

Dr. Hugh Hamilton
Trinity Presbyterian Church – Pensacola, FL
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LIVE COURAGEOUSLY: 1. DARE TO BE GENEROUS

1 Timothy 6:6-19 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

Do you know the name Sam Rayburn? Sam Rayburn served in Congress for over 50 years, from when Woodrow Wilson was president until John F. Kennedy was in office. But Rayburn's greatness was not in the office he held. It was in his common touch with people.

One day Sam Rayburn heard that the teenage daughter of a Washington reporter had died. Early the next morning he went over to the reporter's house and knocked on the door. "I just came by to see what I could do to help," he said. The reporter was obviously touched. "Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, but I don't think there's anything you can do. We're handling all the arrangements." Rayburn asked the reporter, "Have you had your coffee yet this morning?" and when the reporter said that he had not, Sam Rayburn said, "Well, I'll make it for you." With that, he walked into the house and into the kitchen and began to fix the coffee for the reporter. The reporter was taken aback by all this and said, "Mr. Speaker, I thought you were having breakfast this morning at the White House with the President." Sam Rayburn responded, "Well, I was, but I called the President and told him that I had a friend who was having some trouble, and that I wouldn't be in today."

That story exemplifies the generosity described in 2 Corinthians 6 — sharing yourself and your resources. Verse 10 says we Christians *are regarded as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things*. We make others rich in life, rich in faith, rich in things toward God, by showing them the love of God in Jesus Christ, by showing them that they are important, that they matter, they mean something to God and to us. Your service to others, your attention, your financial gifts, your volunteerism -- all of this enriches the lives of others, and it makes you rich toward God!

Live Courageously: Our Stewardship Theme this year, LIVE COURAGEOUSLY, comes from 1 Timothy 6:19, the verse on which we have based our stewardship three years now: *"take hold of the life which really is life."* Year 1 we challenged ourselves to LIVE FREE, then year 2 LIVE SIMPLY, year 3 LIVE GENEROUSLY, and now, year 4 - LIVE COURAGEOUSLY.

Usually Bible passages about material wealth make us Western Hemisphere people uncomfortable, because on a global scale we are the rich. We Americans associate personal success and happiness with material affluence. And we recognize that Jesus showed preference for the poor, the outcast, the disenfranchised and he often criticized the rich. But more on point, Jesus challenged the rich who relied on their material prosperity and had little concern for God. He told of the rich fool who build bigger barns to warehouse all his "stuff," and the rich young ruler proud of his perfect obedience to the law, as if good works would buy his way into heaven. Jesus does not condemn money, wealth, or prosperity; what he criticizes is "the love of money" above all else, and "the eagerness to be rich." The love of money provides temporary satisfaction, but the love of God lasts forever. His point of contention is not money but rather the attitude of the person owning it. Material wealth can get in the way of putting your trust in God, and it can hinder you following Jesus. (Mark 10:17-22)

Repeatedly the Bible reiterates that our refuge and strength is God and not ourselves.

Isaiah 41:10 *Do not fear for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; surely I will help you; surely I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Psalms 46:1-2 *God is our refuge and our strength; a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;*

Philippians 4:6-7 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

1 Timothy 6:17 *Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.*

By resisting greed, living simply, and being content with the basics, followers of Jesus can afford to be generous. When we are generous, 1 Timothy 6:19 says, we store up true “treasure” that leads to the *life that really is life*. Generosity is not a burden, it is a blessing, it is a benefit; it gives you a richer, fuller life.

Generosity is sharing yourself and your resources. Your generosity makes others rich in life, rich in faith, rich in things toward God. By sharing the God’s love and the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ you add meaning and hope to their lives. You make people rich when your love and service show them that they are important, that they matter, they mean something to God and to us. Your service to others, your attention, your financial gifts, your volunteerism -- all of this enriches the lives of others, while making you rich toward God!

As followers of Jesus we give generously our money and our service and our attention because we know that all of life is gift from God. We didn’t earn our salvation or blessings in Christ; our hope, our joy, our salvation are gifts to us from God. And as we have taken hold of life in Christ, the life that is life indeed, we can show others how to do likewise! Our example shows them how to be rich in good deeds, rich in generosity, rich in service, rich in the way that comes from taking hold of the life which is life indeed. How we use our money says much about who we are — about what motivates us – and for whom we live.

I’ve been fortunate to know some really wealthy people. Some of them had big money, some did not. What made them wealthy was what they did with the money they had. For example:

- One made a payment on a customer’s car when the customer was out of work.
- One paid for family counseling for a dysfunctional family; they are now thriving.
- Another forgave the balance of loan to an elderly woman who was his parents’ housekeeper in years past.
- Another bought tires for a young couple’s car.
- A man named Charlie periodically came into my office in Tennessee and gave me a check and

told me that if I came across someone in need, I could use that money to help, no questions asked. The only stipulation was that I could not reveal his name. Charlie had made and lost fortunes in his farm implement dealership and fertilizer business, and whenever times got tight, God blessed him

with unexpected money someone had given the preacher to help him and his wife, Margaret. Now that he was wealthy and retired, he wanted to do the same for anyone else who needed help. “Just tell them a Christian friend wanted to help,” he said.

True wealth is measured not by how much you have, but by what you do with what you’ve got ... by the generosity you show to others.

To quote an old saying, *“There’s no trailer hitch on a hearse.”* You can’t take it with you. The only treasures you get to keep are those you give away. Jesus said, “Don’t lay up treasures for yourselves on the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves don’t break through and steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

As followers of Jesus we have the pleasure of making others rich toward God. The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6: 10: *“We commend ourselves...as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.”* To grasp what Paul means, consider the preceding verses 6-8. Paul commends himself and his colleagues in ministry for enduring afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, sleeplessness and hunger.” He then describes the character they sought to display during those ordeals: “purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; righteousness toward all persons...” All of this, he says, is the courage of their faith — courage to witness who they were — servants of God; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet, possessing everything.

We, too, can witness courage and generosity! Whether we are rich or poor, whether we are young or old, whether we are educated or uneducated — no matter our circumstances or situations — we can still make many rich. How? How do you do that?

How can you make others rich?

- Offer yourself, lock stock and barrel, to God as a living sacrifice and ask God to use you to bless others. Not just to use your money, but also to use your experiences, your witness, your faith journey, your community service, your education, your friendships, your emails and text messages and phone calls and letters and word of encouragement to enrich the lives of others.
- Ask God how you can allocate your spiritual gifts and your material goods to bless others in your circles of influence – how might you bless others in Trinity, in Pensacola, in Escambia County, and to the ends of the earth.
- Show others that they are important, that they matter to God and to you, by showing them your love, care, and attention. Unfortunately, some people don’t believe they count. Nobody has ever told them or shown them that they matter. Your service, your attention, your help, your financial gifts, and your witness of what God has done in your life makes them rich toward God.

You may give away millions of dollars to hire people and to make new jobs.

You may simply go to a reporter’s house to make coffee for a grieving father.

You may volunteer for service at Trinity or at one of our ministry partners in town.

However you use your gifts and your character to help others,
you are displaying the courage to be generous, and
in sharing your love and care and attention and money, you show people that they are
important, and that they mean something to God.

Count Your Blessings: Before we celebrate Thanksgiving in November, and before we consecrate our tithes and offerings to God and to Trinity on Sunday, November 3, I encourage you to count your blessings and consider your money, your talents, your abilities.

Literally, count your blessings. Most of us don't realize how much "stuff" we have until we need to move it, or pack it, or clean it. Do an inventory of your assets. Write down your bank accounts and their balances; list your investments, your cars, your home, your insurance policies, your furniture, your personal property. Ask yourself, "How has God blessed me?" Include also your family, friends, your work, money, faith, food, security. You will realize how much you possess, how many things God has provide for you to enjoy and to share. Thank God for the material blessings in your life and for the opportunities God has given you to work and provide for yourself and your family; thank God that you have extra to share with others.

If you use money and possessions only to serve yourself, you starve your soul.

But if you recognize your wealth and possession and comforts and joys and talents and your mind as gifts from God, to be used to help others, you become richer for it.

Live courageously: God will provide...dare to be generous! Make others rich toward God!

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