

I will be reading from 1 Timothy 6, verses 17 to 21.

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.

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous and willing to share,

In this way, they will lay up treasures for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care.

Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in doing so have departed from the faith.

Grace be with you all.

Thanks, Barb.

Well, we did it, or almost.

In about a half an hour, we'll have done it, made it through 1 Timothy.

And I know that I'm not the same because of our journey through 1 Timothy, and it's my prayer that you're not either.

But let's go to the Lord, ask for his help as we wrap up the book and as we hear what he has for us today.

Heavenly Father, I...

shudder to think and to even imagine what kind of glory we would experience if each of us, myself included, were singing with 100% authenticity, Lord, that you are our life and our all.

Lord, we ask that as we open your word today,

that the grace that you have shown us would continue this morning to redeem us, to restore us, and that we would walk in a new and fresh way into the arms of Christ our Lord this morning as we hear from your word.

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

All right, so we've come to the end of Paul's letter to Pastor Timothy in the Ephesian church.

And I think the general impression sometimes when you get a piece of literature, especially something that you can read in one sitting, like a poem or a letter like this, it's just good to reflect on first impressions.

Although I'm thinking about first impressions as last impressions here at the end of the book.

And I think the general impression that we get from the book is that church is hard.

We're reminded that on this side of heaven, church, churches, local churches, will always be striving and working to maintain doctrinal purity and to ensure the faithfulness of their leaders.

Also, this side of the fall, or when sin entered the world, individuals within the church, you and I, will be fighting, as Drew reminded us last week, the fight of faith.

That we'll be working to persevere in our walk with the Lord and helping those

or maybe sometimes not helping, our brothers and sisters along the way.

So all of that struggle with sin, both within and without, both within us and without us, and within the church and without of the church, all that relational activity that we've talked about and looked at and discussed through the book of 1 Timothy, all of that within church life, it's hard.

It's work.

It can be emotionally draining and exhausting.

And if you've been plugged into a church and active in a church, you'll know that that's the case.

It doesn't take long to figure that out.

So why do it?

If it's so hard, it's so emotionally exhausting, and it's all this work, why do it?

Why not just keep church at arm's length, either be tangentially involved or plugged into a church or just kind of not involved at all?

Well, I think the short answer that we see in 1 Timothy and that we just see in the New Testament in general is just that you and I need it, right?

That we need the church.

We have to be involved if we're believers in order to survive and make it to the end, right?

Walking faithfully with the Lord, we need church.

Church is one of the three legs that God has given us to support our spiritual maturity in this life.

The other two being the scriptures and the Holy Spirit.

We need all three of these things, church, scriptures, Holy Spirit, in our spiritual lives.

Like a beggar needs clothing and a meal for their physical life.

Those three things are as necessary for our spiritual life as clothing, food is for our physical life.

And you know who tends to recognize their need, who truly becomes poor, who tends to truly become poor in spirit?

It's usually the believers that are poor in real life.

They feel their need.

They're smacked in the face with their need on a regular basis, their physical need, and it quickly reminds them of their spiritual need.

You know who tends to not see their spiritual need and who might view the relational work of serious church life as too much trouble and maybe not worth the effort?

Often, it's those who are rich in this life.

And I think this is why Paul ends the book in this way.

He's primarily been showing us in 1 Timothy how to behave in the household of God.

And then he ends his book with a final warning to the rich and an encouragement to Timothy.

And I know some of you might be sitting there and say, all right, we got a message where Nate's going to really go after the rich this morning.

You know, Elon Musk just became worth a trillion dollars.

Go get him.

Preach.

Well, I hate to inform you, or maybe I don't hate to inform you, but I'll just inform you this morning that the average American today still

is in the top five to 8% of global wealth holders, again, across the globe.

And by pretty much any metric, you and I, whether you're on welfare or you're making six figures plus, by any metric, we all are considered rich in global standards.

So I think we all, regardless of where we're at and where we stack up with other people around us and how we're measuring wealth and richness and all that stuff, I think we all better listen to Paul this morning as he tells us to set our hope on God by storing up treasure in heaven and guarding the investment of the gospel.

storing up treasure in heaven, guarding the investment of the gospel.

Paul tells us and Timothy to set his hope, take hold, and guard the deposit.

We'll look at them in order.

First, he says to set hope or set our hope in verse 17.

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, that's a fun word, actually it's not fun, but it's an interesting word, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

So we've got two commands here.

One, put off haughtiness, or one command, two aspects.

Put off haughtiness and put off a shaky or unstable hope and riches.

So don't be haughty.

To be haughty is to have an oversized view of yourself.

I thought about using a synonym, but it's fun to say, so I'm gonna say it a bunch of times this morning.

To be haughty is to have an oversized view of yourself.

which is usually accompanied by looking down your nose at others.

So you've got an inflated view of me, and I'm looking down my nose at other people.

Commentator Brian Chappell puts it this way.

He describes haughtiness, especially in the church and amongst Christians, this way.

He says, but the shadows can be found in the church.

An air of distance develops between us and the poor.

We do not really connect with those who struggle financially.

A subterranean contempt roots in our hearts, then surfaces in insensitive slips of the tongue, revealing the shadows.

There's also the dark inclination of the well-off to overestimate their own wisdom, to take themselves too seriously and throw their weight around.

When such happens, oops, sorry, there we go.

When such happens, generosity can become nothing more than part of the rich Christian's noble obligation.

Arrogance too easily overshadows and darkens the Christian life.

As we've said before, pride and haughtiness are subtle.

They creep in undetected bias, even when they're obvious to other people.

So don't be haughty.

He also says, don't set your hope on the uncertainty of riches.

The great irony of looking to wealth and to money for stability and protection, especially for your life in this world, is just how unstable and vulnerable wealth and money are.

Jesus says in Matthew 6, 19-20, "...do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal."

but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Don't be haughty because, or don't have an inflated view of yourself because quite frankly, your contribution to gaining your wealth, what you put in to gaining your wealth

is really insignificant.

You were given the abilities, the intelligence, the opportunities by God to succeed, and at any point, right, he could have brought something into your life and totally flattened it, right?

Your ability to create your wealth and maintain it, insignificant in the grand scheme of things, but also don't set your hope on riches because they are not all-powerful,

By themselves, your riches, your wealth are vulnerable.

They actually need you to help protect them.

So Paul tells us to recognize our need, recognize our fragility, both ourselves and our wealth that we've built up.

But then he also says, so put that off,

And then he says to put on hope in a rich God.

There's a really interesting play on words in verse 17.

He says, let the rich not hope in riches, but in a rich God.

Kind of communicating that this hope that we naturally kind of in our sin nature put in wealth and in riches is actually not that far off the mark.

Hoping in riches sometimes feels right because it almost is.

But the riches that we're to hope in are not shiny metal and banknotes.

The riches that we're supposed to hope in are the beauty and riches of God's character and all that he is, which includes money.

stability and security and things like that.

God is rich in every way.

He's rich in character.

He's rich in beauty.

He's rich in joy and justice and in pleasure.

The riches and the material things that we're tempted with, that we're tempted to hope in, are an overflow of his riches.

Those riches, the metal, shiny metal and banknotes, are a flickering beam of the sun of his greatness.

And he's not stingy with his riches.

He gives his people everything to enjoy.

That's an incredible statement in verse 17.

But on God who richly provides us with everything...

to enjoy.

He gives his people everything to enjoy.

That means that the things that God has given to you, he has given to you for your joy.

That also means if your hope is in Jesus this morning, the things that God has withheld from you, he has withheld from you for your future joy.

He's working in you a greater capacity for a more intense joy than you can handle in the

God works only, Paul tells us in Romans, only for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

That's a generous God you can bank on, right?

That's a God that you can set your hope on.

So what's it look like?

So Paul tells us, put off, don't trust in riches, don't be haughty, don't have an inflated view of yourself, but set your hope in God and enjoy the things, right?

Who's given you things to enjoy.

What does that look like?

How do we enjoy the things that God, a generous God has given us?

Do we take everything that God gives us and we hoard it, and that's how we enjoy the good things that our generous God has given us?

Well, that's not the kind of riches, that's not the kind of joy that God is most concerned about giving us.

We enjoy God's riches by taking hold, and we mean by that.

Look at verses 18 to 19.

So he's still talking to the rich.

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.

So we see here in these couple verses that Paul gives a command.

The way that we're to

receive from God his generous gifts to us and enjoy them is to take hold.

But Paul, you know, gives that command in three sub parts.

He first says to do good, right?

Commands the rich to do good.

You know, there's sins of commission and there's sins of omission.

When you

have a sin of commission, you do something wrong, right?

You're committing a sin.

You're actively doing something that's against God's law.

Sins of omission are when you fail to do good that you know you should do.

James puts it this way in James 4.

Come now, you who say, today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit, yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

What is your life?

For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.

As it is, you boast in your arrogance.

All such boasting is evil.

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Don't say, I'll do good stuff tomorrow, right?

I'll be generous tomorrow.

After my investments hit, after I'm more financially stable, I'll do good, I'll be generous.

You may not have tomorrow.

And even if you do have tomorrow, your heart might be too hard by then to do the good that you know to do now, right?

So if you're moved to do good, if God moves you to do good, do it.

James says here, if God moves you to do good and you don't do it, it's sin.

So he says, do good, be rich in good works.

He says, value character and good deeds more than material things or financial security.

Who are you more impressed with?

Who are you more impressed with, someone who is godly in character, who's generous to others, or someone who dresses nicely, is obviously successful and rich?

What impresses you more?

Also, be generous and ready to share, he says.

Don't hesitate to meet a need or to bless someone.

Be ready to give, be ready to share, be generous.

The joy you receive in giving is far greater than the joy or comfort of clinging to stuff.

So Christian,

Your hope is in God to meet your needs, not in your stockpile.

So Paul says to demonstrate that by being quick to meet needs and bless others.

So that's the command, but he gives this command with a purpose in verse 19.

He says, 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.

Paul doesn't tell us to give our stuff away and to be generous so that we can become some kind of martyr, right?

And say, oh, look at me.

I'm making such great sacrifices for everyone else.

He actually says you should do this for yourself, right?

So you should do this because it's a wise thing.

As we looked at two weeks ago when Paul talked about money beforehand, we saw that this is just wise investing,

You're leveraging, depreciating assets for treasure that will never decrease in value.

Everyone's looking for the next great investment opportunity.

SpaceX.

Wish I knew how I could get in on it.

But Jim Elliot reminds us, and if you don't know who Jim Elliot is, you need to look it up because he backs up this statement.

He said, he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

What is it that we can't lose?

What exactly is it that we can't lose?

Paul says, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

That's a big statement.

He could have just said eternal life, right?

Life that lasts forever, that doesn't fade, doesn't die.

That's part of what he's talking about.

It's real, eternal, but it's also beautifully righteous and holy life.

It's life as it's meant to be lived.

It's life to the thousandth degree in satisfaction and glory and joy.

It's true life.

So is Paul saying here that you can purchase eternal life?

So if you're rich, do a bunch of good stuff with your money, be generous, and therefore that's how you're going to purchase or obtain eternal life.

No, that's not what he's saying at all.

He's saying something similar to what Jesus is saying here in Luke 18.

when Jesus is talking with the rich young ruler, so this rich young guy comes, apparently he's pretty pious too, because Jesus says, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, love your neighbor as yourself.

That's the law, go and do it.

And the man responds, all these I have kept for my youth.

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, one thing you still lack, sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me.

But when he heard these things, he became very sad for he was extremely rich.

Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, how difficult it is, this is like the key to this whole passage, right?

How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God, for it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

And then Jesus gives the hope.

He says, all things are possible with God, right?

So there's hope for the rich too.

But what's he saying?

He's not saying that wealth can buy you eternal life.

What he's saying is that wealth can keep you from eternal life, right?

Why?

Because wealth feeds, tends to feed our pride and blinds us to our neediness.

There's just a tendency that when we're given that kind of power, that kind of access to comfort, to our own self, that ability to meet our own selfish desires, that those selfish desires grow.

They don't shrink, right?

They tend to continue to grow and blind us to our own greediness and selfishness.

So one of the ways that we can test to see if we're sober and seeing things properly is this, you know, one of the ways that we can test to see if we really understand our neediness and to test to see if our hope is set on God is if we're willing to part with some of that money, some of that power in order to do good and to bless others.

Now, I wanted to have a whole point dedicated here to reminding us of all the good that Paul tells us to do and shows us to do in the book of 1 Timothy as this great wrap-up sermon.

But I got on to like six pages of notes before I got to that point.

And I was like, yeah, we're not going to have time for that.

So I would encourage you to go back through the book of 1 Timothy and look at

and all of the good that Paul tells us to do.

And I would just want to point out one thing, though, about that whole list of the good things that Paul gives us to do, is that Paul expects that good to happen primarily in the church, right, within the context of the church.

The whole book is about how to behave within the household of God and that there's a lot of good to do to other believers within the church, but also great glory to display and spill over and show to others in the community through the church.

So some of these good things, even though I'm not going to list them all out today, some of these good things can be seen in Paul's parting encouragement to Timothy to guard the deposit.

So kind of in conjunction, you still have like fiscal language here.

So Paul's talking to the rich, and then he tells Timothy to guard the good deposit, right?

Like kind of like a bank deposit, you know, put money in the bank.

And Paul's saying, there's this deposit invested in you, Timothy, from Jesus to the apostles.

Now the gospel is given to you, Timothy, and you need to guard this deposit.

I think one way that I would paraphrase this command to guard the good deposit is basically like, just don't mess it up.

We've given you this good deposit, don't mess it up.

Or another way to put it, just don't let anyone get in the way of the gospel.

Don't let anyone come in and mess with the deposit.

Because the gospel is the power of God for salvation.

The gospel is powerful in and of itself.

You don't need to add to it.

You don't need to make it prettier than it is.

It's beautiful all in and of itself.

It's the power of God for salvation.

Basically, just don't mess it up.

Don't get in the way.

The church is Jesus' rescue plan for the world.

The gates of hell won't stand against it.

Just...

Don't mess it up.

Let it go.

Guard it.

Make sure that it's doing what Jesus established it to do.

Our responsibility isn't to go out and conquer or defeat all of the godless scoffers on social media.

Our responsibility is to stay true to the incredibly powerful gift of the gospel that has been entrusted to us.

You know, the church, though, since its inception, has always been tempted to embrace expressions of power other than or in addition to the gospel.

In James, we see the Jerusalem church showing partiality to the rich and the influential and shaming the poor.

Right here in 1 Timothy, we've seen the Ephesian church embracing partiality.

a pseudo-intellectual spiritual knowledge from the academic elites.

In 1 Corinthians, we see the church embracing a chaotic, even at times cultic, spiritual practices as a supposed demonstration of the Spirit's power.

There's always a pull, always a pull to go beyond the gospel.

Whether, like I said, that's to a more refined, rich and powerful academic elite type pull to other expressions of power, or it's to a more like base,

kind of cultic, weird experiential expressions that are supposedly from the Holy Spirit, demonstrations of power.

There's a pull in both directions.

Again, to add that to the gospel.

But God has given the power of the gospel, especially expressed, like the power of the gospel that God has given to the church is expressed in resurrected hearts and changed lives.

Again, as he says here, not in senseless babbling or secret knowledge.

Just look at the end of verse 20 again.

He says, avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it, some have swerved from the faith.

Listen, the gospel is powerful.

The problem is we undervalue the miracle of new birth and we overvalue the sensational.

We undervalue the true spiritual miracle that God is doing day in and day out.

And we overvalue the sensational, the things that on the surface appear glittery and powerful and unique.

Ephesians 2, 1-7 says, Paul says here, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

You were dead.

You.

You.

You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The fact that you desire to be here with God's people, hearing God's word, is nothing short of a miracle.

The fact that you would find Jesus and his death and resurrection attractive at all is a miracle.

And God's still doing it.

God's still doing it.

People that wanted nothing to do with God and his word and his people now want to know him and they want to hear more about him from his word with his people.

That's incredible.

I mean, that's an incredible work of God.

Do you know how to change hearts and minds?

Parents, you know how to change your kids' hearts and minds?

I don't.

If you know, please tell me.

I have no idea.

God does, right?

All I can do is expose them to the glory of God, pray for them every day, and try to live the best I can in the Spirit's power to model that for them, right?

Because God is the one that does the miracle of new birth.

And listen, I'm not encouraging you to evangelize.

This may sound bad because...

Well, I'm just gonna say it.

It wasn't in the notes.

I'm not encouraging you to evangelize necessarily this morning because people without Christ are on their way to hell, right?

To eternal damnation.

That is a reason.

But if the only reason you're evangelizing is out of pity and out of compassion to other people, it's gonna run out, right?

We're too selfish, right?

We're too self-absorbed.

I'm encouraging you to evangelize this morning

Kind of for selfish reasons, right?

Because you want to see the power of God at work, right?

And it's difficult to see it in us.

And I don't know if you've shared the gospel with somebody and they've come to know the Lord like right in front of you and the lights have gone on.

Maybe it's over a week or two and the lights have gone on and they've seen how beautiful and attractive Jesus is and God is right in front of you and to see the power of God at work in their life to change their heart and their mind.

It's incredible, right?

It's incredible.

And all you can do is like drop to your knees and give God glory, right?

And for his work in their lives.

That's one of the reasons you should evangelize.

Yes, we should care about other people, right?

And we should care about where they're going.

I think we hear that sermon a lot.

I'm not gonna give that sermon to you this morning.

I'm saying you need to share the gospel with other people so that you can see this power of the gospel, the power of God in the gospel, at work in other people's lives.

Without it, you're going to be bored.

Without it, you're going to look to fill that boredom.

that, that lack of satisfaction, that hole in your life with other stuff.

I think one of the reasons that we're given to a whole slew of vices and sins is because we're not being obedient.

We're not in all of the gospel anymore.

And we don't think it's going to work when we, when we share it with other people.

And we haven't seen it at work in other people's lives in a long time.

I would encourage you, keep throwing it out there.

Sow the seed and watch God work and be in awe and amazed at his power to change hearts and minds.

All right, that was my soapbox.

And probably not articulated as clearly and as succinctly as it should be, but I had to give it to you this morning.

Let me get back in my notes.

Yeah, like I said, God's still doing it, right?

God's still doing it.

And when we see it, it's hard not to be in awe of it and believe it.

When we haven't seen it in a while, sometimes we start to feel like maybe he's not saving people anymore, but he is.

So don't get caught up.

Don't get enamored with other churches' expressions of the Spirit's power, you know, babbling and kind of rolling on the floor and all that nonsense.

Don't get caught up in slick presentations and the presence of cool, affluent, and influential people.

Find a church that jealously guards the gospel and where you can see the life-changing power of the gospel at work.

And by God's grace...

let's be that church, right?

Let's be a church that guards the gospel, like just doesn't get in the way, preaches the gospel, tries not to mess it up, and where we can see the life-changing power of the gospel at work.

Let's do good, being rich in good works, generous and ready to share because Christ has shared so much with us.

where he's given us his life.

He's called us out of the grave that we were in and brought us into glorious fellowship with the Father who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

That's a God worth holding on to.

I want to know his vision and his plans for my life, right?

I want to know his vision and his plans for our church.

You know, forget my ideas, forget your ideas.

What does he want for you and your life?

What does he want for us as a church?

And let's go and learn what that means.

And hopefully, prayerfully, we have seen a little bit of what that means in 1 Timothy.

That's the whole point of the book.

What is God's vision?

What is God's plan for the church, for us?

May we continue to remember it, be faithful to it, and may we continue to see God's glory at work in and through us this next year.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we want to see and experience more of you.

Lord,

You have worked, if our faith and hope is in you, the miracle of new birth in us.

And Lord, we just ask that you would fan that flame now and give us a desire to share that gift, to share your grace and your mercy with others.

Lord, would you give us a desire to be your hands and your feet in each other's lives?

to be used by you to expand that gift of grace and mercy in our own hearts and lives so that we can continue to grow and take steps forward in being able to say with 100%, Lord, that you are our life and our all.

And Lord, may we bear fruit to our community.

May we be generous.

May we communicate to others that our hope is in you, not in our own wealth and accumulation of things.

And Lord, would you help us to enjoy just all of the good things that you've given us properly along the way.

Lord, we want to be a people that are marked by a serious and a sober joy.

Serious because the stakes are high.

Eternity.

There are no stakes higher than eternity, Lord.

But full of joy knowing that you are a loving, all-powerful God who has a rescue plan set for his people and his church that will not fail.

So Lord, take us

mold us, shape us, and keep us faithfully walking with you, not getting in the way of the gospel, but, Lord, being changed and transformed by it one step at a time together.

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.