DELNORTE
BAPTIST CHURCH

CONTENTED GENEROSITY

1 Timothy 6:6-10

We all have an idea what generosity is. Here are words from the Standard College Dictionary about generosity: liberality, munificence, unselfish, magnanimous, abundant and overflowing.

I don't use some of these words in everyday conversations, so I had to look a couple up. Munificent means 'extraordinarily generous,' and magnanimous means 'having a generous nature.'

How do we become extraordinarily generous; how do we develop a generous nature? Could it be lack of godly contentment with what we have?

Every day we are bombarded with hundreds of commercials and advertising that have one purpose: to hijack us into thinking we can't live without their product. Their damaging message is discontent.

1 Timothy 6:6-10(NIV) 6But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10For 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 griefs.

Most of us have enjoyed other's generosity more than they have ours. About 35 years ago we had some smoke damage in our house.

The next day Tommie Hughes showed up dressed to work and literally spent three days in our home scrubbing walls and washing draperies. Time is perhaps the most valuable thing we have, yet she generously gave us that time.

Our family's lives and Tommie's family's have been closely intertwined for 40 years with a friendship that will last a life time. But we will ever be grateful for her generous gift of time.

Real generosity is such a rare thing that it is unforgettable. When you are on the receiving end of true generosity it feels good. But as much fun as it is to receive, it is more so to give.

That's a biblical principle from the lips of Jesus himself? In Acts 20:35 Paul is carrying a generous offering from the Greek Christians to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. He stops in Ephesus to say goodbye to the church leaders there.

Acts 20:35 I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

These words of Jesus are found no where else in the Bible. If not for Paul we would not have known Jesus said them. Jesus perfectly illustrated them with His life, cumulating with Him giving himself for us on the cross.

'It is more blessed to give than to receive' should be part of the foundation of every Christian. How do we get to this point of generous living?

Go back to v.6. The root of generosity is contentment. True generosity is so rare because of lack of contentment. Those people who are willing to hold what they own loosely have found contentment in life.

It is easy for them to share. It is no sacrifice for them to share. Real giving should come from godly contentment, not from guilt or obligation. According to Jesus it is more blessed for me to give to you than for you to receive from me.

Godliness with contentment is great gain (v.6). It is not true generosity when you are made to feel guilty in order to give to something. You feel manipulated. It becomes forced giving.

Many churches fund themselves in just this way (I.e., United we Give). Let's put what Paul is talking about into context:

Vv.3-4 3If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing.

One of the false teachings that Paul refers to is found in v.5 …that godliness is a means to financial gain. In other words, you can get rich through religion.

The sad part is that it's true. Some nefarious TV ministries use guilt and manipulation to get people to send them money. These are never right motives for giving.

Rather, spiritually contented and fulfilled Christians have a joy in giving, they delight in giving. Being spiritually contented with our lot in life results in benefits.

Here are some benefits of contented generosity:

1.“I don’t have to have (fill in the blank) to be happy.

For every verse in the Bible that tells us the benefits of wealth, there are ten that tell us the danger of wealth. Money has a way of binding us to what is physical and temporal, and blinding us to what is spiritual and eternal.

For too many their driving goal is to get more, have more and look better. Their goal is never reached. What results is stress and unhappiness. There has to be a day when you say “enough.”

Don’t misinterpret ‘contentment’ as laziness or lacking concern. Paul’s word for contentment is a word used by the Stoics of his day for “self-sufficiency which is altogether independent of circumstances.”

There is a difference between the Stoics and Christianity. The Stoics taught that the secret was found inside us. Christian contentment is found in Christ.

Godliness with contentment is the root of fulfilled Christianity—a down deep inside godliness. This contentment is from the knowledge that Christ gave His all so that we could be forgiven and receive salvation.

So Christian contentment is not self-sufficiency, but Christ-sufficiency, and we are no longer driven to have, whatever, in order to be happy. Our contentment is totally in Christ.

2. I am free from turmoil over my circumstances.

Freedom from turmoil over our circumstances means we are free of fear. Whether you have little or a lot, it is being at peace with your financial status and material possessions, or even of your appearance.

Remember, contentment doesn’t mean laziness. That’s another sermon. There is nothing wrong with success, money, and career when God is enthroned in your heart. When He is not, money becomes your God.

Money always dulls our spiritual sense when it comes before our relationship with God. Godly contentment is a peace with where you are.

3. I cultivate a grateful spirit.

You begin to cultivate a grateful spirit, enjoying even the little things, the simple things. You develop the ability to enjoy and applaud someone else's achievements.

How deep is your love for Christ? The depth of your love is reflected in your generosity. Your income has nothing to do with being generous. Generosity comes out of a grateful spirit.

In a church bulletin: "The Lord loves a cheerful giver but He will accept from a grouch." We smile, but it is so much better if you enjoy giving.

The truth is, if you are not generous with a meager income, you will never be generous when you have more. You might think, "If I just get that raise I'll give, I'll be generous." No you won't!

4. I keep God in clear focus.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain," Paul wrote. This is living with God always in clear focus—living godliness; arranging your private life so that it fits the truth of the Scriptures.

It is hearing what the Bible says about life and making your life fit these truths. It is having pure motives because you delight in the things of God.

Godliness is the ability to differentiate between the temporary things of this world and the eternal. It's having a 6th sense. You may have seen the movie "The Sixth Sense," about a little boy who could see and talk to ghosts.

That's not the 6th sense I'm talking about. A sixth sense for a Christian means having godly antennas. You are sensitive toward God, and sensitive toward other people.

Part of this sixth sense is contentment and a willingness to live within your circumstances. The big lie is that when my circumstances get better I will do better. Again, no you won't!

Paul's point is that when you mix contentment with godliness the result is "great gain" which results in great generosity. Circumstances have little to do with true contentment and true generosity.

Another benefit of generosity is…

5. I keep my essentials to a minimum.

V.7, For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. (cf.Job 1:21) Look at the essentials in v.8. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

When we go through life always wanting more, the fun is gone. We cannot enjoy life. Instead of driving a Ford, we want a BMW. Instead of hamburger, we insist on steak.

A 3-bedroom is not big enough for the two of us; we'll trade it in for a 5-bedroom. [Portales couple] If we don't have mountain views, then have to have a place with.

V.10 says that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. It is always important to note that money itself is not a root of evil, it is the love of money—the love of the stuff money can buy.

When you are spiritually contented the stuff money can buy becomes less important. I've also noticed that when something physical occurs that threatens security or your life your stuff doesn't seem that important anymore.

6. I send the right message.

I think money or stuff is one of the big two in pastoral counseling. They send the wrong message when they cannot agree on how to spend their money. [Hunting season]

Or they say they simply want better for their children and want to leave them a nice inheritance. These are the wrong messages to send, both to your husband or wife, and especially to your children. The message is 'greed.'

In v.9 you see the downward spiral of greed. They have a passion for more, which causes them to give into temptations, and actually fall into Satan's trap with many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

That's very descriptive isn't it! People whose goal in life is "more," are sucked under through their greed. This love for money causes all kinds of grief—broken homes and disillusioned spouses.

Money is a good servant but a poor master. The lure for money is stronger than the human will, and with many a man it stands between his soul and his God.

Application:

Contented generosity understands that God provides everything we need for our enjoyment—not everything we want. Here are a couple of closing thoughts:

(1) if you can't enjoy it, get rid of it.

(2) everything you can buy with money has to be maintained.