



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

Bling Bling - Jan. 22, 2017 - Jeff Bucknam

Countering Poor Teaching on Riches- (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

If you have a Bible I want to invite you to open it to 1 Timothy 6:6-10. That is what we are going to study here in the next few minutes. I don't want to start there, though. Let me start first with something a little bit weird and perhaps quite provocative. Rod Parsley is the name of a gentleman who is a pastor of a very large church in Ohio. I know him because he has been on TV for years. When I lived in Dallas, Texas he was one of the well known guys. This guy has got one of the deepest preacher voices that you've ever heard. He has employed that voice to be, in his words, a televangelist. He's happy with that label. He probably has hundreds of thousands of people at least, and probably will end up being in the millions, I'm sure, who watch him across the globe on channels like Trinity Broadcasting Network and others that do that kind of work. I bring him up to you because in the 25th of December (Christmas) until New Years Day, this last year, he came up with an idea that he said the Spirit of God gave to him. The idea was called the "The Seven Days to Suddenly." You know how the Bible has lots of places in it where it says, "Suddenly, this happened," or, "Suddenly, that happened?" So his point was that when God does something, he does it suddenly. So his "Seven Days to Suddenly" campaign was, "Look, if you send him a prayer request, he will pray over it for those seven days between Christmas and New Year and at the end of that time he believes that by you submitting that prayer request and him praying over it, you will receive (in his words) your miracle." Here's what he said from a video advertising this: he said,

"The Spirit of the living God has spoken to my heart that the answer you so desperately need; the answer to that urgent financial need; to your crucial family crisis; to your greatest physical or emotional need is wrapped up in God's number of perfection, the number 7. In 7 days, suddenly, I believe God is about to rush with your miracle into every situation of need in your life... We are approaching a very significant year on God's calendar: 2017 and the Hebrew year 5777 [Boom. Three sevens, right? Trinity of sevens]. This is when your enemies are to be driven back. Your 7 days to suddenly is on its way. Call right now or visit my website... Don't miss this opportunity."

So I didn't, and I went to his website [inaudible]. On his website-- because my question at this point was, "How is this going to work out? And what is it that you expect from me? Just sending you an email?" Here's what he writes on his website:



“How can it happen? [Yes Rod, that’s my question. How?] When you need a miracle, God will always talk to you about a seed [I didn’t know that]. So when you submit your prayer needs, I want you to pray about sewing your very best seed of faith. When you sow what you have been given, I believe you will reap what you have been promised. Our ‘7 Days to Suddenly’ begins on December 25, so I want you to fill out your prayer form and sow your best seed-faith gift today!”

I number of years ago I visited Zambia. I came to the airport in Lusaka, Zambia, got in a car with my friend, we drove through the streets of Lusaka, and the first thing I noticed was the number of churches that were there. A lot of people go as missionaries to Africa to proclaim the gospel and there are so many churches, so I said to my friend, after about three quarters of an hour of seeing all these churches, I said, “Steve, there are so many churches here. It’s amazing to me that so many people have come down here to proclaim the gospel.” He said, “Uh, proclaim the prosperity gospel, Jeff.” About 90-95% (according to my friend and statistics that he is familiar with) of the churches in Africa - huge, gorgeous, ornate churches, built by people with very little money - 90-95% of those churches preach some form of the prosperity heresy, meaning, “You will get money from God, who will be obligated to you in that way, if you invest in God by giving him money. You scratch God’s back and he will then scratch yours.” 90-95% of the churches in Africa hold that view point. Most of them get that viewpoint, in fact, from the United States, from the broadcasting exploits of Trinity Broadcasting Network that is streamed into homes all across Africa and several other places. I’ve been in Fiji where people keep Trinity Broadcasting Network on in their homes overnight to ward off (in their minds) evil spirits. They believe it’s a message from God.

One of the biggest names on Trinity Broadcasting, or affiliated with that ministry, is Kenneth Copeland. His show is called “Believer’s Voice of Victory.” He wrote a book years ago called, “The Laws of Prosperity.” In it, here’s what he says:

“You can have what you say! In fact, what you are saying is exactly what you are getting now. If you are living in poverty and lack and want, change what you’re saying. It will change what you have...”

So you can claim something out of your mouth and the Lord, because of the creative power of your words, the Lord is obligated to make that happen. They use phrases like, “The law of attraction” to talk about this kind of thinking. People have responded, of course, to Copeland at that point and said, “Wait a minute, that’s a ‘name it and claim it’ philosophy. It’s a ‘blab it and grab it’ theology.” He stood up in a pulpit recently and responded to that criticism with these words: he said,

“People say I teach ‘name it and claim it’ or ‘blab it and grab it’. Yes! We named it and claimed it and got it. We blabbed it and grabbed it and still got it! Hallelujah! And our bills are all paid!”

Babylon Bee, a satirical website, put as one of their headlines: “Kenneth Copeland in Real Pickle After Audience Member Names and Claims His Private Jet” [laughter].



So I lived Down Under for a little while and if you live in Australia or New Zealand or that part of the world, you don't have to walk very far before you get to a Hillsong knockoff church of some variety. There were a couple in our town. They are everywhere. Hillsong makes some great music. You probably know about it because of their music. They record wonderful stuff and we sing some of the stuff here, there's no question about that. But when you get into their teaching ministry, one of the things that you quickly learn is that there is something awry when it comes to some of this teaching about money. In fact, their pastor, Brian Houston, who is a New Zealander, wrote a book a number of years ago called *You Need More Money*. I bet you can't guess what it's about. You need more money. This has become a very popular, not just book, but thinking. People think about Hillsong in Australia and think about the gospel that Hillsong preaches. They don't think about the gospel that you think of. In Australia, when they think about the gospel Hillsong preaches, they think about money. They think about them promising that if you give God your best seed-gift, God will return this amount. I've been to Hillsong churches that say that. I've been to Hillsong conferences that take your shoes and they say there is some way that you can turn your shoes into cash for them. "We won't let you leave the building without getting your shoes." Anyway, this has become so well known that some Australian comics put together a song that you can actually watch on the internet. One of the lines in that song (it's a parody)-- this is the way that people who are not Christians view the message that Hillsong is preaching. One of the lines in that song is this: I will sing it to you, ready? "Praise the Lord for all the cash I've got. Praise his for my Rolls Royce and my yacht. Serving God ain't hard with a credit card. Jesus died so I could make a lot" [laughter]. Yeah, well I hope you're clapping for the singing and not the song.

Look, my point in all of this is that there is a wicked streak of teaching in the Christian Church when it comes to money. What you have is a bunch of people, men and women, who are spewing from their mouths teaching that is saying to you that the good life can be had in the here and now and that the goal of your life should be the accumulation of material goods. In fact, "That's what God wants for you in the present time. Not to wait, eternal life starts now. Abundant life is now. 'Name it claim it', 'blab it grab it.'" They think that godliness is a means to material gain. Now, I'm using that line because that is exactly the line that is used in 1 Timothy 6 when Apostle Paul is describing the false teachers that pastor Timothy, in the city of Ephesus, is supposed to contradict. Timothy is living in this setting and there are a bunch of false teachers in his setting who are called in 2 Timothy 3, "Lovers of money." They proclaim some kind of doctrine, they have other nuances, sure, but at its heart is the belief that God wants you to be rich. They are going around to people's houses, worming their way into widows lives and teaching them that what God really wants is for you to have material gain and in so teaching it they are receiving that material gain themselves. Does that sound familiar? So in 1 Timothy 6:5 he describes these false teachers with these words:

"...people of a corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain."

The verses that immediately follow that are the ones that I want to study with you and what they essentially are is what the Apostle Paul would be preaching on today if he had spend the last evening watching TBN (Trinity Broadcasting Network). He emerges from his basement suite that he's visiting



us from and he comes here today, stands up in front of you and says, “Here’s where they get it wrong. When they teach you about money, this is what they don’t understand about money.” Three things he points out here:

1. Money is fleeting
2. Contentment is Simple
3. Loving Money is Foolish

Money is fleeting, contentment is simple and loving money is foolish. Let’s study this together. Here we go.

[Money is Fleeting]

First: money is fleeting. 1 Timothy 6:6-7,

“But godliness with contentment is great gain...”

Which is coming off the back of the people of a corrupt mind, they’ve been robbed of the truth. They think that godliness is a means to financial gain,

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.”

You were born naked and you’re going to die naked. Money is a this-life-only thing. It’s here to be used in this life but it doesn’t do you any good for the next one. Do you remember King Tut? 1922, they found the burial chamber of King Tutankhamen, who had died at nineteen years old. He had become the Pharaoh at age ten and he died at nineteen. They originally thought that he died of a blow to the head, thinking, “Oh, some of his enemies must have wacked him in the head with something and he died.” They found out recently that he actually died from a broken leg. They did an MRI on him and found that his leg was broken and then it went septic and he died because they don’t have any antibiotics in those days. When they went in to find his tomb, it was a treasure trove. About five thousand artifacts made of the most finely found materials, right? I mean, gold and marble and all sorts of things. The reason they put that in there, of course, was because the Egyptians believed that you needed to send with the guy who died, stuff that will help him in the afterlife. So a fan, because he might get hot. A chariot - no kidding, there was a golden chariot in the middle of that room. It was not constructed together because I guess, in the afterlife, nineteen year-old King Tut was supposed to put it together like a lego piece. You can go see it today in Cairo. You can see it constructed. Golden plated beautiful chariot. You and I hear stuff like that and we’re like, “That’s so dumb,” right? Because you and I know that you can’t take it with you, right? There’s no U-Hauls attached to hearses [laughter]. This life is what you’ve got, right? We know that what Paul is saying essentially here is, “We brought nothing into the world, we can take nothing out of it. Yeah, you’re born naked and you die naked.” Now, the response of our culture to that news is, “Alright, because you die and there’s nothing beyond that and this life is all you’ve got, man, you better use your money for your bucket list, right?”



Like, are you dumb? You should be buying more stuff. You should be pleasuring yourself as much as you possibly can because this life is all there is. Money is just a this-life thing. Be rich towards yourself.” But the Christian Church says the same thing. “Look, yes, this life is all money is really good for, but there’s another life beyond it. Godliness doesn’t just have value for this life, it also has value for the life to come. So, godliness with contentment is great gain, unlike money, which is only good for now. You should focus on things that are permanent and eternal. If you have energy, focus on those instead of the things that are temporary and fleeting, right?”

Jesus essentially tells a story with that point in mind. This guy comes up to him and says, “I want you to tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus doesn’t get into the family squabble. He responds to the guy by saying to the guy, “Oh, here’s what I need you to know. Your life doesn’t consist in the abundance of your possessions, so I’m not going to sort out your family squabble, but I am going to address your greed and I am going to address it with a story.” Here’s the story. Here’s how it reads in Luke 12:16:

“And he told them this parable: ‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops...’”

By the way, what’s the answer to that question? Here he is, sitting there, thinking to himself, “What should I do with all these abundant crops? I’ve got enough to fill my barns. What do I do with the leftovers?” In the Jewish society of that day, there was an easy answer to that. Everyone who heard this story would be thinking to themselves, “Well, you leave the rest for the gleaners.” So if you have extra stuff on your property, you collect what you need and you leave the rest, in your field, so that people can come after the fact (poor people) and they can collect what they need from your extras, thereby being cared for by the community.” So, the answer this guy should have is pretty easy. “What should I do? I have nowhere to store my crops.” “Um, leave them for the gleaners.” Verse 18,

“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself [because I talk to myself all the time because it’s only me in the world, and I’ll say to myself, ‘Self,] ‘You have plenty of gain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’ But God [“Oops, there’s someone else in the world?”] said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich towards God.”

What’s his error? Like, if we were in a Bible study and we were sitting around in a room and you had your coffee in your hand, what’s his error? Well, he focused only on the “now.” He didn’t realize that there’s a whole other world that exists beyond your death and that’s when God comes to him and says, “You fool! Your life is required of you. Now whose stuff is this going to be? You should have recognized the fleeting nature of your wealth, man. Instead of giving all your energy to accumulating goods, you should have given your energy to God and his Kingdom. You should be rich towards God.” In fact, that’s the very line that’s used in the passage. And at the very end of this section, Jesus kind of summarizes things in Luke 12:32. He says,



“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom [There’s a kingdom for you beyond the grave. There’s a kingdom, started now and will be consummated then. So,] Sell your possessions and give to the poor [that’s what it means to be rich towards God]. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”

You should invest in permanent stuff. Your energy should go towards permanent stuff, not fleeting stuff. You know that. Here’s why I know you know that: Imagine, if you will, you have a great Aunt who you have never met and never heard of, but you received a letter from her lawyer recently because she has passed away. She lived in the Los Angeles area and she had property. It overlooks the ocean. It’s quite beautiful. You go there and you see this property that has now been bequeathed to you. The property is amazing. It’s huge. The house, not so much. The house smells like cats and it’s old and it’s gross and you look around and you think, “Ooo, I don’t know what to do here.” So you call a contractor in and you say to the contractor, “Okay, so I need you to go away and prepare two plans for me. The first plan that I want you to prepare for me is one that is going to be about renovations. Like, what would it cost, what would it look like, what could we do with that wall? Renovation plan. Second one is that I need you to prepare a plan for if I just knocked the whole thing down and just started over again. What would that look like?” He goes away, he comes back, you sit at the table, brush away the cat hair, and you have these two plans in front of you and you’re looking at the two of them. Here’s what you will do. You will choose one or the other, but not both. None of you will choose both because you’re not a fool. See, what a fool would do here, would be, “You know, I’m going to renovate and invest my time, energy and money into the renovation of the fleeting thing and then I’ll knock it down.” “Huh?” You don’t do this. You’re not stupid. You don’t invest your time, energy, and money in fleeting things, right? You focus on things that are going to last, like being rich towards God. Or, do you focus on the things that don’t? Money is fleeting. This is what false teachers get wrong. They are trying to get you to focus on something that is a just-this-life thing. Godliness has value forever. Be rich towards God.

[Contentment is Simple]

Here’s the second one, okay? Money is fleeting, but the second way to get it wrong is this: Paul teaches that contentment is simple. I’ll read verse six and then verse seven and eight again:

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.”

Inevitably, whenever people want to talk to me about the teaching that I’ve done in the past, or even now, about money and possessions and what the Bible has to say about it, there always comes up one of the same questions. They say something like this: “Okay, I heard you say ‘God give me neither poverty nor riches but only my daily bread,’ so there is a river there. There is a bank that I don’t want to go aground on of poverty, because that’s bad, and there’s a bank that I don’t want to go aground on called riches, so there is something in between there, right? Some people are a little closer to the



riches side and some people a little closer to the poverty side, but the goal of your life is to keep between them. Don't run aground on either side. But what does that look like, right? I mean, in practical terms, what does that look like? How much is too much? What do I need to be content?" Usually when I respond to that I say, "First of all, I'm not going to give you a law. Laws do not motivate, so I'm going to give you the gospel. 'He who was rich became poor so that you may become rich,' so what does the gospel do to your giving patterns? He gave up everything for you, how much do you want to give up for him? Little bit?"

But, I want you to notice that in this passage right here, Paul actually answers the question, "How much do I need to be content with?" Right? "If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that." So the word 'clothing' there is a word that means a covering. It can mean clothing in a lot of contexts and it also means housing, right? Shelter. It's a covering. "If we have food and covering (whether clothing or shelter) we will be content with that." And yes, this is probably what we would call a synecdoche (that will be fun for you to share with your friends later). A synecdoche is a way of talking that takes a part to represent the whole. So the point he is making here is that, "We will be content with our basic needs. The simplest, basic stuff. That's all we need because we've got Jesus and he's enough. All we need is the basic stuff met." This is exactly what Jesus taught that God would provide for you. That if you follow Christ and you seek first his kingdom, he will provide for you that. Let me show you where he does that. So that story about the rich fool that I just told you, the response that people have to that is, "If we're not supposed to store up extra in our barns, what happens when my kids go to college or I retire? What happens when I get sick? Oh no, I don't know if I'm going to be taken care of." So Jesus responds to that kind of thinking preemptively and he says, in Luke 12:22,

"Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life [don't fret], what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear [food and covering]. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the wildflowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you - you of little faith! And don't set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them [need what? Food and covering]. But seek his kingdom, and these things [these what things? Food and covering. Basic needs] will be given to you as well."

You don't need to worry. God has guaranteed that he will take care of you.

My mother-in-law is one of my heroes. She was a missionary for a number of years. She is one of my heroes because at one particular point she was doing missions work with her husband, she laid down on the ground in a very rustic building in a very uncomfortable bed and she started saying, in that hour, what she has said ever since. She laid her head on her pillow, getting ready for a restless night



sleep, but she said, “The Lord is good.” My wife asked her mom, at one point, why she said that all the time and she said, “You know, I just decided that if I have a place to lay my head every night, a covering over my head, and just enough money to go to McDonalds maybe once a month, I’m okay.” Look, contentment is simple. God promises to meet our basic needs. We should be content with that, with the basic needs. Can I just tell you, when I read that and when I think about that, what I think - no way. I don’t say, “No way” because God’s not going to provide for my basic needs, I say, “No way” because basic needs? What? Like food and covering, that’s it? Um, cellphone. I mean, there are a lot of other things I need, like a carbon bike. I mean listen, there is a lot of stuff that I need.

I went to Africa, right? Travelled, same trip where I went by all the churches with my friend, went into a little community where there’s a pastor that we met. We sat down on his couch. He had a two room house. One room with a couch and a TV and a mini fridge. The next room was a bedroom and just had a bed in it. Honestly, the two rooms were about the size of my kitchen. He sat down with a smile on his face. He had a wife and two kids who slept all in this space. He was one of the only people around the refrigerator, he opened the refrigerator up, while the fuzzy television was showing a Zambian soccer game, and he pulls out bottled Coca-Cola. He hands it to me and says, “We usually only get one of these a month, but we spent a little extra because we knew you were coming.” He hands me a Coca-Cola and my friend a Coca-Cola and we’re sitting there on his dusty couch, flies everywhere, he sits down across from us and he says, “Isn’t the Lord good? God is providing for my church in miraculous ways and look at the bounty I have around me” [laughter]. He reported stories about how great God was and how joyous he was and how content he was with the way the Lord had been caring from him. I remember getting up out of that room, walking out, my friend pointed out the toilet, which they did not have in their house, which was a common toilet for the entire compound, and he walked by there and I said to my friend, “Steve, are you kidding me? How in the world can that man be so content? Does he not know what he’s missing? There is a lot of joy in indoor toilets [laughter]. Like, does he not have a clue what he’s missing? Basic needs? What? You can’t just be content with that.” Do you know why I think that? I think that because our consumer society convinces me, and everyone else, that contentment comes with a little more than we currently have. Like, I am inundated with that every day. I have what is called “affluenza”. You have it too. It’s a disease like the flu. You get it from the day you are born. You know how it’s transmitted? Advertising. It is. You hear, repeatedly, over and over and over again that, “Listen, you don’t want to old and bad, you want the new and improved.” All the time.

Craig Blomberg in his wonderful book called *Christians in the Age of Wealth* said this:

“Advertising bombards us daily, creating a consumer culture that is designed to make us feel shortchanged. Last year’s technology is obsolete; upgrade it at once! Don’t repair a broken item; throw it away and buy a new one. Acquire more, never be content with what you have, and always look for the improved model.”

Honestly, I have not seen this any more blatantly displayed than the advertising for manual razors to shave men’s faces. Have you ever thought about-- Listen, we mastered the razor when we went to two blades. There’s no more you can do. They used to use one blade and it was fine, but then they



went to two blades and now there's thirty-nine blades [laughter], right? And it's this big and you just scrape it across your face. You know the images they do on the TV for this, right? "The first blade gets this much of the hair, the second blade a little bit more, but at the thirty-eighth blade it finally takes care of the hair, your face, and your skeletal structure of your head" [laughter]. "No more hair!" And they have other things. "Oh, you don't like that? Oh, well my razor has thirty-eight blades and a little ball at the bottom so you don't actually need to move your hand. You just do this and it rotates to the shape of your face. And it has comfort strips because you need to have rubber rubbing against your face, right? To make you comfortable. I love rubber on my face." You know what, I watch the commercial and I think, "Man, I need a new razor" [laughter]. Did you know that Toyota right now has this commercial out (I drive a Toyota) that says, at the beginning with a Toyota Corolla going down the road, "How do you construct happiness? Can you create joy?" Now, I've got to tell you something. If you've got a Corolla, God bless you. I think that it is a really great, useful car, but I have never in my life sat inside a Corolla and thought to myself, "Now this is joy" [laughter]. And yet you want to buy a Corolla because you're like, "I don't know, maybe they did. Maybe it's not just a tin can. Maybe it's great. It's got this and..." "I've got an Iphone twelve, what's yours? A six? That's half as good. Mine levitates." Stop already [laughter]. But you have it. You have affluenza. It keeps coming at you over and over and over again saying what you have isn't good enough. You need another one. "You have a 4k TV? I've got a 9k TV. I don't even know what the 'k' stands for but I got em," right?

Sometimes I watch these ads with my family and I just stop in the middle and I actually pause it to my kids and I say one word: "Really? Like boys, really? Sophie, really? Really? Is your life going to be better because you own that thing?" The answer is of course no, but you and I buy into it over and over again. Look, I'm just trying to say that Paul's point here is what they get wrong, what the false teachers get wrong, is they want you to drink that Kool-Aid. They want you to get on that treadmill and keep trying to run it down, but I'm telling you that it's a dead end. You will never get where you're trying to go. Contentment isn't found with more stuff, it's just simpler than that. Seek first his Kingdom and all these things (the basics) will be added to you and we will be content with that because if we have Jesus we have enough.

[Loving Money is Foolish]

Here's the last one: loving money is foolish. Look at verses 9-10 with me,

"Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

This is a warning passage, right? It's essentially saying, "Look, you do know how dangerous money is, how dangerous the love of it is. I'm not talking about having it, it's talking about wanting more. Getting on that treadmill. Desiring, chasing after, thinking, 'If I just had a little bit more than I would be happy.' That thinking is dangerous." And he uses all sorts of images to try to describe it. I'll just point out two of them. The line, "Those who want to get rich fall into a trap" - so you've got a picture of the meat



hanging from a tree and a deadfall underneath it that has been constructed so that the bear, when he comes along, will think he is walking on the forest floor. When he reaches, still focused on that meat, he doesn't realize that his feet have given way and he's falling to his doom. He might even hold onto it and think he's got it, but while he's falling backwards he's like, "I got it" and he's nearly dead. The love of money makes you fall into a pit like that. You're the bear if you love money. It focuses your attention off of everything else.

The other line, "It's harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction" - that's the language it uses of ships. The Titanic plunged to the bottom of the sea. One of my favourite images of plunging to one's destruction is actually in *The Lord of the Rings*. You know the ring of power in *The Lord of the Rings* is this intoxicating thing that everyone says, "If I get it, if I have it, I can do amazing things with it. Think about it. If I had that ring of power I could be invisible. If I had that ring of power I could use it for good and govern the nations." And everybody who touches this ring, it goes to their head and destroys them, but everybody wants it, Gollum especially. At the end of the movies, the trilogy, there's this wonderful scene where he's finally got the ring back and he's holding it in the middle of the air as he's falling backwards into a pool of molten lava, but he's so happy because he's got the thing, not knowing that it killed him. That's what the love of money does to you. It lays waste to everything else in your life. All you do it focus on that. You don't realize there's another life after this one. You're rich toward you, not toward God and that's what lasts forever.

Look, I'll give you another image. Whenever I read this passage I think of myself and it's like standing at a posted minefield, you know, on the edge of it. On the other side is the riches of King Tut and you're standing there and you see the riches and you think, "Ooo, that's delightful." There's a sign that says, "Danger, minefield," and in that minefield you can see the dismembered body parts of people you know who tried to get through it and their head is there and their arm is there. Their skeletal remains everywhere. Doesn't look like anyone actually got over there, but you stand at the edge and you think to yourself, "Yeah, I bet I could, right? I'm not stupid like them. I can jump really well." It'll kill you. That's what he's saying. There are those who have, because of their love of money, wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. You can see their remains and you're not better than they are.

My point in all of this is quite simple. Loving money is foolish and wanting to get rich is dumb. Even if TV preachers and the whole society keep trying to convince you to buy more and more, you don't listen to them. You don't listen to them. You stop the TV and say, "Really?" God will provide what you need and we will be content with that and with him. My favourite Psalm, (one of them) Psalm 73:25,

"Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

May it be so. Let's pray,

Father, I'm so thankful for your kindness to us to give us warnings like a good father does. He warns his children of the pitfalls, of the danger, of the minefields. But I pray father, that by the power to your



spirit you'd help us heed that. I pray that you would find this week and in the months and years ahead, a contented people who see financial gain as being something to use to be rich towards you and not just rich toward us. We want to thank you for providing everything we need. We see these verses, we recognize that you are truthful and right and you've shown yourself faithful to them. We don't go without. But we ask father, that you would help to press these thoughts down deeper into us, father, that we might reflect more of who you are. For the glory of your name and the good of your people, in Jesus name we pray, Amen.