

Sermon Notes



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11/16/25

Godliness + Contentment = Great Gain (1 Timothy 6:6-19)

A Friendsgiving sermon

Welcome to a special gathering of Our Safe Harbor Church. We take one Sunday a year to celebrate this New Thing God is doing in the world. This is also our chance to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday with each other before many of us scatter to visit family or have family come to visit us. We are now 5 years old!

We started right here. Within minutes of hearing that I had lost a job, Greg Grant called me and asked me to come to his house. When I went, he offered to let Kami and me live with him for as long as we liked. He even said, "forever." I was taken aback but told him we were going to try to find another work in ministry or academia, and it would likely mean moving away.

He, and over a thousand of you, asked me to consider continuing teaching, but online. I was very doubtful that such a work would draw much of an audience or that it would last after COVID restrictions were removed and people went back to their brick-and-mortar churches. He said, "Let me show you something."

He took me into his basement. That is where we are right now. As a designer blessed with an amazing, creative mind, he crafted this basement as a center for the community, his family, and even corporations as a place of retreat and celebration. He pointed at this stage and said, "Use this."

His generosity and that of his wife, Mary, have been amazing from that day to this. Those of you who have never visited the soundstage don't know this, but we have to walk through their living area to get to the soundstage. And we do show up at all sorts of hours to get work done, record, install equipment, and more.

The first night we went live on air was a Wednesday in October. Thunderstorms hit the middle of the US and knocked YouTube off the air over much of the USA just as we were broadcasting a dream for our new online way to gather and worship. It was an inauspicious start, to say the least.

Where are we five years later? We don't want to commit the sin of King David and rely on numbers, but numbers are used extensively in scripture to show what God is doing and what effect it is having.

- We started with 1 tripod, 1 iPhone, 1 tech guy who wasn't being paid and had never done this sort of work before, a minister who wasn't sure it would work, and a singer to help us keep our spirits up with a few hymns.
- Now we have 5 cameras, a video switcher, a hardware streaming encoder, 3 computers, multiple control surfaces, and a soundboard, all run by 5-6 people. We recently installed an intercom system for the technical crew to use while our live productions are underway, for communication between tech members.
- We have over 3,500 followers on Our Safe Harbor Church's FB page. Add to that my personal page with over 11,000 friends and followers.
- We have just under 5600 subscribers on YouTube.
- Over 1,000 email addresses get our weekly newsletter.
- We have posted over 1,600 videos in the last 5 years. 5 years = 1826 days, counting leap year. That means we have posted nearly a video a day, and that is just on YouTube. Add in Facebook, and it balloons much higher.
- That represents an incredible amount of study, writing, and production done by our three employees and a handful of faithful, hard-working volunteers.

- We also post on X, Rumble, Vimeo, and Instagram and a dedicated website service, live.oursafeharbor.com
- On YouTube alone, we average between 15 and 19,000 views each month.
- We have viewers in 38 nations and all US States, though we are concentrated in about 18 states and 5 nations.
- That said, our podcast reaches around 3500 a month with listeners literally all around the world.
- We have nearly 90 men and one woman in penitentiaries in Louisiana who receive our notes and share them with other inmates, family, and with their home churches.
- Because of those who listened in Tanzania, I have gone there and spoken a quite a few churches. That has led to me writing the curriculum for ministry training in Tanzania, a very time-intensive work. I am humbled and a bit overwhelmed by it all, to be honest.
- Our hiring of Jon Knutson a year and a half ago has been one of the best decisions in our history. He and Dave Cassilly have transformed our production and increased the number of shorts, reels, and other posts. (Yes, we see the drive-by comments - but with the help of automation, we are taking care of those "keyboard-preachers". Remember, "don't read the comments" is the first rule of internet sanity).

We celebrate God's amazing work with us and how He has blessed Our Safe Harbor Church. Numbers can tell some of the story, but not the whole story. Remember "Paint By Numbers"? They are still out there, and people still enjoy them, but no matter how hard you try, your end product doesn't represent the original very well. Lego sells a Lego Build By Number of the Mona Lisa. It has 1503 pieces. Does it do a great job at representing Mona Lisa? A bit.

In the same way, telling the story of what God does with our gifts by using numbers paints a picture, but it doesn't reveal the entire glory of God if we just focus on the numbers.

Jesus picked 12 apostles. They were not men of power, education, or high birth. They were not trained rabbis or community leaders. Except for John, all would die by violence, some when they were still young. Yet, North Africa, Syria, Turkey, Georgia, all the way to India in the East and Spain in the West were touched by the apostles. Just 12 regular, flawed men. Every person who believes in Jesus came to that faith through the work of those 12 men and the Holy Spirit.

Last week, I visited yet another congregation that has long served its community but wants to do more and be more like Christ. They have been watching OSHC and want to learn from us how to reach their community. Last month, I visited another church in another state who wanted to learn from us. Your gifts to this church and the work of the staff, volunteers, and the Spirit have done amazing things and is transforming many churches.

Gifts given to OSHC have fed and clothed countless people through our partners, Graceworks, OneGenAway, Lifeline, and many more. Babies have been saved from the abortion mill and, more than that, they have been clothed, fed, and cared for. Their mothers have been given diapers, formula, cribs, community, love and friendship.

God chose one family on earth, that of Abraham, and said that all families of the earth would be blessed through him. To reach all nations, it would seem to be insufficient to touch just one family, a flawed family with no power or important connections. Yet, God is still blessing us through Abraham today and will at the end of all things when we are welcomed into eternity by God.

Never downplay what is in your pocket or what kind of family you have. Never think that you have nothing to give because of your financial, social, marital, or spiritual condition. If it is given to God, He will do great things with it and with you.

Never let anyone tell you that any church that doesn't put the bulk of its money into bricks and mortar isn't a real church. OSHC is a true community of faith. Emails and questions are answered. Requests to speak to various groups are accepted. And I continue to rack up the miles visiting any group of 5 or more viewers who want me to come see them. Now, we have Mark and Jodi Bush RVing full time and ready to come see you.

Last year, we told you that we might move our production to another place. This year, we are happy to inform you that this house is no longer for sale, and the Grants want us here with them forever.

We don't get many days off. The pace is relentless. I will be 69 next month. I have no intention of retiring until God renders my body or mind incapable of doing this work. We pray that God will raise up leaders across the world to keep it going and growing well into the future...until God decides it is time to do yet another New Thing.

We are content with whatever God gives. Choosing to serve Him has always been a good idea. Thank you for helping us help you and so many others. May God bless you as you have blessed us.

1st Timothy 6:17-19. For godliness with contentment is great gain.