

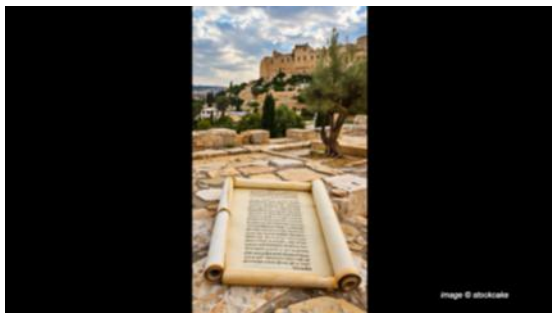
Life That Really Is Life

Bible reference for sermon text: 1 Timothy 6:6–19

¹⁷ As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches but rather on God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

Grace, peace and mercy are ours through the triune God, who gives life freely and sustains us by grace. Amen.

Last week in Pastor Nev's sermon we heard about Paul's response to the problem of false teaching and speculation in Ephesus. He told the young Pastor Timothy and his people to look to Christ for the gospel, for truth and for life.



In today's reading, we again hear the words of Paul to his younger friend and co-worker in the faith. In this final section of Paul's first letter to Timothy, we can see the mentoring, caring concern that Paul has for him. Paul was older. He had walked many hard roads—he had been shipwrecked, imprisoned, betrayed, beaten, and opposed. But he had

also seen God's power and love at work—miracles, conversions, churches planted, friendships formed.

Timothy, on the other hand, was younger, still learning, still growing, and still carrying the heavy responsibility of leading a community of faith. Imagine Paul speaking to him like a loving father or mentor, not scolding him, but encouraging him.

He says: "Take hold of the eternal life... take hold of the life that really is life." These are not words of pressure or burden. They are words of gift and promise. Paul is saying: "Timothy, God has already given you life in Christ. Don't let it slip through your fingers. Hold onto it. Live into it." And that is the same word spoken to us today.

Take hold of the eternal life...
...take hold of the life that really is life.

When we hear the phrase “eternal life,” our minds often jump straight to heaven—something waiting for us after death. But Paul’s language is urgent and present. The Greek word here means “to grasp, to seize, to hold tight.”

Eternal life is not just something far off. It is something God gives us here and now in Christ. It is life with God that has already begun - eternity is now. Jesus brings God’s eternal love and presence into our daily lives, in every moment. So when Paul tells Timothy to take hold of eternal life, he is not telling him to dream of some far-off day. He is urging him to live differently today. To let God’s grace shape how he sees the world, how he treats people, how he spends his time and energy. This is not about escaping the world, but about being transformed within it.

That’s why Paul also says, “take hold of the life that really is life.” Isn’t that a powerful phrase? The life that really is life. By saying that, Paul hints that there are other kinds of life that only look like life but are really empty.



He warns Timothy about the danger of chasing wealth and clinging to money. Paul is not condemning money itself—he knows money is a tool, something we need to live.

But when money becomes the thing we cling to, when our hearts revolve around it, then it becomes a false god.

He even calls it a root of all kinds of evil. And don’t we see this still today? Human lives are reduced to numbers, labour, or profit. Human trafficking and exploitation continue to bring billions into greedy hands while destroying lives. This is not life at all—it is death in disguise. Paul is right: the love of money is a dangerous trap. It promises life, but it delivers emptiness.

But there is another way. When we live generously, when we share what we have, when we affirm the God-given worth of our neighbours, then we step into true life—the life that really is life. Luther once said that whatever your heart clings to, that is your god. If our hearts cling to wealth, wealth becomes our idol. But if our hearts cling to Christ, then generosity, kindness, and love flow naturally out of us, as gifts of grace. Life becomes rich, not because of what we own, but because of what we share.

To remind Timothy of this, Paul points him back to his “good confession” before many witnesses. Most likely, Paul is speaking of Timothy’s baptism. In baptism, Timothy was named God’s beloved child—just as Jesus was named beloved at the Jordan River.



And the same is true for us. In baptism, God has already said to each of us: “You are mine. You belong to me. You are my beloved child.” That is not something we have to earn. It is not something we can lose. It is a promise sealed by God’s grace. And because of that promise, we are free. Free from fear. Free from chasing worth in the wrong places. Free to live with courage, generosity, and hope.

That’s why Paul tells Timothy to “fight the good fight of the faith.” Not because Timothy has to earn God’s love, but because faith is not always easy. The phrase Paul uses suggests an athletic contest, a race, or a struggle that takes training and endurance. Faith is not just something in our heads. It is something lived with our hearts, bodies, and daily actions. It is choosing, again and again, to trust God in a world full of distractions. But here’s the comfort: we are not fighting to win salvation. Christ has already won the victory over sin and death.

Our fight is simply to live in that victory, to resist despair and idolatry, to keep choosing love, gentleness, and endurance when it would be easier to give up or give in.



There is great gain in godliness
combined with contentment

This connects with what Paul says about contentment. He writes, “There is great gain in godliness combined with contentment.” Godliness here can be understood as living the best version of me in Christ.

Contentment here does not mean we never desire anything or that we must deny our needs. It means trusting that God provides, that Christ is enough.

We came into the world with nothing, and we will leave with nothing. Everything in between is a gift. To live with contentment is to pay attention to the daily grace God gives—bread for today, community around us, the Spirit’s presence in our lives. This is contentment: not the absence of struggle, but trust that God is with us in the struggle.

When we live in that trust, generosity becomes our natural response. Paul says that those who are rich are not condemned, but called. They are to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share.

Why? Because in giving, they take hold of the life that really is life. And this is not just about the wealthy. All of us are called to generosity.

Not because it earns us God’s favour, but because God has already given us everything in Christ. When we give, when we share, when we live for others, we are not losing life—we are finding it. Generosity is not loss. It is participation in God’s abundance. It is living extravagantly in love. In being generous to others we reflect the grace of God that we already know for ourselves.

So today, hear Paul's words not as a heavy burden, but as a loving encouragement. He is saying to Timothy, and to us:

Do not be distracted by the glitter of the world.
God, who gives life to all things,
is richer than all riches.
Take hold of eternal life,
the life already given to you in Christ.
Take hold of the life that really is life.

“Do not be distracted by the glitter of the world. God, who gives life to all things, is richer than all riches. Take hold of eternal life, the life already given to you in Christ.

Take hold of the life that really is life.” That promise is ours. We are not asked to earn it. It

is already ours, through baptism, through grace, through Christ's death and resurrection. And because of that, we are free to live it out—with faith, with courage, with generosity, with love.

So let's not settle for shallow lives of distraction, greed, or fear. Let us take hold of the real life—the life of godliness with contentment, the life of generosity and love, the life eternal and true, given by God in Christ. And may the Holy Spirit strengthen us for this good fight, guide us we walk in faith, and help us to take hold—here and now—of the life that really is life. Amen.

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul's Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>