

Sunday, November 8, 2015
1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19 (CEB)
A Stewardship of Possibility: We Are Rich
Marysville UMC
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First world problems

- There are times when I'm in the midst of one of life's dreaded dilemmas that I catch myself and say, "first world problem." It happens when I'm complaining that my iPhone won't charge fast enough, or I can't get the mileage seat I want on a plane, or the store is out of the cereal I wanted...and I don't want any of the other 27 cereal options. #firstworldproblems. It's another way of saying I need a perspective check. Compared to most people in the world, I'm incredibly lucky to have access to the latest technology, the ability to fly when I want to and enough money to get food when I need it.
- Friends, we are rich.

The things we tell ourselves about life matter. The voices in our head. They're real. And we get to decide which voice we're going to listen to.

Think back to our abundance & scarcity example from last Sunday. If I tell myself I don't have enough love for a certain person, I likely won't have much love for that certain person. If we tell ourselves we have to buy that specific thing or the world will be over, then we'll feel lacking and frustrated if it doesn't happen. If we stress over how little time we have, we won't see the little pockets of time we do have and use them differently.

Who or what tells you that you don't have enough? When we name those voices, we can see them for what they really are. Complete untruth.

Some of us listen to the voice that tells us we don't have enough money. But did you know, if we have an income over \$10,000 a year, the voice in our head should be telling us, "you are rich!"

<http://www.globalrichlist.com> - Put in your income and it tells you where you rank in wealth in the world. For an example, I put in \$40,000 annual income and it said I was in the top .57% in the world.

As the holidays approach, some of us listen to the many voices that convince us to join the frenetic pace of trips to the mall, endless gifts that may be discarded on December 26 and the general feeling of stress that can surround this season of our year. It's hard.

This week, I was reminded of one simple way to focus on making space in our Advent and Christmas season for wonder, awe, slowing down and soaking in all the beautiful moments. Make sure all your Christmas shopping is done by December 1. If you have kids and grandkids in your life, ask them to choose one thing they need, one thing to read, one thing they want, one thing they'll wear and one thing to light up the world. A gift for someone else. That's it! If we set boundaries like those, it's easier to spend Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas focused on what **have** instead of what we **want**. And that is the key to joy (Glennon Doyle).

When we focus on what we have, instead of what we want, we realize we're rich in a lot of ways.

I'm rich in funny moments with little kids. On our Tuesday morning walk, Isabella stopped us and said, "Quiet. I've got to hear the clouds moving." On Sunday night at dinner, she said "I'm going to pretend this squash is cake."

What are you rich in? (ask for answers)

Is it okay to be rich in money? Yes. Is it okay to be rich in time, love, influence, words? Yes. It's all about how we use it.

...Instead, they need to hope in God, who richly provides everything for our enjoyment. 18 Tell them to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, and to share with others. 19 When they do these things, they will save a treasure for themselves that is a good foundation for the future. That way they can take hold of what is truly life.

Like we said at the beginning of the series, stewardship is arranging our lives so God can spend us. God can either spend us or something else will.

Though the gifts we give today, God's going to spend us in some incredible ways next year.

- The children in our preschool will grow in love, knowledge and joy.
- We'll be able to provide childcare so parents can participate in small groups and grow in their faith.
- We'll continue to steward this building and open it up to our community.
- We'll house a clothing ministry that's making a difference for many families in our county.
- We'll support a variety of small groups and Bible studies.
- God will meet people in big and small ways through our worship experiences.
- People who are looking for a place to belong where all are truly welcome, will find generous friends here.

And communion is God's way of reminding us we're rich.

We have access to a grace and way of being in the world that will always trump any other way of being. When we receive this kind of grace, God is shaping us into disciples who put others first, forgive quickly, let others off the hook, share what we have, look out for those we don't like and care for the poor.

This life we have chosen is not easy. It requires much of us. But I still haven't found a more meaningful and profound way to walk through life. Friends, we are rich in the things that really matter.

1 Timothy 6:18-19 (MSG): Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage—to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they'll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life.

Amen!