

Truly Life

1 Timothy 6:6-19

Grace Mercy and Peace are now yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So a few moments ago we spoke with the Kids about what they would do if they won the lottery. You heard some of the wonderful things kids would do if they had the opportunity. So let's indulge ourselves a little bit. What would you do if you won the lottery? How would you spend your wealth after Uncle Sam takes his percentage from your winnings? What kinds of things would you put the money towards? What would you do with this miracle?

For some of us you might reevaluate your current position at your job. If you have more money than you would ever hope to use, why would you want to keep working? Would the first thing you do be to walk your resignation notice to your boss and happily walk out? Would your lottery winnings be the ticket out of your 9 to 5 and into endless freedom? Instead of being what you are now, you could take on any identity you want. Free from work you can define yourself a new be anything or do anything. The options are endless.

Maybe you are a little different and instead of thinking first to your job you think to all the things you would buy. The countless luxury items that have always been just a little too out of reach or too expensive for you ever to indulge yourself with. It could take any

form. Maybe it is the luxury clothes you never had, the new house. The better and faster car. Anything and everything could be just a simple purchase away now for you. Your greatest desires are now just waiting for you to come and get them. The lottery millions makes that possible.

Maybe you find yourself a little more self-controlled than some of us. Your first thought isn't buying something or quitting your job, but rather how you are going to hold onto your money. Instead of cars and a new life it is making sure that you never ever have to worry about money again. Your mind goes to the money market and how you can grow the pile of cash you have been given. Saving and investing so that you, your children and your children's children will have everything that they could ever need. Where others see freedom from a job or the new shiny toy, you see security. The security of not ever needing to worry about money again.

Whatever your lottery plans are there is one thing we can agree upon. Wealth can be a wonderful thing. Our entire society revolves around our ability to seek and to gain wealth. Spending money to get the things that we need or want. Saving money to make sure that we never run out and using money to change our social and economic outlook. Money seems to be the solution to many of our problems. In our world if we just had a few more dollars a lot of problems could be solved or even avoided. As we spend, save and use money we realize that everything in our world revolves around money. To win the lottery would mean that every part of our lives in our world would

improve, we could identify with newer and better classes of people, it could give us our hearts desires and it can even give us security in this life.

Can you imagine what a blessing winning the lottery would be. Unfortunately for us I don't think any of us are winning the lottery any time soon. We might have lofty dreams about what we would do if we won the lottery, but what are we doing with the wealth that God has given to us now here today? Wealth goes beyond just our money but covers all the material things that you and me have. Our money, our things and anything that we need to live out life.

We think how our identity would shift if we won the lottery because our identity is tied with our wealth. We shape and change who we are based on what we have. For some we wear our wealth, dressing in fancy clothes or always wearing the newest and most advanced thing. Others do it through making sure they own the right things. Computers, cars and all those expensive homes and appliance. We want to project ourselves as someone who has money. We value our image that we project to others through our wealth. We want others to see us in a particular light, we can use our things to portray ourselves as strong and powerful or even as likeable and friendly. Our wealth is the means by which we tell the world who we are. It allows us to make an image for others to see, real or not. For us in our culture our wealth is used to express our identity, to tell others who we are.

Our wealth goes beyond our identity and even helps our hearts reach out and take the things we desire most. Our hearts can be given everything it could want through our

money. As long as we have enough. It is the tool by which we get our most expensive things, it helps us form relationships with others who use their wealth in a similar way and even gives to us the things we need to live and get by one. Therefore we desire wealth so that our wealth can give us the desire of our heart.

We even can get our sense of security from our wealth. We pile more and more wealth together, we save, invest and make smart decisions so we can watch our bank account number slowly grow. The higher that number the better sleep we can get at night knowing that our security is taken care of. Our money lets us relax because if we have enough, we can be certain that we will be taken care of. Our wealth is our sense of security.

Is this the way that our Epistle reads though? Is our wealth supposed to be our identity, our greatest desire and our sense of security? Paul uses some harsh words for our idea of what wealth can do for us. Paul writes this: But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Paul's language about wealth doesn't match up with what our world tells us. Paul warns us about our desire for wealth. Brothers and Sisters in Christ we have done something awful. Our world and our own sinful nature points us to wealth for our own sake. It has

lead us to put our trust in money above all things to give to us our identity, our desires and even our security. We look to our wealth to not only tell us who are, but also protect us and make us feel safe. We are looking to a created thing to do the work of God in our midst. We have given wealth the spot of God in our lives. We have made the wealth God so graciously has given into a god. We have traded the almighty for the dollar. Through of our actions of trusting our wealth over God we worship an idol.

As Christians we do not find our identity in the wealth that we surround ourselves with, but we find it through the proclamation of who our creator says we are. Money and things do not make us anything before God but we are given the title children of God. God has told us we are his through the waters of our baptism. Jesus comes to us, claims us and give us a hope. We are not defined through what we have or don't have, we are defined by the life death and resurrection and the second coming of Jesus. We have been made children of God. Our sins have been forgiven. Even for all the times we have worshiped the idol of wealth, God calls us back as one of his own. We turn in repentance and remember who we are. We are baptized children of God.

We have also looked to our wealth to get us the desires of our heart. We looked to our money to provide for us all the things that we need to live in this life. Yet again we have put the creation into God's role. God is the source of all things, creator and ruler of all. It is him we are to thank and we are to look to for all of our things. We do not look to our pocketbook to get the things that we want, but we remember that it is God who richly provides for us all things needed in this life. God gives us the wealth that through it we

might have all we need. That we might be able to provide for ourselves and our family. The wealth is a tool of God for his purposes, not our wish fulfiller.

As Christians we look to God for our security. As Paul writes us in this epistle: “we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.” The things we have, our wealth is fleeting. It could be here one second and gone the next. Disaster, a market crash or even a health crisis can quickly drain away our security when we look to our wealth. The blanket of cash we looked to shield ourselves with is here one second and gone the next. As Christians, our security isn't in the things of this world, but in the promises of the one who made us. Promises that tell us that we are a forgiven and redeemed child of God. That Jesus who was dead and raised to a new life will do the same for us. We look for the life of the world to come. Our hope is secure in the promises of God, they are the same yesterday, today and until he comes again. Our security rests in the promises of God.

Our identity, our desires and our security are rooted in who God is. We have replaced the role of God with our wealth, we have made an idol and sought after it for the way we should live our lives instead of the living God. As Christian's living in this material culture, let us repent of our love for wealth and turn back to the one who will always love us. We can turn and ask for forgiveness because it is who we are. God has proclaimed us a new identity, we are forgiven and redeemed. He has provided all things for us in the wealth that has given from his righteous hand. All that we have comes from God.

Finally, we rest secure, knowing that our sins of idolatry have been forgiven. Our future is not one of fear, but of the fulfillment of God's promises.

This identity we are given from God as children of God, has radical implications for how we as Christians are to go from here and live life. Our Epistle reading challenges us to radically rethink the way we look at what God has first given to us. We are to ask the question If we are not relying on our wealth to give us meaning and purpose. To give us an identity, to get our greatest desires and our security what is it used for? What are we to do with this wealth God has given to us?

Where the world calls us to use our wealth to serve ourselves to identify ourselves, to give us our desires and give security, we know that God will give us what we need.

Paul writes: But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. – We give thanks to God for providing for our needs. To take care of ourselves and to take care of our families.

The rest Paul writes this encouragement: They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Our wealth does not serve us inwardly, but it allows us to generously love our neighbor. Our wealth does not define us, God has, and now we get to use our gift of wealth in

service to others. The neighbor who struggles to put food on the table, we have an opportunity to show love by using our wealth to support them. Freely giving what we won't be able to take with us. Where there is need we can be quick to share of what has been given us to be generous with those who will never be able to return the favor.

The exciting thing about being a Christian is that God will send each and every one of us out of these doors today and we will all experience something different. We go home to different families; we will meet different people and we will all see different kinds of need. The joy of being a Christian is that God has equipped us to show love and generosity in whatever situation we find ourselves in. Whatever adventure God has for you beyond these doors you go as one defined by God, a child of God, you go as one who does not look to money for the things they need, but to God himself, you go as one secure in the promises of God. You go to love places and people God has called you to. So when asked what would you do if you won the lottery. We have exciting thought about how we can use the wealth given to us to love and serve our neighbor. In Jesus name, amen.