

## Title: “Power of Christian Community”

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1 Timothy 6: 19

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**Service Readings:** Amos 6:1-7, 1 Timothy 6:6-19, Luke 16:19-31

*Living counter-cultural in this world is a powerful way that the Christian Community can reach the lost.*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Poor Timothy. This is his first call out of Seminary and Paul is sending him to a congregation that is experiencing some problems. Last week we read about a couple people that Paul had “handed over to Satan” and this week it seems that there are even more problems to be sorted out. The entire letter is like a manual for this church and was written to help Timothy navigate some of these problems and keep the church moving in the right direction.

Last week we focused on the power of prayer. This week we look at the power of the Christian community. Last week we talked about bold, powerful prayers to the Father concerning those who are lost and have turned their backs on the savior. Today we turn our attention to those who are not necessarily lost but have seemingly become distracted by earthly wealth. Paul begins this portion of the letter by describing those who are at risk of falling away from Jesus because of their love and pursuit of money. He warns them in this way:

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

but then he turns his attention to Christians who are already wealthy. He has a message for them, starting in verse 17:

<sup>17</sup> As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. <sup>18</sup> They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, <sup>19</sup> 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.

At first read, this sounds like Timothy is to teach each member of his flock how to use the gifts of wealth to glorify God, and this is very true. But I think Paul’s warning extends beyond just the individual and his or her actions. Recall that this entire letter was written to help Timothy serve this congregation as a whole and the approach that Paul was advocating for was to instill in them a sense of unity, a sense that they were one body in Jesus and that this body was being led by the

head, Christ himself. And so, if Timothy was to install this culture within this congregation, he needed to understand what it was and how it was supposed to function. And so, when we view this passage through this lens, we understand how it becomes a charge to the congregation as a whole just as much as it becomes a charge to each individual member.

Paul often speaks of the church as a body and in this analogy the church body, just like any physical body, is to follow and serve the head. And what the head wants, the body should work towards achieving. And so, to understand the function of the church, one must first understand the desire of the head. And this... brings us full circle to last week's passage where Paul tells us exactly what Jesus wants. He "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." And so, this is what we are to do with every gift that God has granted to us, even our wealth. And we are to do it as one body.

And so in this passage, Paul instructs Timothy to charge the congregation to do good works, to be generous, and to share. He is telling them to be godly – to live a life modeled after Jesus. Each individual contributing their individual resources and talents but doing so as part of the whole so as to fulfill the desire of the head.

Here's what I mean. Think back to Acts chapter two and how it describes the early church. They gave to those in need, they sold their possessions, they cared for the poor. They did all these things without worry or care of the health of the church body for they knew by faith that if they, the body of Christ acted like the body of Christ, then Jesus, the head of that body, would ensure their health and supply all of their needs.

Now, this counter-cultural way of living and thinking was not born from the idea of Paul or even the idea of man. It came from God, himself. Reflect on the plan of salvation that God enacted after the fall. Reflect on the earthly ministry of Jesus and how he turned the understanding of Scripture, and even the understanding of the world upside down. Consider for a moment how counter-cultural it was for the Father to sacrifice his own son to save a creation that despised him. This is the well from which Paul draws his advice. He tells Timothy to instill in the congregation a counter-culture way of living. Last week the focus was to pray for those who have turned their backs on God, who shun and even attack the Christian church. This week the focus is to use our wealth in a way that might lead all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth. This is counter-cultural. It might even be called "Jesus-cultural." But whatever it is called, the charge is the same.

Look upon the cross and see how God spent his precious treasures. He spent all so that he might save all. How can we not want to join with him and share this message with the world? How can we not want to be a part of something so counter-worldly that our very efforts point people to Jesus?

And so Paul is speaking to us this morning, as well. He is charging us

not to be haughty, nor to set [our] hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. <sup>18</sup> [We] are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ...

And we are to do it because Jesus first did it for each one of us. And our reward? It is even greater than we can imagine for it is not storehouses of gold but an eternal life where we live rich in the

presence of God in his kingdom. This is the life we long for and is a life that we will one day experience. But today we live in the *promise* of that reality. *But* it is a promise that we place all our hope in for we know that the reality is most certainly true.

So let us live today as a church body that is counter-cultural. Let us live as a body that the world calls "Jesus-cultural." Let us respond to the work of Jesus by being a body that devotes all its earthly resources to the desires of the head. Together let us give our money, our time, and our talents. Let us hold nothing back. The world may look upon us as crazy, but if we do it right, the world will look upon us. And with their attention, we can tell them about our savior, Jesus Christ. Are you in?

Please pray with me.

Lord Jesus,

We pray that this body will be invigorated and strengthened to boldly live a life that is counter-cultural but a powerful witness to you. We pray that we be motivated to use the talents and resources that you have provided us to realize your desires instead of our own.

Amen.