

## **We're rich!**

1 Timothy 6:6-19

September 26, 2010

*Well, religion does make us very rich ...*

There you go! Did you hear that? This is great news! Religion makes us rich. Very rich!

That's news we need to spread, don't you think? If we got this news out, all over the city, we'd have so many folks coming here to church, we wouldn't know what to do with them all. We'd probably have to have two services every Sunday, maybe three, because everybody will want to come here, for the same reason you'll want to keep coming here -- religion makes us rich!

We'll have lots of people, lots and lots of people, a thousand members, maybe two thousands members. They'll add their wealth to the wealth we already have, and we'll have so much money, we'll be able to do whatever we want.

We can build that atrium we've always wanted, a beautiful gathering space between the sanctuary and the chapel. We'll televise our services, every Sunday, and the people who watch will send us money too because they will want to keep hearing how religion makes us rich. Why, we'll be just like Jim and Tammy Faye!

That's what it says! Right here in the Bible ...

*Religion does make us very rich ... if we are satisfied with what we have.*

If we are satisfied with what we have? That doesn't make sense. We are rich, if we are satisfied with what we have? But if we are dissatisfied with what we have, we are poor?

Does that make sense to you?

If you are satisfied, you are rich ... You are rich because you are satisfied, because you have enough, because you have all you need. But if you are dissatisfied, you are poor ... poor because you are always unsatisfied, because you never have enough. When what you want is more, then nothing is ever enough, because what you want ... is more!

Oh ...

*What did we bring into the world? Nothing! What can we take out of the world? Nothing! So then, if we have food and clothes, that should be enough for us.*

How much is enough? How much is enough for you?

How many pairs of shoes do you have? If you had half as many pairs of shoes as you have now, would that be enough?

How many shirts do you have? If you had half as many shirts as you have now, would that be enough?

If you lived in a house or an apartment that was half the size of the house or apartment you now live in, would that be enough? It is enough ... if you are satisfied with what you have.

*But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and are caught in the trap of many foolish and harmful desires, which pull them down to ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a source of all kinds of evil.*

The love of money is a source of all kinds of evil. Like what? What kinds of evil derive from a love of money? (Greed, selfishness, exploitation, ...) Two evils in particular result from a love of money ...

We give time and energy and attention to the things we love, so when we love money, other things, other important things, are neglected. When we love money we love God less, and that is evil. When we love money, we love our neighbor less, and that is evil. When we love money, we fail to notice what is needed by the people around us and we fail to notice what is needed by the earth that sustains us, and that is evil.

The second great evil to which the love of money leads is pride. Isn't it true, that when you love money, you don't really want the money for the things it can get you? You want the money to have the money! Because you love the money. Because you love the sense of power having it gives you. Because you love the sense of self-sufficiency, the sense of being in control, it gives you. Because you love the sense of being special, the sense of being set apart from other people, the sense of being above other people.

When you love money, you think money makes you different. You think money makes you special. You think money puts you in a different category from the common people, and that is evil.

*Some have been so eager to have it that they have wandered away from the faith and have broken their hearts with many sorrows.*

*But you, man of God, avoid all these things. Strive for righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.*

Strive for righteousness. Do the right thing, whether it is easy or hard, whether it benefits you or doesn't benefit you, whether other people support you in doing it or whether you have to go it alone.

Strive for godliness. Pay attention to the things that matter, to the God you provides for you, to Jesus who directs you, to Spirit of God who shows himself in the people around you.

Strive for faith. Put your trust in God, not in your own wisdom or strength or wealth.

Strive for love. Love God with all your heart, with everything you have and everything you are, and love your neighbor -- you know who your neighbor is. Look out for your neighbor's interests, just the way you look out for your own interests.

Strive for endurance. Don't give up. Don't give up because it isn't working. Don't give up because people don't understand. Don't give up because you're tired. Hang in there with God because God is hanging in there with you!

And strive for gentleness. Treat people with gentleness. Treat the earth with gentleness.

*Run your best in the race of faith, and win eternal life for yourself; for it was to this life that God called you when you firmly professed your faith before many witnesses. Before God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus, who firmly professed his faith before Pontius Pilate, I command you to obey your orders and keep them faithfully until the Day when our Lord Jesus Christ will appear. His appearing will be brought about at the right time by God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He alone is immortal; he lives in the light that no one can approach. No one has ever seen him; no one can ever see him. To him be honor and eternal power! Amen.*

Amen? Amen! Honor belongs to God! Power belongs to God!

*Command those who are rich in the things of this life ...*

That's us! We are rich in the things of this life, everyone of us. So listen carefully. These commands are for us!

*Command those who are rich in the things of this life not to be proud, but to place their hope, not in such an uncertain thing as riches, but in God, who generously gives us everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share with others. In this way they will store up for themselves a treasure which will be a solid foundation for the future. And then they will be able to win the life which is true life.*

Don't be proud. Don't try to convince yourself that you are something you are not. Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are the master of your own fate. Don't congratulate yourself for what you have.

What did we bring into the world? Nothing! What can we take out of the world? Nothing! If you have something, be thankful. If you have enough, be thankful. If you have more than enough, be thankful. But don't be proud.

Place your hope in God. It is God who provides for you. It is God who will provide for you -- generously, for your enjoyment! If you are apprehensive, if you are anxious, if you are worried about not having enough, you have placed your hope in the wrong place. You might fail, but God will not fail you.

And do good. Be rich in good works. Be generous and ready to share. You can certainly afford to be generous. We can all afford to be generous, because we're rich! Religion does make us very rich!

Look around you!

See these people who love you, these people who care about what happens to you, these people who have your back, these people who laugh with you and cry with you, these people who pray for you?

We're rich!

Look around you!

See this book? This book filled with stories of people like you and me, people who experienced the patient and persistent and insistent and tireless love of God?

See this book? This book filled with songs, songs that may thrill us or soothe us or make us feel close to each other or make us feel close to God?

See these musicians who with sounds and words speak to us in ways beyond words and beyond sound?

We're rich!

Look around you!

See that cross? The cross that reminds us of the deep, deep love of Jesus? The cross that reminds us that life, true life, is won for us already by Jesus' death for us? The cross that reminds us of the astonishing grace of God that never gives up on us? The cross that humbles us, and, at the same time, lifts us up, and, at the same time, shows us the way?

We're rich!

We're rich! This is great news, news we need to spread. If we got this news out, all over the city ...