

**Christ Presbyterian Church**  
**Edina, Minnesota**  
**January 20 & 21, 2018**  
**Rich Phenow**  
**Satisfied: Giving Time and Presence | 1 Timothy 6:17-19**

Nothing can tear us from His heart. Nothing can separate us from His love. He's never going to let us go. Praise God! Praise God! Well, we're now in our third week in this series called Satisfied and we've been looking at this idea of how to be content in a world of consumption. We live in a consumer-driven, debt-ridden, advertisement-saturated culture and it will require nothing short of a total transformation for us to adopt the heart of Christ. The question is simply this: how do we do it in a different way? How do we do it in a different way? How do we become countercultural to this lifestyle that surrounds us? How do we become contented and satisfied? That's what we're going to look at this morning.

We begin this series with this idea from Jeff Manion's amazing book called *Satisfied*. I would encourage you to get a copy of it and read it. I just absolutely ate everything he said up, and I want to start with this quote. He says this in his very good and thought-provoking book: "Being contented is the cultivation of a satisfied heart. It's the discipline of being fully alive to God and others whatever our material circumstances are. Contentment is not achieved through getting everything that we want, but it's training the heart to experience full joy and deep peace even when we don't have what we want." It's cultivating a satisfied heart. It's about heart training; it's about character training. Contentment liberates us, it frees us from the illusion that things and stuff will somehow take away the pain, or fill up the loneliness, or love us and take away our emptiness, or fill our deep desire to be valued and loved.

As I was reading Manion's book, I thought back to a time that I felt incredible contentment and satisfaction. The year was 1982, and it was about 10 days after Jody and I were married. I was pretty satisfied and contented that after five years of dating, Jody said, "Yes." Actually, I was amazed. It was a miracle! Here we are driving, as part of our honeymoon, to Pasadena, California to start our five-year journey in seminary together. Our 4-cylinder, 1974 Toyota Corolla was pulling a very small, the smallest of all, U-Haul trailer. Literally in this trailer I think we had three boxes of clothes, three boxes of books, some cooking utensils, and most importantly, we had our camping gear. We had our tent and sleeping bags and air mattress, the only piece of furniture we had, and then there were maybe—Jody would like me to say 2-3 boxes of Christmas decorations—I think there were more like 10-12, but the number doesn't matter. Let's just say there were more Christmas decorations than anything else. Jody and I love Christmas decorations, and it was an amazing time for us. It was incredible because we had virtually nothing, but we dove right into a community of international students in this apartment complex, and some of our best friends became the people all around us. Chris and Margaret were a Korean couple that we just fell in love with. Chris and I loved to cook and we'd go down to Chinatown and spend time in the grocery stores together

and then we'd go back and cook for our families and friends in the afternoons. Next door, a Puerto Rican family, Raphael and Obed and their children, Ruth and Jolene, really impacted our lives. We spent Christmas Eve with them in their apartment, and I helped Raphael put together my first Barbie Doll van. It took us about four hours and we had decals everywhere, but it was amazing. Obed and Jolene made us the first Christmas decorations for our tree. And it was so cool. Jody took our bookshelf—she's so creative—and made a picture of a fireplace that we wrapped around the bookshelf. Then on top of the bookshelf she put a mirror and she had cotton balls, and snowflakes, and little people, and she made a snow village. Obed and Jolene would come to the door every day and say, "Can we come in and see the snow? We've never seen snow before." Just great memories.

We had nothing for five years. We had nothing, but we were content. We were satisfied. It was a foundation for our lives. Last week John talked about comparison and how toxic it is for us to compare ourselves to others. He talked about this whole idea that comparison causes us to focus on what others have and on what we don't have. Comparison is a crippling thief that robs us of the sense of gratitude and joy. This whole comparison thing is thinking *I want what you have* or *what you have is better than what I have*. But when we compare ourselves we have an inability to look at the richness of the blessings we have. One of the starting points is to begin with a shift in our identity. What we need to have imbedded and embossed in our minds is this: the God of the universe picked you out. He picked you up, He brought you home, He adopted you, and your identity is in the fact that you are God's beloved and treasured daughters and sons—treasured daughters and sons who are wholly and dearly loved. It's from this identity that we can think clearly about who we are, what we have, and what we want because my identity is not anchored to the things of this world. My identity is in the fact that it doesn't matter what I buy. What matters is who bought me; that's what matters most.

I love the fact that James Madsen would say it's all about Jesus. See, my identity does not depend on what I buy, but it depends upon knowing Jesus. We have more than we could ever want or imagine if we know Jesus. Yet, one of the greatest challenges we face is being surrounded by all this affluence and symbols of success, and this affects our attitude toward ourselves. Suddenly we begin to think it's all about us. It's about what I can accumulate and what I can earn and suddenly we hear whispers, *it's really about you. It's all about you*. It's all about your ability to accumulate. It's all about the next big thing—the next big purchase or the next big car, the next big vacation—and in all of that next big thinking it becomes all about us so that there's little space for God in our heart. There's little space for others because really we're kind of consumed and obsessed with ourselves. You know with the big holidays around here, Christmas and Easter, we jam the Sanctuary with visitors and extended family members, people who only come on Christmas and Easter. Chreasters we call those folks. When they come this place just fills up, so you know we get up here and say, "Hey, hey, it would be really awesome if you moved to the center of the aisle to make space for others." And we don't do that just in the beginning of the service, we do it about three or four times. The reality is that the affluence in our lives takes up all the space in our hearts and in our minds, and we need to make space. We need to move the stuff over so that we can

have space for God to speak to our heart and space for us to love others.

The apostle Paul, who is mentoring this young new pastor, Timothy, instructs him to talk to the wealthy of his church in Ephesus. These are the words that Paul writes in 1 Timothy,

<sup>17</sup> Command those who are rich...

Ya hear that? Command those. Don't make it optional. Don't invite those who are rich and don't sugar coat it for the rich, but 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. <sup>18</sup> Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. <sup>19</sup> In this way they will lay up a treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. [1 Timothy 6:17-19]

A life of contentment. A life of satisfaction. This is a very significant teaching that Paul is telling Timothy, because it's not just about the rich in Ephesus, but it's about the rich in Eden Prairie, and Edina, and Bloomington, and the rich at CPC. The reality is that this is for all of us who are rich, but the problem is that often times we don't think that we're rich because we look over and say, "That person's richer than me; I'm not as rich. They're the rich ones." But the truth of the matter is, every one of us in this room is rich and God graciously provides for us. Paul says God graciously gives blessings to us for our enjoyment so that we in turn will give God gratitude for the riches that we have. But most of the time we're oblivious to the reality that we are rich. Do our possessions and the wealth we have give us humble gratitude toward the giver or does it simply blow our egos? Does it really just remind us that we are the one who is growing our financial profile? Paul tells us not to put our hope in our wealth. Why? Because it's uncertain. And later on, Paul says one of the reasons we shouldn't put our hope in wealth is because we're born into this world naked and we leave this world naked. Paul is advising his protégé, Timothy, to urge the wealthy to be generous with their time and their money. He says, "Command them to do good. To be rich in good deeds. To be generous and willing to share." He's challenging those in Ephesus—and he's challenging us—to serve and to share and to do good deeds, to be generous with our gifts and our blessings.

For the next few minutes, I'm going to focus on service and good deeds, and then next week John will close out our series and talk about sharing generously. I want to say that humble servanthood, doing good deeds for others, trains the heart to say that it's not about me; it's really about you. The idea of doing good is not merely, and this is important, it's not merely *thinking* about doing good, and it's not merely *talking* about doing good, it's actually *doing* something. It's an act of service. Recently there was a

young man in our church, Dewey. He was 63-years-old and he fought a three-year battle with ALS. He fought this disease courageously with the help of his wife, his sons, his cousins, his whole family, and the medical community. It was an amazing blessing for me to walk alongside this family in the months leading up to his death, and afterwards there has been an amazing outpouring of good deeds. Amazing outpouring of good deeds...servanthood that blew my mind. People stopped by daily with meals. They picked up family from the airport. They put up a Christmas tree. They came and sat with Dewey. They took care of Joey the family dog. Coworkers and family and neighbors sent cards, and gifts, and flowers, and chocolate, and *good* wine. It was amazing. Every time I was at the house I felt like I was in the way because someone was coming in with something or coming in to do something. Longtime friends came by. Toward the end of Dewey's life, they told his wife and sons stories, stories they had never heard before. People showing up. Do-gooders. Humble servants. But I think what happens most of the time—when someone is hurting or in a tough spot, lost a job, or lost a spouse or a child—is we say to them, *I'll do anything you need. Anything you need, just give me a call. I'll do anything.* You know what we're doing when we say that? We're simply writing a blank check and we're not even signing it. To say I would do anything or everything for you is not an act of doing good. It's not a courageous thing. It's an offer that does absolutely nothing because it puts the burden of responsibility on the individual and the families to ask you for help, to call you and say, "I need help." That's a big burden and responsibility when somebody has lost a loved one. And second of all, it's a big burden because in the middle of the shock and the grief and the loss, they're not even sure what they need. What I would say is this . . . I would say *show up*. Doing something is so much better than offering everything, because when you offer everything you are really offering nothing. I want to encourage you in those situations when there is a need of somebody in your life, in your neighborhood, in your family...I want to encourage you to do for them what would be meaningful for you. You know, if it would be meaningful to have a dinner made for you then make a dinner for them. Don't call and ask them if they like garlic or not, just put it on! Show up with a meal. If it would be meaningful to have somebody come and shovel your walks or mow your lawn, show up with your lawn mower and cut their grass. If it would be meaningful to you to have somebody wash your sheets or clean your bathroom, then you know what? Show up with a bucket, and some cleaner, and a brush. Just do it! Make it happen! It's so much easier to ask for forgiveness than permission.

See, it's truly less about what we do and more about having the courage to show up and do something, so just show up! Just do some good. When we do that, we are training our heart. We're reminding ourselves: *It's not about me, it's about you.* Jesus made it very, very clear. He said, "I have come not to be served, but to serve." And what does He do? He kneels down and washes the dirty, smelly feet of His disciples. He was a servant, a humble servant. Paul says,

<sup>6</sup> Christ, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;  
<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant [Philippians 2: 6-7]

Jesus took on the very nature of a servant. He put His godliness aside and He came to serve.

I want to say this about CPC and our culture. This is a church that doesn't just talk about showing up and doing good deeds. I am so grateful for this community. This is a place where so many of you are doing good and serving in such great capacities. But we need more do-gooders; we need more people to come and serve. Let me just flash through a couple of pictures. [Photos shown] These are pictures of people who are servants, people who show up in places where they serve. This first one is a group called ARMS. That stands for Active Retired Men Serving. They show up Thursday morning and clean the church, clean the pews, repair things, use magic markers to take the scuffs off of pews. There are money counters that show up every Monday. There are deacons that serve us at barbeques and Families Moving Forward. There are van drivers. There are Sunday school teachers. There are parking lot attendants—Bill Davis—this guy needs a lot of help! Woo! Talk about a servant. And this next guy, Dave Olson, along with Bill...both these guys need a lot of help and some of you may not be able to provide the help they need, but show up and help them. There are so many people. Ross Robinson, huh? Woo! Isn't that guy amazing? Ross needs ushers. He needs people to do good and serve you on Sunday mornings. There are so many places! Dean and Martha Adolph—these guys redefine servanthood for me; these guys are the most humble people. They serve so many times in so many ways—through Communion, or whatever it might be—they are people that show up. Choir members. Every Sunday, they need more voices in the choir. Here's a picture of a guy named Bob Kerr. Bob Kerr heads up our Hearthside Prayer Ministry—Intercessory Prayer Ministry—he would love more folks to pray for the requests. Brad Kranendonk heads up our hospital visitors. He would love more people to visit folks in the hospital. There are hundreds and hundreds. We need more folks praying for the staff on the Prayer and Healing Team. We need cookie bakers. We need memorial reception volunteers. We need people. We need people to show up and do good in this church, but not just in this church. We need folks to show up in places that make a huge impact. Places like Loaves and Fishes, and the Salvation Army, and the Neighborhood House in East St. Paul, and Sharing and Caring Hands, and VEAP. We need do-gooders because it creates a space for God in our hearts and it makes it not all about us.

Let me share a challenge for you. I want to challenge every one of you in this room to do an act of service this week. Make some cookies for a neighbor, shovel someone's sidewalk, show up this week in people's lives. Now, I have an example I want to share with you. An example of a woman named Betsy Winger. Betsy shows up every Sunday to worship God. Betsy is sitting in the back and she is a model and an example to us.

Betsy has spent a good chunk of her life, over 35 years, with MS, but she's never been defined by her disability, only her abilities. Betsy is an overcomer. She's somebody whose hope is not in the things of her life, but in Jesus alone. She comes here to give God gratitude for being the giver. You'll see Betsy in this video telling her stories, along with Don and Carol Krebs and her helper Sally—who has not only been a friend, but is somebody who shows up and serves. I want you to watch this video as an example of a satisfied, contented server of Jesus.

[Link to watch Betsy's video]  
<https://vimeo.com/264998869>

Betsy is too humble to talk about herself, but she serves in so many capacities. She serves in the gift shop at Gideon Pond, sings in the choir there, she goes to pray with Roger and Dottie Anderson—she has served this church in all circumstances. She's making space for God, she's making a difference, she's a humble servant who does good.

*The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.*