

## Honoring the Lord in the Blessed Seasons of Life 1 Timothy 6:17-19

### Outline:

Scripture Reading: Rev. 3:14-22

Main Idea: We need to be intentional about what we do in times of blessing

Intro

1) We have been blessed

2) For a purpose

3) That leads to amazing results

Application:

### Scripture Reading:

Revelation 3: 14-22 -- 14 "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

15 "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. 21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

### Intro:

Listen carefully because I am going to ask this question a little differently. Does anyone in here hate running? Me too! However, I do it from time to time because I know that I should to maintain good cardiovascular health. I have not run a marathon, nor do intend to, but I have run a long enough distance to get the analogy the Apostle Paul uses a few time comparing the Christian life to a distance run. The longest run I have done was about 5 years ago when I completed a Tough Mudder. It was a difficult race of about 12 miles with 10-15 obstacles along the way. I remember experiencing some things during the training and running of the race that taught me some valuable lessons about running the race of life. There

was a time in life where I would treat life as a sprint, but I have learned that it's a marathon. We have to pace ourselves, think long term, prepare appropriately, there are highs and lows, hills and flat spots.

Around here we talk a lot about the hills within a run, the difficult times in life and rightfully so. Life is full of trials, difficulties, and challenges. This is one of the reasons we have the counseling ministry and are committed to equipping people to help others walk through the valleys of life. I appreciate this about our church. America is filled with churches that are not willing to address the realness of life. They are only there to help the people feel good and to give them some motivational speech that will help them get through the next week. They refuse to talk about the reality of life in a fallen world. Therefore, they are not able to give their people tangible, helpful, Biblical advice on walking through these trials. Some of you are walking through some real, difficult times right now. I am praying for you, and there are people who would love to help walk through them with you. That is one of the amazing things about being part of the Body of Christ!

Sidenote: please take advantage of our counseling ministry. I know our counseling team spends a lot of time with those in the community, but I know that working with people from WBC is something they have a heart and passion for as well. Also, don't think that you have to be at a desperate situation in order to utilize the counseling ministry. They would love to talk to you in order to give you Godly, Biblical teaching to hopefully prevent it from getting to the desperate point.

However, with all of this talk about trials, I have walked out of a service questioning if I am doing something wrong because I have not going through a great trial? In order to be a doing the Christian life correctly, do we have to be poor, persecuted, and miserable. The answer is of course not. As I have thought about this, I was reminded about the passage is Ecclesiastes 3 that talks about the seasons of life. In life we will be facing trials, and the Lord has blessed us with good times as well. The flat spots in the race of life. We experience times when life feels monotonous and ordinary. In a race there are also those slight down hills or that endorphin rush that is called a runner's high. There are times that we experience the blessing and good gifts of the Lord. Now we are still running this whole time. Which means we are not sitting out are resting. While running the race, there is no sitting out, so we are focused, working hard, refueling, experience soreness, and nagging aches and pains. However, those things do not cause us to break stride. Have any of you been in that spot in life? The question is what do we do in those times? That is exactly what I would like to talk about to day.

In order to help us think about how to handle these seasons of life, we are going to look at 1 Timothy 6:17-19. Please turn in your Bibles to this passage. While you are turning let me take a minute to remind you of some key themes in 1 Timothy. This letter was written by the Apostle Paul to his son in the faith, Timothy. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus in order to pastor the church in that city. In this letter Paul is giving Timothy some practical advice about shepherding a church. He warns him of false teaching, he gives instruction of roles and qualifications within the church, and he also gives some teaching on the practical affect the gospel has on those who believe. We are going to look at one passage in the section that gives some instruction for the man of God. Paul has just finished giving a warning about the love and pursuit of money. However, he didn't want the church to think that wealth or having riches is a sin, the pursuit of it is (that's another lesson for another time), he gives the following instruction for Timothy to teach his congregation.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 - 17 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. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 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.

In this passage we can see that 1) we have been blessed 2) for a purpose 3) that leads to amazing results. So, let's dig in a take a look!

### **1) We have been blessed (vs 17a)**

"The rich in this present age". Right away we can see that Paul wants Timothy to instruct those who are wealthy in this life. They have been able to accumulate a great deal of material possessions. The phrase "present age" is written to contrast the time to come that is referenced in vs. 15-16. Evidently there were people in the church of Ephesus who had been able to accumulate a great amount of wealth. Ephesus, which was in modern day Turkey, was a major coastal trade city. It gained prominence during the Greek empire, and then was a prize of the Roman empire as well. Much of the trade going to Asia and India came through the city of Ephesus. So, you can imagine that some of these wealthy traders have now come to know Christ as their savior. They are wrestling with what they should do with this money that the Lord has given them. Especially, since some of the money may not have been gained through honest and upright business practices.

This is a fair question, and I commend the people for seeking guidance in this area. Now some of you may be nice for them, but I don't have to worry about asking this question in my life. This may be true in some situations; however, let me take a minute to prob that thought and try to expand your thinking in this area.

The first thing I would ask is that you consider wealth not from an American perspective, but from a world perspective. We have such a skewed view of this. We struggle to imagine the poverty around the world. The Daily Mail has this article to help up put this into perspective, "America IS the 1%: You need just \$34,000 annual income to be in the global elite... and HALF the world's richest people live in the U.S.". Now, I know that some of you in in here do not make \$34,000 a year. We have a group of high school and college students who are sitting right here that haven't even started making money yet. They are still in college and statistics will tell us that you yearly income is in the negatives. Depending on what study you look at the world median income per person is \$10,000. If someone works 25 hours a week making \$8 a hour, they will make \$10,000 a year. This will put you in the middle of the road of wealth in the world.

Now I know that in the United States one cannot survive on that due to the cost of living, and that the distribution of wealth is not even. Believe me I do not want to get into the political debate of wealth distribution in this country. I just wanted to pull back the lens and give a different perspective. It is true that many of us, if not all, would not be considered wealthy from the perspective of the world we live in; however, we have to keep in mind that our perspective of wealth is different. It is skewed from much of the world.

The second thought I have in this area is, what blessings do we have as a blessing we have from living in a wealthy nation. I am thinking about time. How many of us get to enjoy a weekend of not working because we make enough throughout the week to get us through the weekend. How many of can go to Kroger to get our food instead of having to grow it or find another way to provide it ourselves. Many have gardens, but if there is a drought or disease, we will not go hungry. I enjoy hunting, but if I don't get anything, my family will still be able to each. Speaking of gardening and hunting, what about hobbies. We have time and discretionary income to have hobbies. Things we enjoy, and help us to relax and have good fellowship (if that is what you want. Some may have hobbies that get them away from people). I am thinking about the information we have available to us. Many of us have mini computers in our pockets at all times that can connect us to the world

of information around us in an instant. This allows us to enjoy certain types of entertainment, learn about things some people have never thought about, and research more ways to gain wealth. One thing that marks the millennial (and younger) worker, is that statistics will tell us that the majority of us have some sort of side hustle. We are able to generate more income through our hobbies and other interest in ways that the older generations couldn't because of the environment and resources around them. I am thinking about the access to the Bible and books that help us in our walk with the Lord. All of us have our own copy of God's word, and many of us have several different translations of the Bible. We have access to free public libraries where we can check out or download books that we don't have in our personal libraries at home. Even while studying for this sermon I used a software that allowed me access to countless books and resources. There are pastors around the world who treasure the one copy of the Scriptures that someone gave them (or was discarded due because one of us got a new one that was nicer). Brothers and sisters we have no excuse not to know the Word of God. We have no excuse. I am thinking about the fact that we are sitting here in a building worshiping our Savior and proclaiming his truth without fear of police coming in to arrest, torture, or kill us. I wonder what the church in China would think about the what we are doing here as they meet regularly for underground services. I wonder how our Middle Eastern brothers and sister would respond to this type of gathering in such a public place. I could go on and on, but I hope are starting to get the picture that we living in a blessed and profitable time and place.

**Transitions:** This does not guarantee us to not have any troubles, trials, or go through dark valleys, but this allow us to experience the extreme blessing of the Lord. The questions is what do we do with this blessing? How do we respond in times when things are going well? That's exactly what Paul addresses next. He is tells us to not do two things and to do two things.

## **2) For a purpose (vs. 17b-18)**

### **2 dangers:**

The first instruction Paul gives in regard to this blessing a negative. He tell Timothy to instruct those in his congregation to not be "haughty". This is not a word we hear too often. This is more that just proud, but it refers to someone who is arrogant, almost obnoxious about their wealth. Arrogant people are hard to be around. They are alway concerned about themselves and never concerned about others. Why is this command something important to remember? Verse 17 reminds us that it is "God who provides" the return, the wealth, the blessing. The only reason someone can be arrogant about their wealth is because they believe

they gained it as a result of their own doing. This is simply not true. We serve a sovereign God who is give generously as he see fits. But Matt, I was the one who negotiated that deal, invested that money, or worked hard to build that savings account. Yes, I agree with you, and I commend you for being wise. Who gave you that wisdom and insight? Who saw fit to not allow any financial catastrophe in your life to take up that savings account? You see to take the credit for that wealth is to assume that you have total control. The fact is there was and is so much out of our control. All we can do is be faithful and trust the Lord will take care of our needs. There are probably others out there working just as hard, make other wise decision, and remaining faithful without seeing the material return on investment. This is due to circumstances out of their control.

We are so good at hiding our pride in religious clothes. The other thing we need to remember is this blessing is not a result of "living right" or doing things the "right way". When we keep the mind set that blessings as the reward or result of "doing christianity" the right way, we are believing a false gospel. This is the prosperity gospel that has worked its way into churches everywhere. We assume that our blessing is a direct result of doing the right things. The problem with this theology is it doesn't work. People doing things against the Lord's ways are still gaining material rewards, and faithful servants of the Lord are suffering greatly. This does not fit with this theological system, and it really sets people up for discouragement and false hope. This line of thinking is all over the religious industry. We see it in books, songs, and other merchandise. We need to continue to grow in our ability to identify it and call it out. The bottom line is this theology in more focused on the gifts rather than the giver. We must keep our focus on the Lord and to serve Him faithfully. He will bless those he chooses to bless. Our reward for the faithful service will be in the age to come, but more about that later.

The second warning is to not put our hope, trust, faith in the wealth we have received. We know this to be true. We have been through a recession. We live in an area that is still feeling the effects of the industries closing down. We know this is an uncertain, shakey, untrustworthy thing in which to build our foundation; however, we still do it. Now, yes, I agree we need to be good stewards that plan, and save, but there is a difference between being wise with our wealth and depending on our wealth. How do you know which side of this line you are on? Are you being a good seward or being dependant. It takes some careful evaluation. You need to look at your priorities. How do you spend your discretionary time? Are you leaving the important things (family, church, ministry) to do more work, or are

you keeping things in the proper balance? When things start to look a little down, how does that affect your giving to the church and other ministries? When you get done checking the market numbers for the day, does it ruin your mood the rest of the day? Do you find yourself worrying about how much is coming in versus trusting in the Lord's goodness? Do you view your status through the lens of the riches the Lord has given you? Unfortunately, there is not an easy formula for this answer. This is something that you and the Lord must work through together. This is something that can't be fixed by changing behaviours, but rather changing your heart.

## **2 Instructions:**

Now Paul gives us two things we should do with the blessings of life. The first is to enjoy it! When we take the blessings of the Lord and experience them in the right context and priorities, He receives the Glory! Sometimes I hear about the blessing people have received and it sounds more like a burden than a blessing. When I hear people talking about the blessing, I can't help but think of that person who is complaining about receiving a large sum of money because it is in \$100s instead of \$20s. Not to mention the taxes they are going to have to pay now. We have all talked to that person...we have all been that person. I truly believe that most believers are not miserable and really complaining; however, they are trying to come across as humble. This is false humility at best, and we are robbing the Lord of the honor and glory He deserves. It is always interesting to me when people are really shy about the vacations they are taking, won't talk about the success they have been granted at work, or get awkward about sharing how the Lord has been working through them lately. Yes, we should not be boastful (we have already covered that), but in the context of friend and in the church family, we can and should give God praise and rejoice together. We need to enjoy the blessings of the Lord. Camp story and reaction...Colton yard sale...Gerry's prayer for Josiah.

In vs 18 we see the other instruction on what to do with this wealth. We should be doing good. We need to be using the blessing of the Lord to see others blessed. When we gain this wealth of money, time, knowledge, etc the temptation we have is to use it for ourselves. We become more and more introspective, and concerned about how we can use this blessing for ourselves and ourselves alone. "I have worked hard for this money, I am not going to share." "This is my day off. I am not going to spend it doing something for someone else." "I had to learn the hard way! It will be good for him to learn it that way too." Have you heard anyone say these things? The Lord wants us to get our eyes off of ourselves and use our abundance to do what is good. Galatians 6:9-10 states, "And let us not grow weary

of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. 10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Have any of you grown tired of doing good?

Notice the language Paul uses in verse 18, "They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share". Instead of riches on earth being our focus, rather we need to be rich in good works. Our good works should not be done as a minimum thing to cross off a list, but rather seen in abundance and done generously, freely. This should be a way of life. However, this doesn't just happen organically. Notice the end of this verse. We need to be "ready to share." This takes some withitness, intentionality, and planning. We need to take the time to notice those who could use a blessing. This may be hard in our fast paced world that requires us to keep our list and to move from one task to the next. How many times do we go throughout the day completely oblivious of the divine opportunities around us? Then we need to plan. This means you and your spouse need to talk about when and how much to give. When you can have people over for a fellowship dinner. This may mean you keep cash on you more often just incase. It could possibly mean that you schedule some extra time between appointments, just in case. We need to organize our lives in ways that it will seem organic to do good, but really it is something that you planned on and were anticipating for awhile.

Another side note on this point, there are people around who want to do good, but in our pride we won't let them. When I was at Cedarville, I worked in the fitness center. One afternoon I was working with Mr. Wheeler. He is a retired pastor who worked in the fitness center, and we often worked together. This particular afternoon he asked me about my lunch, and as a poor college student living off campus, I simply told him that lunch was not going to happen today. I would eat something when I got back to the apartment later that evening. He then proceeded to give me a couple dollars and told me to go get a sandwich. I tried to refuse the money in part because I didn't tell him that to get something, and in part because of my pride. He then looked me in the eye and say, "listen there is the gift of giving and the gift of receiving. If you will not receive, then you are robbing the person the opportunity to use their gift of giving." This is so true! Besides, there is going to be times in life when you have the opportunity to give, and there will be times when we need to receive. In either case it is the Lord at work, and the beauty of the church being in community.



**Transition:** Brothers and sisters may we be marked as people who do good. Not to get anything in return (that a business transaction), but rather just because we have been truly blessed and want to extend that blessing to others. When we do it this way, the return is greater than any treasure or riches we can gain here on earth!

### **3) That leads to amazing results**

Verse 19 states, "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." When we are using the riches we receive from the Lord, we are able to receive eternal returns on our investment. The work future here is translated as "coming age" in the NIV. Paul is drawing the reader's attention away from the present age in verse 17 to the coming at in verse 19. He is helping us see that we need to be thinking not in terms of earthly wealth, but rather in rather on things from above. John MacArthur puts it this way, ""storing up" can be translated "assuming treasure" while "foundation" can refer to to a fund. The idea is that the rich in this world should be concerned with receiving a return on their earthly investment. Those who make eternal investments will be content to receive their dividends in heaven." It is amazing to how our decisions and priorities change when we are walking in the shadow of the cross with our eyes focused on the eternal, meaning the person of the eternal, Christ.

Notice the benefit of this perspective. We do not have to depend on the uncertainty of early possessions, but rather we can "take hold" of the certainty of Christ. The phrase "take hold" is the word to experience. We don't have to try to keep the earthly treasures around us; that is a lot of work and ultimately unrewarding. Instead we can experience the endless joy, satisfaction, and life of living for eternity. This is where true life is found. We must be willing to allow our dividends be paid in eternity rather than on earth if we are going to truly experience the abundant life Christ promised.

You have heard it said that it is better to live for something bigger than yourself. That only works when the thing bigger than yourself is sure and life giving. If it is not those two things then it is still deficient. There are many people, even churches, living for a cause. This is ok; however, we have the opportunity to live for the Saviour, and that is where true meaning, purpose, and life is found. Now that is something to invest our blessings into!

I am reminded of the Jim Elliot Quote, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose"

Brothers and sisters, don't feel guilty if you are in a good spot right now. Don't go looking for the next trial. Rather use this time of blessing to show the love and glory of Christ to a hurting world around you and to bless the body of Christ.

### **Application:**

#### 1) Maintain the rhythms of grace

What do I mean by rhythms of grace? Some may say spiritual disciplines. Whatever you call them it is the things we keep in our life to help keep our focus on Christ and walk in step with the Spirit. Our daily Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, fellowship, ministry, etc. This may seem like an odd application for this message, but this is vital. How did the church in Ephesus do in listening to this command? I started the service off by reading the letter to the church in Laodicea, who allowed their wealth to cause them to become lukewarm, lazy, and not useful for the Kingdom. The church in Ephesus had the opposite problem. Revelation 2:2-5 says, "2 "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent." You see to simply do good works without the love of and for Christ is to do them for selfish reasons. We need to be constantly reminded this is not about religious duty, but rather love for the person of Christ. It is through His love those of us who have been redeemed by the work of Christ on the cross, and we are called to share that love with others regardless of our situations. The rhythms of grace are not a religious duty to earn easy days, but, rather a way to experience a deepening of our relationship with Christ. A byproduct of that relationship is the privilege to do good works that will bring Him honor and glory.

#### 2) Enjoy the blessings of the Lord...by using them to do good works.