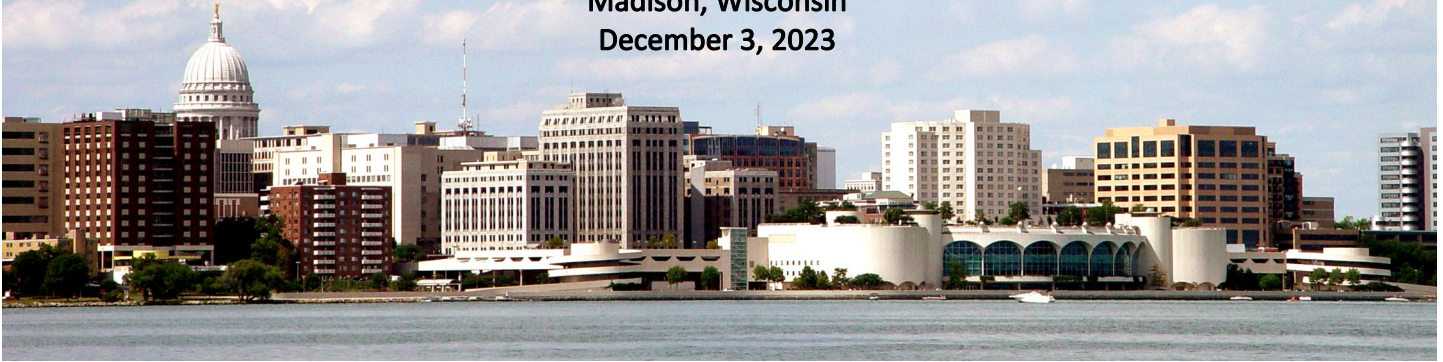


He Is Enough

Hebrews 13:5-6

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Good morning, and welcome to the Four Lakes congregation! If you are visiting this morning, we are glad to have you with us. We'd like to ask that you fill out a visitor card online if you can, or you can use one of the cards from the pew in front of you. Whatever works for you, we would love to hear from you, and we invite you to pass along any questions or prayer concerns.

We are here this morning to preach the good news that God loves us! He sent his only Son to die in our place, he was buried, and he was raised up the first day of the week. We respond to this good news by believing the message, by turning away from sin, by confessing our faith in Jesus as being the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with him in baptism (an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins). And we have several examples to share this morning, starting with an update from Ukraine, where they start by sharing some pictures of a woman studying the Bible with the preacher and several friends. I know we focus on baptism, because it's very visual, it's easy to see, but what leads up to it is also important, and thankfully, they show it here. But then they also show this woman being baptized, and they say (as translated by Facebook), "Today we have a great holiday. The Lord gave us a sister in Christ. Natalia accepted Baptism. Glory to Jesus forever." And then they quote 1 Corinthians 15:57, where Paul says, ***"And thank God that He through our Lord Jesus Christ has given us victory."*** So good to see it!

And then we have an update from the Palm Beach Lakes congregation down in Florida. They posted a few days ago and say, "We are so excited to share that Ayanna Babcock-Sutherland was baptized this afternoon! Welcome to God's family!" I'm sharing this one because she is one of the happiest people I've seen this week!

We have an update from a church I used to attend down in Tennessee and their ongoing Bible studies at the Chester County Jail. They say that "Timothy obeyed the gospel today, and put on Christ in baptism. Please keep him in prayer to grow in his faith." I love the John Deere and the search and rescue gear in the background, I love the stock tank (just like my own baptistery/hillbilly hot tub in our back yard at home), but I love that this young man has found freedom and some sense of peace in the Lord as a result of some good men who are willing and unafraid to go behind bars to preach and teach the good news.

There were many more I wanted to share this week, but I'll make this the last one today, coming to us from the Lord's church in Honolulu, Hawaii. They say that, "Jewel has been studying with some of her Hawaii Pacific

University softball teammates. Today, four of them made the decision to put on Christ in baptism. Glory to God for these souls coming home. Thank God for the gospel of Christ! Rejoice!" They had pictures of all four, but I'm just sharing one so it can fill the space up here: What a beautiful setting! We are looking forward to worshiping with this congregation in a few months, but as always, we share these examples to emphasize the good news, and if you would like to know more, please get in touch.

This morning, we continue in the very last chapter in our study of Hebrews! And today, we come to one of those passages where we read about a sin that may be easy to see in others, but quite difficult to diagnose in ourselves. It's a passage about the value of being content. The theme of the book, of course, is "Jesus is Better," and in this last chapter we come to a series of very practical applications. And today, we come to the reminder that "Jesus is Enough." On a daily basis, in good times or bad, he is truly all we need.

This morning, then, let's take a look at Hebrews 13:5-6, where the author of Hebrews gives a warning, followed by some encouragement,

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

This morning, let's move through this passage, starting with a danger to avoid, continuing with a positive reminder, and then closing with the reason we can be so content and the confidence we have.

- I. **But let's start with the opening line, where we have what we might describe as the NEGATIVE side of the command, as the author gives the warning: MAKE SURE THAT YOUR CHARACTER IS FREE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY.**

And here at the beginning, let's just make sure we notice that the passage does NOT say, "You shall not EARN money." It doesn't say, "You shall not HAVE money." It doesn't say, "You shall not INVEST money." It doesn't say, "You shall be POOR." It doesn't say, "You shall BEG for FOOD for you and your family." It doesn't say, "You shall walk around in TATTERED CLOTHING." But the passage very clearly says, ***"Make sure that your character is free from the LOVE of money."*** In an amazing way, the word of God cuts directly to the heart, because the Lord is interested in our attitude toward money. We are not to fall in love with the things of this world, and in particular: Money! In fact, the word that he uses here ultimately goes back to a word referring to the love of "silver." Do you guys remember the abbreviation for silver on the periodic table? Gold is "AU," but silver is "AG." Those are the first two letters of the Greek word for silver, and it's the basis for the word translated here as ***"money."***

A few notes on this, starting with something I've noticed again this week, and that is: Covetousness (or the love stuff) is often listed together right alongside sexual sin, and we see it here. Two weeks ago, we looked at the verse right before this one, where the author says (in verse 4), ***"Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge."*** And then, here we are: Not only will God judge fornicators and adulterers, but we are to ***"make sure that our character is free from the love of money."*** In our Wednesday class, we just studied the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, and we looked at Commandment #10 where the people were told not to covet anything that belonged to their neighbor – their neighbor's house, their neighbor's wife, and anything that belonged to their neighbor. There is a connection between covetousness and fornication. We saw the same connection in 1 Corinthians 6, where Paul listed the ***"covetous"*** right alongside fornicators, and thieves, and homosexuals, and the others, who will

not inherit the kingdom of God. The same connection is made in Ephesians, Colossians, in 1 Thessalonians, and in 1 Peter. Covetousness is thrown in with the big ones. We have a tendency to sometimes think of some sins as being much worse than others, with covetousness in the “not too serious” category, but the Bible makes no distinction. It is a sin to be in love with money, just as much as it is a sin to cheat on a spouse. As Paul explains in 1 Timothy 6:10 (a few verses up from what Elijah read for us earlier), ***“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and have pierced themselves with many griefs.”*** And as Jesus explains in Luke 12:15, ***“Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”***

Now, at this point, some of us might be thinking: Well, I sure am glad that don’t love money, because after all, we barely have enough money to pay the bills. However, let’s not forget that Jesus himself warns about the ***“deceitfulness of riches”*** (in Matthew 13:22), because the bible never tells us that we have to have a lot of money in order to be in love with it. In fact, you could be homeless and living out of food pantries and still be in love with money. I’m just saying that this is an attitude of the heart that may or may not be reflected in our current financial reality. We don’t have to be sleeping on a pile of gold to be guilty of this.

Something else to note here: I appreciate how the author describes being ***“free”*** from the love of money. And that’s so appropriate, because the opposite of being ***“free from the love of money”*** is being “enslaved” to money. I don’t know how many of you remember this, but I actually preached on this passage back on May 28, 2006, right around 17 years ago. And in that lesson I gave the hypothetical example of someone who goes out to Sears and buys a new washing machine for \$299. First of all, I don’t think Sears is a thing anymore, is it? At least here in Madison. But secondly, can you imagine buying a washing machine for \$299? Not anymore! I bought a used washing machine for nearly that much several years ago. So much has changed since 2006. But in that hypothetical example, a couple buys a new washing machine for \$299, and if they would make the minimum payments on their credit card, that washer would end up costing \$1,199. Now, of course, the washer starts at \$1,199, and those minimum payments would stretch out for years and years. That’s slavery. As King Solomon says in Proverbs 22:7, the ***“borrower is slave to the lender.”*** The flip side of that is that our character is to be ***“free from the love of money.”*** We are not to be dominated or controlled by this constant urge to always be wanting more, and more, and more.

II. **And this leads us to a very closely related encouragement as the author now refers to BEING CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU HAVE.**

To be ***“content”*** is to be “satisfied,” to have “enough.” So the author, then, is encouraging us to be satisfied with what we have. The temptation, though, is to always think we need more and more, and to be dissatisfied with what we have. Sometimes I see this in myself with projects around the house. I have this list of things I’d like to improve: I want to paint this part of the house, I want new carpet over here, I’d like to build a shelf for this or that, and maybe I start to collect those resources, perhaps I try to find the time, and then I suddenly realize: I’m not using that fire pit on that patio I put in 15 years ago! And wouldn’t it be nice to just sit down and enjoy a fire in the backyard! Do you see the danger there? I may have a patio and a fire pit, I may have this setup that others would love to have, but I’ve moved on and now I’m wanting something else. I am confessing this to you this morning. It is a real danger when we want what we do not have, and then we get it, and then we very quickly move on to wanting something else. We become dissatisfied with what the Lord has already given us. There’s something addictive to it, and so the Lord warns us about it.

And it’s one of the first warnings given by John the Baptist. John was out there preaching in the wilderness, and some soldiers came up and asked him, ***“And what about us, what shall we do?”*** They were asking John the “So what?” question, and John replies, ***“Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely,***

and be content with your wages.” Now, this doesn’t mean that we can never apply for a new job that pays more. It doesn’t prevent us from getting an education so that we can make more than we might have otherwise. It doesn’t mean that it’s a sin to invest (expecting a return on that investment). But this is a general encouragement: We are to live our lives in a way that we are **“content”** with what we have, that what we have is “enough.” Whether we have much or whether we have little, we understand that God has blessed us and that he is enough.

To me, it seems that there’s something of a balance. On one hand, the Bible condemns laziness; God wants us to work hard; he wants us to enjoy our work (we read about this in King Solomon’s Proverbs). We are supposed to provide for ourselves if at all possible, we are supposed to work hard so we can share (as so many of you have done over the past several weeks). But on the other hand, we need to be careful to be content with what we have. Otherwise, always being discontent is an absolutely miserable way to live. As I was preparing this morning’s lesson, I ran across a quote from Henry Kissinger, and since he passed away a few days ago, I thought I’d share it. Mr. Kissinger said, “To Americans, usually tragedy is wanting something very badly and not getting it. Many people have had to learn in their private lives, and nations have had to learn in the historical experience, that perhaps the worst form of tragedy is wanting something badly, getting it, and finding it empty.” Or again, as Jesus says, **“For not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions”** (Luke 12:15). We are to be content with what we have.

III. And this leads us to a reminder of what we have: We have something greater than silver and gold, we have the Lord himself – in the middle of verse 5, “...for He Himself has said, ‘I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU.’”

Now, my challenge here is that this phrase is in all caps and quotation marks, indicating it is a quote from the Old Testament; however, I cannot find this exact quote anywhere in the Old Testament. To deal with this, I think we need to understand that quotation marks (as we understand them today) are a fairly recent invention. The author of Hebrews, then, seems to be paraphrasing and combining a number of similar statements that are, in fact, found in the Old Testament. And speaking of a paraphrase, several weeks ago, one of our young adults made a passing comment about the danger of a paraphrase like *The Message*. And she had a very valid concern, but shortly after she made that comment to me privately, this popped up on Facebook, and I laughed out loud. But on top we have a translation (pretty close to what the author of Hebrews actually wrote, but translated into English), and on the bottom we have a paraphrase – not a word-for-word translation, but the thought behind the original statement.

But as to the original statement, the concept is found throughout the Bible. In Deuteronomy 31:6, God said to Moses, **“Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.”** In Joshua 1:5, God said to Joshua, **“Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.”** In 1 Chronicles 28:20, David said to his son Solomon, **“Be strong and courageous, and act; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished.”** In Isaiah 41:10, God spoke to the people through the prophet and said, **“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.”** And then to his disciples Jesus gave the Great Commission and said, **“Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”** All of these seem to be summarized or paraphrased into the quote we have here, **“I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.”** I am not a Greek scholar, but those who are have noted that this statement has the equivalent of five negatives, emphasizing this idea that God will never forsake us. In English, two negatives often make a positive; not so in Greek. And so in that regard, Rick Astley may have the right idea! Some have compared this statement (in

Greek) to an old song we sometimes sing, “How Firm a Foundation,” when the song says, “The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose, I will not, I will not, desert to his foes; That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I’ll never, no never, no never forsake!” One scholar has attempted to bring this into English with the literal translation, **“No, I will not leave you; no, neither will I not utterly forsake you”** (Adam Clarke). Again, in English, two negatives make a positive, but in you can apparently pile up those negatives for emphasis.

But the point of this is: We can be content, because the Lord is with us. He is enough. He is all we need, and he will never forsake us. He’s with us from the bedroom, to the boardroom, to the classroom. He’s with us for every meal, through every illness and surgery, and he’s even with us through the valley of the shadow of death (as King David understood in Psalm 23).

Something else I appreciate here is how the author says, **“...for he himself has said”** this. This isn’t a quote of a quote that somebody might have made up at some point, but this comes from the Lord himself. He will be with us, and by no means will he ever leave us; he will not let us go, never. People make promises, and they let us down, but the Lord will not. This is something he has said himself. He will never let us down. Money, by the way, has never made this promise to us, has it? Money may have the illusion of security, but it is only an illusion. Most of us know from experience that money will forsake us; money will let us down and desert us.

Are we worried about what might happen over the next year? We have no idea what might happen in terms of war, or the economy, or our own health, but you know what’s for certain? The Lord will be with us, and he will never forsake us. This is the reason why we can be **“content.”**

IV. And this leads us to the bold and confident assertion (in verse 6), **“...so that we confidently say, ‘THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?’”** ****PPT****

Notice the link here: Because he has said, **“I will never leave you nor forsake you,”** we can confidently say, **“The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid, what will man do to me?”** As God’s people, our lives are based on his word. Because he has made a promise, his word affects the way we live. Because he is with us, we can live with no fear. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, we are confident that whether we live or die, God is with us. And this confidence gives us the power to stick with it, the power to do what’s right, regardless of what people may do to us. And that seems to be the point of this verse, and really, the point of the book of Hebrews. As we’ve discussed all through this book over the past year or so, these people were facing pressure and were starting to waffle a bit: Is it worth it or not? And the author’s conclusion is: Because the Lord is with us, we have no reason to fear what anybody may do to us, so keep on pressing forward. Do not give up! Do not give in to a worldly way of thinking. Do not give in to the covetousness of the world. Do not fall in love with stuff!

And something else I’ve noticed in this passage is how the author says that **“we”** can say this with confidence. In other words, this is something we say together, as a group. Years ago, an older preacher made the comment that a lot of people are just barely dragging themselves in the door every Sunday morning, and what he meant by that was: Many people are beat up by the world Monday through Saturday, and on the Lord’s Day they need some encouragement. And we see that here, don’t we? The people reading or hearing this message for the very first time were being abused by the world, and so the author gives this encouragement as something that all of us can say together. This is a statement we make, and we say it so we don’t forget, **“The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid, what will man do to me?”** which is a direct quote from Psalm 118:6. Sometimes we may need to encourage each other by repeating this, and we can say it **“boldly”** or with **“confidence,”** he says. We are content, because he is with us. He is enough.

Conclusion:

This brings us to the end of today's passage, and looking back on it, we see how important it is to be content. It's so easy to worship money as a god – it seems to be so important, money buys us food and security; clicking that "buy now" button on Amazon makes us happy. But all of that is so temporary. Jesus is better! Jesus is enough. He is all we need.

Let's go to God in prayer and then Josh will lead us in a song as we think about what we've learned this morning:

Our Father in Heaven,

You know how hard it is to be tempted by the love of money. You know the pull of wealth. You know the deceitfulness of riches. And this morning we are so thankful that your Son gave up the riches of heaven to come to this earth to save us so that we, through his poverty might become rich eternally. This week we ask for your help as we redirect our hearts away from the illusion of earthly riches and as we look to the goal of being with you for eternity. We pray for generous hearts, and the understanding that we are closest to you here on this earth when we reach out to help others.

We love you, Father, and we come to you today through Jesus, who gave everything. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com