

Sunday, October 16  
9:00am 11:00am

Money  
Life **MATTERS**  
Covenant Presbyterian Church

*"Elizabeth Schuyler,  
Mick Jagger, and Timothy"*

Sermon for Sunday, October 16, 2022

"Elizabeth Schuyler, Mick Jagger, and Timothy" | 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Charlie Berthoud | 1 Timothy 6:6-10

In the history of the Christian church, I'm reasonably sure this is the first sermon called Elizabeth Schuyler, Mick Jagger, and Timothy. Hopefully you'll see why in a few minutes.

One of the most poignant songs in "Hamilton" is called "That Would Be Enough" sung mostly by Elizabeth Schuyler, wife of Alexander Hamilton. With the birth of their first child, she sings "Look around, look around at how lucky we are to be alive right now." She is rightly concerned that her husband Alexander is not content and not appreciating the gift of each day.



The play shows the paradox of being driven, like Hamilton, to work hard, to make a difference, to make the world a better place through politics but with the risk of going to far and never being satisfied and forgetting the importance of family and the gift of life itself.

Being motivated and driven is great, but sometimes we take it too far. We forget to look around and realize how lucky we are to be alive right now.

The drive for "more" is deep in the fabric of our country. Contentment is elusive for us.

Ben Franklin noticed it, writing:

"Content[ment] makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor."

In his famous reflection on the young United States in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote:

"[Americans] are extremely eager in the pursuit of immediate material pleasures and are always discontented with the position that they occupy.... They think about about nothing but ways of changing their lot and bettering it.... One usually finds that the love of money is either the chief or a secondary motive at the bottom of everything the Americans do." (cited in *ENOUGH*, by Adam Hamilton, p. 14)

Many years later, Mick Jagger famously noticed our collective discontent, singing "I can't get no satisfaction."

In the Bible, there are several teachings about **contentment**, to learning to be **satisfied** with what we have. One of the best know comes from the little letter that Paul wrote to Timothy. Listen for God's word.

"Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment,<sup>7</sup> for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it,<sup>8</sup> but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.<sup>9</sup> But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.<sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains."

Several years ago, Wall Street Journal columnist Robert Frank published a book called *Richistan: A Journey Through the American Wealth Boom and the Lives of the New Rich*. I haven't read the book, but I've read about it. The author describes the life of the super-rich in our country—the families with alligator skin toilets and \$100,000 watches, the 400-foot yachts and 30,000 square-foot homes.

One revealing finding was to see how many of the ultra-rich are gripped by discontentment and are deeply concerned about running out of money.

The author cites a survey where people were asked "How much money would you

need to be financially secure?" Rounding out the statistics of the responses, it seems that those worth one million dollars said they'd need two million dollars to be secure, to feel comfortable. Those worth 10 million said they would need 20 million. And those worth 100 million dollars actually felt they needed 200 million dollars to feel financially secure. (Source: *Feasting on the Gospels: Matthew*, vol 1, p. 136, commentary by Wallace Bubar)

Oh, those super-rich people are so shallow. They're so greedy, never content, always wanting more. They just keep buying more and more stuff, and never seem to be happy with what they have.

Good thing *we're* not like them, right?

We're good at pointing our fingers at "those" super-rich people and all of their foolishness.

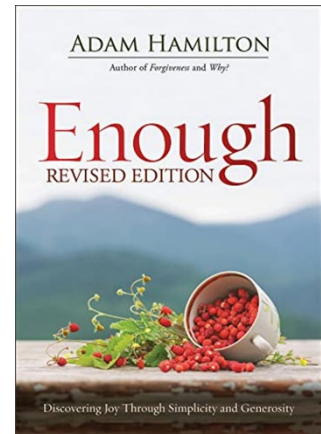
The reality is that we are pretty good at seeing how green the grass is in our neighbor's yard. We are pretty good at thinking of all the stuff we don't have. And we are really good at thinking more money and more stuff will solve all our problems.

I think we realize that it's too easy for us to slip into discontentment and greed. The apostle Paul provides an aspirational goal for us in Philippians 4.

"Not that I am referring to being in need, for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

I'm grateful for aspirational words like Paul's, and I'm grateful to be in community where we can encourage each other to grow spiritually.

In his little book *ENOUGH: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity*, Adam Hamilton suggests four ways to cultivate contentment. (pp.72-75)



**1. Remember that it could be worse.**

This is a helpful framework in just about any situation, as we almost immediately lock in on how bad the situation is. I'm not saying we should naively ignore hardship and pain, but rather just keep things in perspective.

**2. Ask yourself: "How long will this make me happy?"**

How many times have we made an impulse purchase only to regret it later? Lots of things look better in the magazine or the shelf or online than they do when their actually in our homes. Yes we can certainly buy nice things and fun things, but it's good to develop caution.

**3. Develop a grateful heart**

It's good to cultivate gratitude, not just at Thanksgiving, but all year. One simple routine is to pause before meals and simply thank God for the food and the gift of the day. Some people have gratitude journals.

In his book Hamilton tells about a couple that had an argument. One of the two stormed out of the house in anger. He walked for awhile and began to pray about all the things his wife did that frustrated him. Then his prayer changed, and he began to be thankful, praying with gratitude: "Thank you that she is strong willed, that she has a fiery personality, and that she calls me to be better than I am."

**4. Ask yourself, "Where does my soul find true satisfaction?"**

Deep down I think we know that true satisfaction won't come simply from a bigger bank account, a bigger house, a bigger boat. But we are inundated with messages telling us about all the stuff that we need to be happy.

St Augustine famously said: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

The call to contentment runs through our religious tradition.

The commandments are a foundation of faith. The first two and last one are essentially calling us to love the right things in the right way and to be content with what we have.

- 1. We will have no other gods before God.**
- 2. We will not worship idols or any false god.**
3. We shall keep God's name holy.
4. We will honor the Sabbath as a day of holy rest.
5. We will honor our fathers and our mothers.
6. We will not kill.
7. We will not commit adultery.
8. We will not steal.
9. We will not bear false witness against our neighbors.
- 10. We will not covet our neighbor's things.**

We see examples of contentment and generosity in various places.



Men's World Cup soccer is coming soon, and one of the global superstars is a player from Senegal named Sadio Mane. He makes about \$10 million per year and he may be a name we hear next month in the men's tournament.

A couple years ago, social media went a little crazy after this picture of him appeared. If you look closely, you'll see his phone has a cracked screen. He was asked about why he hadn't gotten a new one and why he lived a relatively simple life.

His reply was long, but worth hearing:

"Why would I want ten Ferraris, 20 diamond watches, or two planes? What will these objects do for me and for the world? I was hungry, and I had to work in the field; I survived hard times, played football barefooted, I did not have an education and many other things, but today with what I earn thanks to football, I can help my people. I built schools, a stadium, we provide clothes, shoes, food for people who are in extreme poverty. In addition, I give 70 euros per month to all people in a very poor region of Senegal which contributes to their family economy. I do not need to display luxury cars, luxury homes, trips and even planes. I prefer that my people receive a little of what life has given me."

After this incident, the world learned more about him, how his father died when Sadio was seven, so Sadio has funded a hospital in his hometown, along with better schools.

Sadio Mane has learned the lessons of contentment, simplicity, and generosity. He knows the meaning of being blessed to be a blessing.

Rev. Billy Graham famously said, **“Give me five minutes with a person’s checkbook, and I will tell you where their heart is.”**

That might be a little simplistic, but I do invite you to look at your checkbook, your banking app, your piggy bank. Think about how you are using your money, if you’re using it wisely and well.

The good news of the gospel is that we have been blessed with abundant life, life that begins right here, right now. **We have been blessed so that we can be a blessing to others.**

My invitation to you this week is simple. Find five minutes to sit quietly in your home. Set a timer on your phone and block out the time. Keep your eyes open and see what you notice. If you want to prayerfully thank God for the gift of that day, or the comforts of your home, or for food or shelter or a simple pleasure, go for it.

But maybe you just sit there and look around, **look around at how lucky you are to be alive right now.**

Let us pray...