

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Pentecost 9
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Sermon by Pastor Daniel Gensmer
Enjoy God's Riches (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

¹⁷Instruct those who are rich in this present age not to be arrogant or to put their hope in the uncertainty of riches, but rather in God, who richly supplies us with all things for our enjoyment.

¹⁸Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹In this way they are storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

So here we are, one week in, and we get to talk about money! But whether we've been walking with Christ 50 years or 5 days - the relationship between a Christian and their wealth is an important topic. Jesus confronted salesmen who turned God's house into a marketplace; Jesus taught about paying taxes to Caesar; Jesus praised a widow who entrusted her final two coins to God; and when Jesus called wee little Zaccheus by name, the tax collector's relationship with money changed. Jesus talked about wealth, but when he did, he wasn't simply talking about the cash in our pocket. Jesus was exposing what the human heart treasured the most, which brings us to the words of Paul as we continue to engage in this discussion about wealth today.

So let's jump right in... "*Instruct those who are rich in this present world*".... Hmm... alright... So, there's a command, and it's for the rich people. So let's figure this out, where are the rich people at? I don't see Elon Musk, the world's first trillionaire; that would have been easy. I didn't run a credit check on everyone before I got here to Emmanuel last week. I didn't see any of you pull up to church this morning in your own private helicopter... so where are the rich people at? And don't worry, I am not about to start singling people out.

I suppose we could play the comparison game though and look at the annual US median income of \$84,000 and compare it to \$14,000 in China, or maybe a measly \$260 per year in Burundi. But I don't think Paul's point was to compare tax brackets. You

see, Paul is addressing "those who are rich" and this word he uses describes those who have more than what is necessary. So, do you have a roof over your head, clothes on your back and food in your belly? Alright the basics are done! But did you have the time and money to go through a Starbucks drive-thru or scroll through your Netflix subscription in your free time? Me too. Praise God for that because God has a message for us today, and here's what He says... "*Command those who are rich [THAT'S US!] in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*" Did you hear that? Those riches are for us to enjoy! So let's dig in today, and figure out how we **ENJOY GOD'S RICHES!**

Maybe that phrase in and of itself seems a little odd. Enjoy God's Riches. Maybe it just feels a little "unchristian"? Like shouldn't Christians strive to live simple lives, avoid indulging themselves with the good things in life, especially when there are people out there that don't have the luxuries we get to enjoy. Maybe the question goes like this... Jesus carried a cross... Shouldn't I?

But the greater question is, are riches good? To answer this question we have to go all the way back to where God's riches began. Because back at the beginning of the world, God showered his creation with riches. God created light, trees, dogs and cats, gold in the ground, beautiful sunsets at night, tomatoes to put on our salads, and the blessing of marriage. It's not like I could even try to list all the riches God has showered us with, but there at creation God made one powerful observation.

IT WAS VERY GOOD

God's riches are good! The blessings he showers his people with are good! All the Enchilada bakes I tried last week... GOOD! The Starbucks you picked up on the way to church today... GOOD! So, if God's riches are good, why does Paul immediately follow that with a warning?

Paul gives us this warning because enjoying God's riches and depending on God's riches are two completely different things. Notice first how Paul says, "Do not be arrogant." But arrogance isn't simply bragging about what you own. Arrogance is when what you own defines who you are. Success

becomes your identity. Your house, your tools, your salary are all markers of your own worth.

But Paul's second warning is even deeper. Paul doesn't say, don't have wealth, don't enjoy wealth, don't spend wealth. He says **DON'T PLACE YOUR HOPE IN WEALTH.** Why? Because as Paul said, riches are uncertain.

Think about it this way... Money can buy a security system, but it can't promise your family another tomorrow. It can pay the doctor's bill, but it can't conquer death. Money can make life more comfortable, but it can never make life certain. And that is only if the stock market doesn't crash, war doesn't break out, and you don't get let go from work. Suddenly, placing our hope in wealth seems awful foolish, because in that moment we are relying on something created rather than the God who created it.

But oftentimes that "false hope" is subtle. I don't think anyone got out of bed this morning to bow down and pray to the money gods. But when that life crisis hits, what do you do first? Do you fold your hands to pray to God? Or fold your fingers around your phone to check your bank app? And of course, no one likes surprise expenses. The car breaks down, a medical bill, a job change – those are difficult. But do those expenses steal more joy from life than the sins that separate you from God? Do they cause more fear than the thought of spending eternity apart from Christ? Because sometimes those moments reveal where our hearts have placed their hope. God's riches are good, but **Sin takes something GOOD and makes it GOD.**

But this is where Paul turns the page. Don't put your hope in riches, they're uncertain! Put your hope in God. Is he a stingy God? A God who wants us to live joyless lives? No. Listen again to Paul's words: "[Put your hope] in God, who richly supplies us with all things for our enjoyment."

Our God of all creation didn't hoard his riches. And if you want to know just how generous God is, don't look at your paycheck, your house, or even creation. Look at the cross. Because the greatest riches God possesses aren't piles of gold buried beneath mountains; it's Jesus, our almighty God wrapped in human flesh. Our one-of-a-kind savior, God's dearly loved son. And what did God do with this priceless treasure?

He gave Jesus to you.

God gave you Jesus when God set aside his power and riches to be born as a baby. **God gave you** something wealth never could - an irrevocable identity as his child when you were pulled out of the baptismal waters dripping in God's love. Wealth couldn't conquer death, but Christ did as he gave his dying breath for you on the cross.

And God continues to pour out his riches on you today... In just a few short moments, God will do what he has always done. **Give.** Into your outspread palms God places the very body of Christ that was given for you so that your teeth can press into your Savior. Into your lips God places the blood that was shed for your forgiveness so that you can taste the riches of Christ's victory. And as you walk away from His table, God gives you something riches could never afford. Certainty, certainty that forgiveness is yours.

And what do we do with this gift? **We ENJOY GOD'S RICHES!** You don't take a gift no matter how precious it is and ignore it. Parents imagine saving up and buying that toy your son or daughter have been asking for just to see them walk that bicycle or dollhouse to the garage and leave it there for the next 10 years. No when you get a gift, you enjoy that gift. So when God showers you with riches, enjoy God's gift. But enjoy God's greatest riches first.

Enjoy the certainty of forgiveness that is yours through Christ, and walk through life unburdened by the chains of sin.

Enjoy the identity that God gives you in Baptism that doesn't rise and fall with your paycheck, because it rests in Christ.

Enjoy the certainty that no depression, diagnosis, or death can ever take Christ away from you.

And because those riches can never be lost... You are finally free to enjoy every other gift God gives. Enjoy dinner around your table tonight. Enjoy laughing with your grandchildren. Enjoy the sunrise in the morning and the paycheck God provides. We can finally enjoy these, because, since our hope is in God, everything can finally become just a gift again.

But never forget which gift is the greatest. Long after food has lost its taste. Long after the house has

fallen into disrepair. Long after the retirement account runs dry... Christ will still be yours. The forgiveness he won will still be yours. Your place in God's family will still be yours. Eternal life will still be yours. Enjoy the riches God has showered you with. But above all, enjoy the greatest gift - Jesus Christ.

So where are my rich people at? They're right here. No matter whether you live paycheck to paycheck or with a pension, you're rich. You're rich because Christ is yours. Your sins are forgiven. Your Savior is alive. Your baptism is still your identity. Heaven is still your home. In Christ you have already received "that which is truly life." Now that's wealth. So, enjoy God's riches. But above all, enjoy God's greatest gift. Enjoy your Savior, because God gave Jesus to you. Enjoy God's riches. Amen.