together. If you want to know what a person values or loves, you can look at their checkbooks, so we need to talk about it. 2) Greed is an insidious idol that can creep into our lives without our knowledge sometimes. Tangible things like murder and adultery have clear boundaries. You have either committed those sins or you haven't, but greed is slippery and sometimes difficult to gauge, so we need to talk about it. 3) When you refuse to talk about something, it becomes taboo. The refusal to discuss something openly makes it a dirty topic or an embarrassing topic, and we simply don't want that to be the case at SFC when we discuss a resource that God has given us to invest and grow the kingdom with, so we need to talk about it. 4) We have a vision for making disciples at SFC which includes our ministry here and around the world. This vision is going to require an investment not only of our time and talents but also our treasures. so we need to talk about it.

Today I want you to see the relationship between your cash and your contentment. This has nothing to do with how much money you have. Poor people can be discontent and rich people can be discontent. Contentment has everything to do with the state of our hearts.

The content follower is satisfied with what you have today.

In verses 6-8, Paul is writing to Timothy to encourage him to stand firm because there are many religious hucksters who are teaching and living their Christian life for monetary gain. There is nothing new under the sun. For as long as God has entrusted the divine mystery to us, people have tried to make a profit from it. You know it when you hear it. For those who have conflated God and money can't stop telling you how rich you should be and how God wants you to be rich.

I don't know if some of you got the opportunity recently, but there was a chance for you to help Creflo Dollar do ministry around the world. The invitation was for 200,000 supporters to provide \$300 each so Creflo could buy a \$65 million jet. When some people questioned this request and use of money, Creflo responded:

Our pastors share the gospel of Jesus more than 300 times per year — in churches, arenas, venues, convention centers, stadiums and other facilities across the entire planet — and are committed to aggressive travel schedules that cannot be fulfilled via any means other than private aircraft.

That sounds like a bit of a stretch. In fact, I did a little research and found out you can buy a round-the-world airline ticket with 15 stops going around the world 1.5 times, and it can be a first class ticket for \$22K. You could buy roughly 3,000 trips around the world, first class, without any carrying costs, fuel costs or pilot costs for the same price as Creflo's plane.

There will always be teachers of the Bible who are obsessed with cash, and there will always be Christians who live their Christian life motivated by cash. But Paul reminds Timothy of a simple truth, we came into this world with nothing and we leave this world with nothing. There is something I have noticed quite particular to children's clothing. They rarely have pockets, and if they do, they are usually sewn shut and are only for aesthetics. On the rare occasion that they are functioning pockets, they are usually stuffed with flowers from the park or rocks found in the backyard. No, it is when we get older that our clothes have countless amounts of storage. I had a pair of jeans one time with at least nine discernible pockets. Front pockets. Back pockets. Side pockets. There were pockets inside of pockets. Grown men wear suits that have four pants pockets, three exterior jacket pockets, two interior jacket pockets and one pocket on their shirt. There was a fad in the 90's called fanny packs. Do you remember these? Not only did you have purses, wallets and pockets all over your bodies, you needed an extra compartment to take it with you. The message is simple as you grow up. Keep it. Store it. Accumulate it. Save it.

Paul reminds us here you have nothing when you come into this world and nothing when you leave it. You can't take it with you. Here is the part that Paul alludes to without saying a word. It becomes clear when you recognize a stated truth and an implied truth from this passage. 1) You can't take it with you when you die. 2) You don't know when you will die. If those two things are true, then worry about today. Be satisfied with today. Contentment is found when you are thankful for what you have today.

Paul says here, "Seek contentment and that contentment is found in what you have for today. Food to eat. Clothes to wear." This is not a new concept. Jesus actually covers this

topic during the Sermon on the Mount; don't worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. Don't worry about food, don't worry about clothes for God feeds the birds of the air and he clothes the lilies of the field. How much more so does he care for you? Find contentment with what you have today. That is why Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." This is why when God gave manna from heaven, it was only good for the day. It would literally spoil if they kept it overnight. They couldn't stockpile it and they couldn't invest it. He gave them enough for the day, and they had to trust that it would be provided again tomorrow.

Discontentment is obsessed with what you will make tomorrow.

In verses 9-10, the two key words I want you to see in this passage are "want and love." It is easy to misread this passage. The rich fall into a temptation and a trap. Money is the root of all evil. Two words are key here, those who *want* to be rich and the *love* of money. Those who want to be rich fall into a temptation and a trap. This can be poor people who want to get rich or rich people who want to get richer. The love of money and the obsession with it motivates you to action. Both of these are future leaning in their implications. If you want to get rich, then it is not about what you have at the moment but what you will obtain later. If you have a love for money, then what you have for today is never enough, and tomorrow will always motivate you to find more of what you love.

The problem with both of these sentiments is the myth of more in pursuit of the perpetual dangling carrot. There is a quote that may be apocryphal when someone asked John D. Rockefeller, at the height of his wealth during the oil boom, "How many dollars will be enough?" To which he replied, "One dollar more." Whether you are a monetarily a billionaire or monetarily barely there, the pursuit of "one dollar more" can drive you insane.

You might be prone to read a story about professional sports, and you see the lowest guy on the totem pole for the 49ers makes like \$400k. You think, man, that is X-times what I make. If I made that, then I would be happy. The problem is that guy is looking at someone on his own team who makes \$4 million dollars, and he is thinking, if only I could make that, then I would be happy. And that guy is looking at A Rod on the Yankees who made \$29 million last year, and he is thinking if only I could make that, then I would be happy. And A Rod is thinking about Tiger Woods who makes about \$90 million per year with

endorsements. And Tiger Woods is looking at Mark Zuckerberg, and Mark Zuckerberg is looking at Bill Gates, and Bill Gates is trying to give his money away because he realized it won't make him happy.

Paul says not only is it a perpetual carrot that will leave you feeling empty, the desire to get rich and the love of money will plunge you into destruction and grief. Essentially, it is not just that you will get hurt in the process. If you dedicate yourself to the pursuit of money, you will most likely have to violate your own conscious, burn a few bridges and hurt a lot of people along the way. Bernie Madoff is a great example of the desire for money destroying countless lives. Bernie Madoff, of course, is the perpetrator of one of the largest Ponzi schemes in history. The final tally of Madoff's crimes and the amount he stole was in the neighborhood of \$60 billion dollars. For decades, Madoff lied, cheated and stole his way into becoming a millionaire. While he was busy using one person's money to pay another person, he was always paying himself, and at the end, he was worth hundreds of millions of dollars. The problem was that it was all a fraud. There was no real growth, only lies covered up with fraud. When it was all said and done, Bernie's family was ruined. His wife divorced him. His eldest son committed suicide, and thousands of Americans were financially ruined. And for what? A yacht? A vacation home? It doesn't make sense in retrospect, but I am sure at the time, Bernie Madoff was sure of his motives and set on his goals. If you told him he would be one of the most reviled humans on the planet who would spend his golden years in a state penitentiary, that his kids would hate him, that his wife would leave him, and that his eldest son would kill himself out of shame, would he still have chosen the same path? Probably not.

The problem is that greed and discontentment creep in a little bit at a time. If you aren't on your guard, it will trickle in a little bit at a time and fill up more and more of your life. It is never a truckload of greed and its attendant problems that are dumped into your life but instead it is the slow trickle, the building up of silt that clogs up your life and squeezes the life out of you. The people of Ephesus knew the power of the slow trickle, the power of the slow steady silt clogging up their lives. A perfect picture of this is seen in the city of Ephesus itself. When you walk the streets today, you walk down a long beautiful street towards what used to be the waterfront, the source of life for the Ephesian people. Today that source of life is some six miles away. What happened? Ephesus was situated on the Cayster River; this river carried some amounts of silt everyday towards the ocean. If you looked at it for only a day, it would be no big deal, but day by day the silt began to build up. This pushed the water, the source of life, further away. Just a little bit of silt, each day pushed them further and further from the thing they were built upon. Until one day, they

are six miles away from the ocean and are wondering how did we get here? We didn't plan this. They didn't take notice of the silt. This is the same problem facing the Ephesians. This is the same problem facing us. Our hearts are highly susceptible to silting, and many times we allow in a little bit of silt, some discontentment mixed with a little bit of greed to change us. Before we realize it, we are miles away from our source.

Discontentment is obsessed with what we will make tomorrow. Paul shares the greatest solution for preventing silt build up in the conclusion of this section.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Contentment comes when we invest in things that last. Paul talks about building a firm foundation with generosity and kingdom investment. Generosity is the embankment that prevents the silting of greed. When you are generous and interested in investing in the kingdom and giving away the very thing that might ensnare you, scripture says you will take hold of the life that is truly life. Guess which Greek word for life is being used here? *Zoe*. Our whole series on Life Matters was taking hold of the *zoe*, abundant life that God offers. Paul says here, to build a firm foundation of generosity and in so doing you will find *zoe*. This is a counterintuitive truth, but it is the way to abundant life.

Contentment comes when we invest in things that last. I want to continue to encourage you to invest in this church. You can give online. You can give via Pushpay. You can give in the plate.

Conclusion: The gravestone of William Borden is off the beaten path in Cairo, Egypt. His gravestone says, "Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for such a life." The man who had it all ostensibly wasted his life in a foreign land. He didn't obsess over the riches he had or the clout he had. He left it all behind for the sake of others. I truly believe he was wholly content, completely at ease, thoroughly at rest. The gospel life for others is counterintuitive. Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for investing in missionaries in a foreign land. Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for investing in building houses in Mexico or orphanages in Malawi. Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for investing in SFC and its ministries downtown. Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for giving your money to a church when boats, vacation

homes and newer cars are calling. This is the counterintuitive way of the gospel. The *zoe* life, the abundant life is found in giving yourself away in all things including your cash, and when you do that, you will find contentment.