

The Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost
September 22, 2013
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

1 Timothy 6:6-10

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People 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. For 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. (NIV)

Can you define what it means to be content? What does contentment look like? We might say being content is to be satisfied. Perhaps we would point to a person who always seems to be happy and say that is what contentment looks like. But there is one picture embedded in my mind that displays and describes contentment better than any words I could come up with to describe it. This is a picture of a once hungry baby who now has a belly full of milk. I know it has been some years since I saw this look on my children's faces but I remember it well. They just give a look many times with some milk still on their face and a little smirk or smile. A baby who has just been fed looks up at you like: "Life is good!" "I have everything that I need!" "I am completely satisfied!" (at least for now)

Dear friends, isn't this what contentment looks like? Does this not define well what it means to be content? Contentment is recognizing you have all that you need. It is being satisfied with what you are given. It is an attitude that, no matter how much or how little we actually have, life is good. And as our God speaks to us again today in His Word we see this is an important attitude. My prayer is our God, who is the giver of every good and perfect gift, teaches us to be fully satisfied for: **Contentment in Christ is great gain indeed!**

The apostle Paul writes to Timothy, "***But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.***" I can't read these words without thinking of Job who lost everything he had, including his children, in one day and yet said, "***Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised***" (Job 1). Our attitude toward possessions and money and the things of this world reveals what is in our hearts. Both our attitude toward these things and how we use them give us opportunity to display our faith. Paul says if we have food and clothing, or literally the Greek says food and "covering" which would include not just clothes, but shelter, we will be content with that.

But why is being content with that such great gain? What is the advantage for us to be satisfied with what we have whether great or small? All we need to do is take a good look at the opposite of contentment. This is something we see all around us, don't we? Everywhere I look in this world I view people who are discontent. I see greed. I watch people who are never satisfied. People want more and better and newer and bigger. People want to have things their way and right away. So many people think like the billionaire oil man Rockefeller who was once asked how much money is finally enough and he replied: "*Always a little more.*"

But I don't need to look at the people out there in this world to see the opposite of

contentment. For far too often I find it right here – in my own heart. Too many times I am not satisfied with just food and shelter. I want steak and the Holiday inn. Too many times greed pops up and rears its ugly head in my life. I see other people's cars or homes or even phones and a little coveting quietly creeps in. I feel at times like the kid holding the penny as I look at others with a \$5 bill. Do you ever feel that you too want more? Are you ever discontent?

These words give us a warning I believe each one of us need regularly. ***“People 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. For 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.”*** This is where the opposite of contentment leads – to hell. We have here a passage that I have heard misquoted almost more than any other. I've heard people talk about money being the root of evil. But listen closely to what God says here. The problem is not money – it is the love of money. The issue isn't possessions – it's what is in people's hearts. Money and possession come from God. The problem is a greedy heart that is never fully satisfied. It is a heart that is not content that leads to all kinds of problems.

Worst of all this attitude can lead people away from what they need most of all. The rich man walked away from Jesus sad because his heart was set on his wealth. We know the sad end for Judas who collected 30 silver coins in exchange for Jesus. I've seen the truth of Jesus' *Parable of the Sower* play out far too many times as people get away from church and God's Word because of the ***“worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth.”*** Yes, ***“some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”***

So what is the answer to being content? What is the solution to being fully satisfied? In one word – Christ! We are able to be content - in Christ. For we find that what God has given us in Jesus is truly everything we need. In Jesus' perfect life – we have righteousness – the perfection God clothed little Jensen with this morning as He did on us at our baptisms. In Jesus we are satisfied because Jesus made the full payment for sin. All our discontent, all our greed, all our selfishness was nailed to Jesus on the cross until God's wrath was satisfied and our sins washed away by His blood. So we have all the forgiveness we need. We have a peace with God far greater than we would ever dream of and we have a salvation that is already secured. Jesus' empty tomb guarantees it. Now we have all the blessings of a God who is on our side. How will this God who did not spare His own Son not graciously give us all things – including a heaven with more riches and pleasures than we will ever be able to number! When we look at what we have in Christ – what more could we need!

The other week I received an email saying that one of our WELS pastors entered eternal life. His name is Pastor Douglas Scherschel and he served his whole ministry in Spokane, WA. Although I did not know him or meet him, I do know one of his sons who is a teacher up at Toledo in our circuit. Pastor Scherschel was diagnosed with lung cancer in May. As the cancer progressed, he lost his ability to speak due to a tumor pressing on his voice box. On the morning he died, the attending nurse related that just before he took his final breath he raised his arms, crossed his index fingers and laid them on his heart! He didn't need his voice to testify to what mattered most – the reason he could be content not just in life but in death. Contentment in Christ is great gain indeed!

It is true as Paul writes that we brought nothing into this world and we can take nothing out. But there is One who want with us in this world and One who we want with us

when it is our time to leave this world. This is Jesus our Savior, brother, shepherd, and friend. He is the reason whether we are rich or poor, sick or healthy, young or old, we have everything we need. He is the reason we are content. Because of God's grace in Christ we are fully satisfied. Life is good! When the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to understand and live in this truth it is great gain indeed! Dear friends, continue to drink the pure milk of God's Word now that you have tasted that the Lord is good! Amen.