

**Christ Presbyterian Church**  
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**John Crosby**  
**Giving Money | 1 Timothy 6:17-19**

We are dissatisfied in our culture. Things go wrong and we are never sure how to make it right. We know that some of the answers that we are given most often are not true, and sometimes the best way to express that is through music. Probably the two most powerful and popular groups in the last 50-60 years both talked about this. You could probably even finish this sentence of their most popular line: “I don’t care too much for money, money can’t buy me... (congregation responds) *love*.” Or, if you are from another side, “I can’t get no...(congregation responds) *satisfaction*.” It’s scary that there are enough of you old enough to know that. But it is interesting to know “I Can’t Get No Satisfaction” comes from the Stones who have career earnings of between \$1,000,000,000 and \$1,375,000,000. Can’t get no satisfaction through money. And “Money Can’t Buy Me Love” from the Beatles whose career earnings are somewhere between \$2,500,000,000 and \$6,500,000,000. How do you get satisfaction in a culture that talks about love, that talks about money? We have been talking this month about discovering contentment in a culture of consumption. Trying not to make just a sermon series, but a sermon experience. And early on we defined what we thought contentment would look like. Contentment is the cultivation of a satisfied heart. Contentment is the practice of being fully alive to God and fully present to other people regardless of our material circumstances. That’s from Jeff Manion’s book “Satisfied”. I would urge you, if this series has touched anything in you, to pick up a copy. You can order it at Pathway and get it in a day or two. Contentment is the cultivation of a satisfied heart, and our goal these last four weeks has been to provide Biblical direction for living a deep spiritual life in a shallow materialistic world—deep rather than shallow, and the sense of spiritual, spirit-filled eternal rather than just materialistic. How does that happen? Let’s just review where we have been. We started by saying there is a longing for contentment in the human heart. The Apostle Paul said, “Godliness with contentment is great gain. You brought nothing into the world and you take nothing out.” So if we have food and clothing, we will be content. Will we, really? Most of us are not, and most of us are not because there is some secret we are missing. The Apostle Paul again: “I’ve experienced need and abundance, and in every circumstance I’ve learned the secret of contentment.” There is a secret to contentment. Do you have that secret? Whether satisfied or hungry, with plenty or with nothing, “I am able to do all things through the one who gives me strength.” The secret of contentment.

Now can I just say that I don’t think any of you are greedy SOB’s—sons of Baptists—I don’t think that’s you today. I also think many of you would say *I’m not greedy* and many would say *I’m not rich*. So that first week we talked about how you can’t know you are content with what you have until you know what you have, and the spiritual practice that I asked you to do that week was to go into your closet and count your shirts, count your shoes—see that you have more than you think—and that first week, give away one

thing that is valuable that you are not using to see if it helps you journey towards contentment. The second week we looked at the idea that contentment usually gets derailed. I have a contented moment and it gets ruined because no matter how much we have or how many good times we experience, what robs us of contentment is comparison. I'm doing fine until I see that they got a new car. I was doing great until she got the promotion instead of me. I'm doing just peachy thank you...*she's married, really?* Comparison. And we used the story that Jesus tells of the workers in the vineyard who all get more than enough, they all get more than adequately rewarded for a full day's work, but the workers who worked all day complained that the ones who only worked an hour got just as much as they did. They are comparing and so they're dissatisfied. And God says through Jesus: *I gave you what I promised. It was fair. If I want to be generous to somebody else, what's that to you?*

I got a note from a friend who said she's been learning some things about comparison and how it makes her dissatisfied. She says we won't be distracted by comparison if we are captivated with purpose. Megan said, "We won't be distracted by comparing ourselves to others if we are captivated by a purpose that holds our attention." Contented people are the ones who see that their purpose is their identity. Their purpose is to be a child of God. My identity is to be loved by Jesus and my destiny is not to compare myself to other people; my destiny is to be a servant of Jesus and He will show me the life He has for me—to bring life and joy and justice into this world. There is real life. But our society is built around self-actualization. I have to keep giving myself things until I am self-actualized. And the problem with that is that we are infinitely un-actualized until we find our way in Jesus.

So that second week, we asked those of us who struggle with comparison to make a list of things for which you are grateful. Thanksgiving is what breaks the power of comparison. *I don't compare myself; I thank God.* I asked you to just make a list of all the things you are thankful for physically—*I can see the paper, I can touch the snow.* For the things around us—*I have a warm house.* The relationships that are precious to us...thank God for those; it breaks the power of comparison.

Last week Rich talked about turning the corner. How do you move from being dissatisfied toward being contented? The story he told came from the Apostle Paul. He said that people are contented when they obey the command of God that says,

"Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share." [1 Timothy 6:18]

And in very visual ways, he said that contentedness and satisfaction come when we serve other people. When we get together and we serve others it takes the spotlight off of us and God starts to teach us the life that is really life—of service and seeing the joy on others' faces.

So the third...first we listed what we own, then we listed what we are thankful for, and this third week Rich said, "Now go out and serve somebody. Do something you would ordinarily not have done. Serve somebody—see how they feel, see how you feel. See if God doesn't get involved." So let me just ask you if you had the chance to count your

shirts and shoes, if you had the chance to make a list of what you are thankful for, or if you had the chance to serve somebody? If you did one of those three practices, any one of the three, just raise your hand quickly. Okay, so it looks like at least 60% of you have tried at least one of these things. Our prayer is that God would use that as a seed to go deeper in your heart, because what we are saying is that our culture drags you the other way. You have to train your heart. Contentment is the cultivation of a heart. Train yourself to go against the flow. You have to learn the secret. Let me tell you a little of what that means. I was taught in seminary that I should look at the last thing that people say in the Bible because last words are lasting words. The last letter that the Apostle Paul wrote is to a guy named Timothy, his protégé. Last words...end of his life, and he has just said that people who want to get rich fall into a trap. Now in Chapter 6 he says,

<sup>11</sup> But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. <sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of the faith. [1 Timothy 6:11-12]

Contentment is not found on autopilot; the drift of the heart is down. He tells Timothy,

“Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called...”

Don't settle for the Macy's sale. Take hold of eternal life.

<sup>17</sup> 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 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]

Paul says *so that we may take hold of the life that is really life...the life that is really life.* If I were to ask you how many of you feel like you are living the life that is really life, how many of you feel like you are a contented, satisfied person more than 60% of the time? I'm not going to do that—but it would be interesting to see how that process happens. I believe that people who do not cultivate contented hearts create massive damage. Paul says here in this passage that some people eager for money have wandered from the faith, not necessarily wandered away from church, but they have wandered from the faith, they have pierced themselves with grief, and they do not suffer alone.

I am privileged to be your pastor, and if you are a visitor, welcome. But I am privileged to be a pastor in this community on the southwest side, and I have to tell you how I think this is a life and death issue. You live in a community that is increasingly financially independent and spiritually bankrupt. And you are in danger, whether you are in these walls or just out there, of that same loss. I think the danger comes in two different places that the Apostle Paul talks about. It's not money that is the problem. It isn't having nice things that's the problem. It's not being able to have great experiences that is the problem. The danger is what I call undisciplined wealth. That is, there are two dangers to undisciplined wealth. Undisciplined is *I have not laid this stuff at the foot of the cross. It's not part of me being a disciple.* The two dangers of undisciplined wealth that

the Apostle Paul talks about are first, that those people become arrogant, and second, that they place their hope in something that they shouldn't put hope in. Now, I have to tell you that when it says that those who want to be rich have become arrogant, that feels far more like a southern California or a New York kind of thing, doesn't it? I mean, we're in the Midwest. We don't flaunt it; we don't make a big deal out of how well we are doing. Arrogance doesn't seem right. Nobody would ever call anybody in this county a cake eater...oh wait, that slipped out. But what we do have is arrogance that comes out this way: You work hard for what you have. You're not ashamed of it, you're not boasting about it, but one of the places I think it comes out is in a constant, subtle comparison to what everyone else has. A ranking—you are doing worse than her but better than him. You live your lives that way, consciously or not. Advertisers make sure of it. That leads to arrogance. Another form of arrogance is with your children or your friends' children. You think you have the best, the brightest, the neatest kids in the world. Instead what you have are children that were born on third base. You have kids who are wonderful, talented, lovely, loveable kids—I love these kids—but the kids on the near north side are just as smart, just as talented, just as loved by God, and they are trying to get out of the batter's box. We can say *We're not so great, but they really aren't doing well* and that is spiritual arrogance. And then I think if there were a danger for undisciplined money, it would be more rooted in the second half of this.

Many of us, because of our relative affluence—and if you hear my voice, you are relatively affluent—have misplaced our hope. Many of you have put your hope, not so much in things (you're too sophisticated for that), you've put your trust in the hope that security provides. You have a retirement plan, you have savings, you buy a house not just because it's a nice house, but for its resale value, you save so the kids can go to the right school. You do all of this hoping for a sense of security. It is not bad to save. What's bad is that rich people have a harder time trusting Jesus than people who can't trust anything else. They have nothing. They believe they are bankrupt without Jesus.

So, if you are having as much fun as I am, let's see where this is rooted. Because it's not in a bad thing, it's in a good thing. Paul says *I am not the messenger of the God of the Grinch*. God is not a Grinch. As a matter of fact, in verse 17 he makes sure that we understand why this is so important. God wants you to enjoy. God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. God does not want you to give it all away. God does not want you to go without food. God wants you to see what He has given you as a gift and to enjoy it. He has given us everything we need for our enjoyment. I thought of the psalmist who declares that God loves bringing forth food from the earth. God gives us wine that gladdens the heart. God gives oil to make the face shine, and God gives bread to sustain our hearts. In these simple ways God says *Enjoy this*.

I couldn't sleep last night—just one of those nights. In the middle of the night I wake up at 3:00, cannot sleep, wander downstairs, go into the kitchen, sit down and I watch the snow on the ground. The fire is going in the fireplace, and about fifteen minutes into it I swear, I just felt like I heard this presence say *Enjoy this. I mean for you to enjoy this*. And I felt thankful to God. All the other things I can still worry about tomorrow, but in that moment as I looked into the fire, I felt God saying *Enjoy this*. And my challenge was not to enjoy, my challenge rather is, how do I fall deeper in love with a God who gives me that to enjoy and not fall in love with my deck furniture? Not fall in love with an updated

kitchen fireplace. Not take that beautiful mountain view, that ski run, for granted. There's the whispered voice of God that wants to say to you, if you will ever stop, *Enjoy this. Enjoy the whine of that little baby.* That's life; that's the gift of God. And when I say thank you, God says *Enjoy this* and then God says, *Why don't you share this? Share this with somebody.* Because generosity, sharing the blessing of God, is at the core of a satisfied life. If you want to be satisfied, if you want to be content, be generous. Being generous is contagious. The discipline of giving away frees my heart from *I only need just one more experience by that fireplace, I need one more ski run, I need one more of this, I need one more of that...* it frees us out of more and it shows that we are thankful.

There is a church across the highway, Colonial, and sometimes I think we're just one big church—CPC and Colonial—half of them come here, half of us go there. I can always tell when I have offended one of you because Daniel says he sees you in church, and vice versa. It's just one big community, and one of the people you probably know over at Colonial is a longtime lawyer named Jay Bennett. Jay is a great mentor to me, a wonderful friend, and I asked him how he achieved a generous, satisfied life. It took an hour, but here are just 4 minutes of a contented life. [Video shown]

Link to video: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/12a7nxxebous7ft/Jay%20Bennett%20Final.mp4?dl=0>

I don't ever want to grow up; if I ever have to grow up, I want to be like that. And I want you to be like that—satisfied, contented, generous people. As a matter of fact, I don't think it is a suggestion, I think it is a command from the God who made you that you should act decisively and immediately to become a more generous person. And if you do that, even starting today, wherever you are, if you become a more generous person, I believe that God's reward will be contentment and satisfaction. Even as I say that, I know that there is resistance to that because I feel it myself. The resistance comes in three ways. Let me get the first one out of the way. The first one is: *I knew it; they're talking about my money. The church just wants my money.* We deliberately, as a church leadership, we deliberately placed this series after the stewardship campaign rather than before it. We don't want people giving to this church, which we would love to have you to do, for the reason that *we need your money.* No, this is about you and Jesus.

The second thing I think that makes a person resist this idea of becoming more generous is that when people are prompted by God to pursue generosity, good-hearted Christians rarely say no. You don't say no. Usually instead of saying no, you say later. When you resist giving, you aren't saying no, you are saying later. One of the problems is that that's lethal because you really mean it; you really think that later will happen, and it don't. Don't fall victim to the deception of well-intentioned delay; life will pass you by. Even if you write in your will that you will give a third of your money to the poor, that's great, but you don't get to see that. It won't make you content or satisfied now. The problem that I had with the video of Jay is that Jay looks like he's a rich guy, and I need an ordinary guy who can give now.

I had dinner this weekend with a young family in the church and as usual we were talking about our kids. They had two of these Ziploc bags full of change in their kitchen. They have two kids and they are trying to teach those kids how to share, how to save,

how to spend. You've heard that before; you share first, then you save, then you spend with joy. They give their kids allowances in those three bags. They talked to us about how it's been a while since they've been through the share process and so the kids brought their bags to the kitchen table and they laid them out and they asked, "Where should we give at the end of the year?" And being Presbyterian, elder, thoughtful, giving types the parents said, "Oh guys. You know what we should do? We should give to Opportunity International. It's a thing at our church where you create wealth by giving jobs through loans to poor people. It's great!" The kids go, "Uh huh, uh huh." And then the kids saw pictures of children from World Vision, and that's where they went...their hearts went to the children like them. Especially this one picture of a young girl, and the verse with it says, "I know the Lord secures justice for the poor." And the parents read it and they said, "World Vision is helping children be rescued from human trafficking." The kids asked, "What's trafficking?" "Well, that's when someone either steals you from mom and dad, or they buy you from mom and dad, and you are so poor you can't help it, and bad things happen to you." The kids say, "We want to do that; we want to rescue one of those kids." And they pooled all their money and gave it to World Vision. World Vision sent back a little lighted pen. Then a couple of days later the older daughter came into her mom's room with her "spend" bag—not the save, not the share, but the spend bag—and said, "Mom, what's trafficking really? Does it have something to do with sex?" And her mom said, "Honey, it's much more about somebody being taken away from the love of their mom and dad and being forced to do bad things, and World Vision helps rescue them." And I wrote this down so I would remember it. The daughter offers the rest of her spend bag and says, "How much will it take to save another girl?"

Do not wait.

The center of Biblical generosity is to follow God's clear direction about generosity. If you do not, it will stunt growth in every other aspect of following Jesus. The center of biblical generosity is the belief that God provides everything you really need right now. And with gratitude for what God provides, and confidence that God is not going to die, we open our hands and share.

The third reason people resist giving is not because they are greedy, it's because they are afraid. It's not that you are greedy, it's that you are afraid to run out of stuff. *I'd give more, but what if I give it away and there's not enough left for me?* That's what the Apostle Paul is talking about. Some wanting to get rich become arrogant; others wanting to get rich put their false hope in money. It will not keep them secure. The intended result of God's gifts to you is not that you amass wealth, not that you accumulate more stuff, but that as you grow you will grow in goodness and generosity. That is your legacy. Not a bigger house, not a great resume, not getting into the best school, not being popular...your legacy is: what have you done with what God has given you? If that little girl showed us that it can start at seven, this last couple shows us that it is never too late. I don't want to embarrass them, so I won't put their picture up on the screen...they are the ones on the left. I don't want to embarrass them so I won't say their names...Randy and Judy. So just ignore them. But Randy and Judy went with us on a trip to Africa ten years ago—they were already in their seventies—and they bumped into this young man. He wanted so much to be a doctor, but he couldn't get into the school, so Randy and Judy started giving \$500 a year so this kid could get into

school. He goes all the way through school and says *I still want to be a doctor*, and he got into medical school—miracle—and they started giving \$1200 a year. These people have gone from their seventies into their eighties, and the retirement income is a fixed income and they are giving \$1200 a year. The young man says *I want to become the best doctor in Uganda and go back to my home*. Randy and Judy were talking to us the other day and they said, “This is great! He’s doing great! He’s going to be a doctor. You know, we told him at the beginning that if he graduated from medical school we would fly him back here. You don’t think he remembers that, do you?” Never too early, never too late. Enjoy this. Share this.

I don’t want to leave this as a sermon; I want to leave this as a challenge. In each pew there should be a basket. I would like every person to take one of the cards, and every two or three people take one of the pens. We want to be your partner in allowing you to experience contentment and joy, satisfaction and generosity. We want to be your partner; we think it takes all of us. So Matt is going to come up and play under us for a while and give you a moment to fill out the front part of the card. Some of you are going to think *I’d really like to do this but I’m overextended. I’m not extended, I’m overextended*. Maybe that’s where you need help. Maybe you need help finding margin. Maybe you need help with your legacy to go to Opportunity International or the church or World Vision or Young Life Capernaum...somewhere so that you can bless now. What we would like you to do, if that front page is for you, is to write down your name and email—we’re in this together—and somebody will contact you this week. The rest of you, if one of these things is not for you, turn the card over. I believe that God has a step for every person in this room—school age, retirement age, anywhere in between—I believe that God has something for you. I think that you ought to put on the back of this card: What’s my next step? What is your next step to being a more generous person? To responding as a disciple of Jesus? Is it to ask your money advisor, “How can I be more generous?” Is it to get one of those budget apps so you’ll know where your money goes, and so you will have some margin? Is it maybe to talk to a friend that you admire...*how did you start this?* But at the very least, it ought to be—give something. Give something. Let God bless you so you can share with others.

*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.*