

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
October 6, 2013**

***“Christ’s Love, Our Calling”
Year 4: Love Speaks***

1 Timothy 6:6-16

Love Speaks with a Focused Heart

Therefore:

- 1. Flee!***
- 2. Pursue!***
- 3. Confess!***

Hymns: 573 – 754

Distribution: 421 – 310

Closing: 333

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

1 Timothy 6:6-16 –

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. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men 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.

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time--God, the blessed and

only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

There’s a common scene playing itself out in many classrooms this time of year. The bell goes off for class to begin. The students take their seats at their desks or tables, and the teacher begins to cover the material for that hour’s lesson. As the class begins, the students are relatively ready to go, with a pen in hand and a notebook and textbook in front of them. But as the lesson goes on, a transformation takes place. After a time, bodies begin to sag in the chairs. Arms that are taking notes get tired. Eyes become heavy. Perhaps even heads droop as well, supported by an arm. Eyes might even lose their focus as things become fuzzy and blurred. That scene occurs in many a classroom, even those that offer multimedia methods of education. Perhaps you yourself have felt that feeling when you’ve been in a meeting or watching the game at home.

That same feeling can also happen spiritually. Faith’s focus, which early in a person’s faith-life is sharp and acute, can become fuzzy and out-of-focus. A Christian’s priorities and goals can be affected by the world that we live in. Therefore, as we continue the service series we’re in called **“Love Speaks”** today, let’s consider the theme **“Love Speaks with a Focused Heart.”** We will do this by meditating on Scripture’s words from 1 Timothy 6. **Let’s learn about three encouragements that this reading gives us so we may have a focused heart.**

1. Flee!

Our reading began, ***“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. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men 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."

The first concept we hear Paul tell Timothy is "Flee!" Paul talks about the vital need for Timothy to flee the temptation to love money. He does this by means of a number of very vivid words that are warnings:

- Trap – This literally is the word for a trap or snare that a hunter lays for an animal. I'm reminded of our modern-day mousetraps. The mouse looks and sees something good, but perhaps can tell something isn't quite right. It then convinces itself that it can be careful and get the food. It starts licking and gets so excited about how yummy the peanut butter is. It digs in and then, all of a sudden, SNAP—the trap springs. Paul's picture is that the love of money can be like that.
- Plunge – This is a basic word for "sink," the basic thing that happens at sea when a ship has been doomed. Sunk. To the bottom of the sea. No matter how mighty or majestic a ship may appear while floating on the top of the water, it is vulnerable to running into things that damage it and sink it. (That sure has been proven true in history, hasn't it?)
- Ruin and destruction – Both of these words do not imply "extinction" but – as well translated – the ruin of a person. This is a fall and a failure, and the end of prosperity.
- Root – This is the actual word for a plant's root, and I think of the dandelions that sink those thick, nasty roots straight down. They are the source of an ugly, hated weed and they are just about impossible to get rid of totally. Such is the nature of the love of money.
- Eager – Literally, this word means to "reach out." These are people who are

"reaching out" for money. I think of the picture of someone toward the top of a ladder who is painting or cleaning out the gutters who thinks, "I can just reach a little farther!" Overextending will result in a tragic fall.

- Wandered – Literally, "seduced!"
- Pierced through – Very well translated, this word pictures something that literally has been pierced through to be cooked as supper over the campsite fire.

These are the dangers of the love of money. Therefore, flee!

Now some disclaimers are in order:

1. Money itself is not evil. It is a necessary part of our world that can be used responsibly without greed entering the picture. But it is dangerous! Ecclesiastes 5 says, *"Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless."*
2. Also, being a member of the poor class or the middle class is not a "more godly life" than that of one blessed with much money. Being rich is not a sin. Abraham, who was featured in our Old Testament lesson, was a rich man.

Yet we could ask, is this an exaggeration? Is Paul overstating his case a bit? Is the love of money that insidious, harmful, and deadly? A look out there in our world would show us. Drug deals gone bad have left thousands dead in our streets. Competitions by the mafia for power and money have been around for centuries. Money-hungry company presidents have ripped off their workers and come to ruin. People who take clever risks in the stock market have "reached out" too far and lost it all. But it's not just "out there," is it? The temptation for loving money, Paul says, is even in young Pastor Timothy's heart, and it is in your heart also. Even for a pious Christ, there's

an interesting line we should be aware. It's the line between "responsible stewardship" and a "sinful focus." A careful management of the blessings of God can turn into obsession and a worry. The most pious Christian even needs to remember this!

As we consider all of this, we have to admit that our country and our society will do us no favors in being a model for us to follow. **We need to be told to "Flee!"**

2. Pursue!

We see our second concept as our sermon text says: *"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world and we will take nothing out of it."* Not only does Paul tell Timothy to "Flee!" **He also tells him, "Pursue!"**

What is he to pursue? First of all, contentment! The picture of contentment here is that a person has everything that they need (not "want!") for their life. Literally, "having food and covering, we will be content with that." We had a great illustration of this in our Old Testament lesson for today. In a remarkable turn of events, when four kings invaded Palestine and carried off his nephew Lot, Abraham responded. He mustered his 318 trained men in his household, pursued the armies that conquered his nephew Lot's city of Sodom, and defeated them. He was in a position to ask for whatever he would like to have! We read before, *"The king of Sodom said to Abram, 'Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.' But Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich' (Gen. 14).* Abram could have had extra wealth and money for his efforts in rescuing Lot's city, but he trusted that the Lord would provide for him and his was content with what he had.

What else is young Pastor Timothy to pursue? *"But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good*

fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called..." We have a "fruits of the Spirit" type of list here. Rather than loving the money of this world, Paul tells Timothy six major fruits to focus his heart on and pursue – righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness – each of which could be its own sermon. Then he tells him to "fight the good fight of faith" and to "take hold of eternal life." The feeling we get from those words is there is a struggle that will be going on as long as the Christian lives in this world. Temptation and traps that money provide lie all around us. **We need to fight against these advances daily and pursue godliness!**

Why would we do that? Because it's the "right thing to do?" Because it's our "duty?" No, Paul gives us another motivation, a much better one. He writes, *"In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Do you see why this is important? Paul puts Timothy under an oath to keep this command to have a focused faith. The oath is two-fold:

1. In the sight of God, who has made everything. In other words, the Lord has made Timothy as well as every single thing on this planet. And he has not made him to be a lover of money!
2. In the sight of his Savior Christ Jesus, who made a confession before Pontius Pilate. Do you remember that confession? In John 18 we read, *"Pilate replied. 'It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?' Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.' 'You are a king, then!' said Pilate. Jesus answered, 'You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the*

side of truth listens to me.’ ‘What is truth?’ Pilate asked.”

What was Jesus’ confession leading to? Why was he there? He had come to confess the truth of his people’s sins and his own role as the Messiah. This was all leading to a cross. It was leading to the place where Jesus would suffer and die for the sins of the world. The “immortal” One that Paul refers to in this reading would take on our mortality as true man and would pay the agonizing price for our sins. But that was not the end of the line! He would rise again and now lives immortal. He has prepared our place in heaven with him. This is the One Paul places Timothy under oath to. Christ did not forsake his mission for the wealth of the world, and Timothy should not either!

We are under the same oath and our thoughts and actions are under the scrutiny of the same God. We have been set free from our sins and the allure of the riches and money of this world. Our focus is clear. Our priorities are right. **These fruits of the Spirit and the contentment that God can give, these are what we pursue!**

3. Confess!

One more encouragement remains. We have heard how we are to “Flee!” and “Pursue!” in our reading Paul also talks about a third encouragement: “Confess!”

This is not a confession of sins that he is referring to. **It is a confession of faith.** Where do we see people confessing their faith in this text? First, Paul mentions that Timothy should take hold of *“the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”* This is a mysterious reference to us, since Paul doesn’t give any more background information on what he’s referring to. Our People’s Bible commentary says this very well might refer to Timothy’s baptism as an adult, when he would have confessed his faith before people gathered together. Timothy had confessed his faith at

that time, and had continued to do so as a young pastor.

Second, we already mentioned Christ’s confession. He faithfully taught God’s truth and did so even under great duress in the courts of the high priest and Pontius Pilate.

And thirdly, we hear a confession of Paul. We almost get the feeling that he can’t contain himself, but has to praise God at the end of this section to Timothy as he refers to *“the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time--God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.”* Paul’s words overflow into a confession! He gave that confession in an age where the Caesar thought he was the King of kings and Lord of lords. But Paul set the record straight as far as who the greatest and most exalted King was!

We also confess our faith to the world as our love speaks. We will confess this as we speak with a focused heart. How?

1. You will confess the truth with your life as a witness. As you view money and riches differently from those around you, your witness will be evident to some. Those you become close to who are not of the faith will notice your priorities, which are different from this world’s. Your life will be a testimony to them.
2. Secondly, as you are asked about your unique perspective on life as you live with a focused heart, your mouth can speak as you “make the good confession” to others. You can tell them about the One who has made you wealthier than any amount of money can make you in this life. You can tell them of the One who emptied himself of power and glory so that you might have the riches of heaven. You can tell them of the one who will provide your daily bread and has given you

contentment with whatever he has chosen to bless you with.

3. And thirdly, you can confess this through your church and synod as your focused faith does not put its trust in money will give its first-fruits to the Lord's work. Again, our example of Abraham giving a tenth of everything to Melchizedek, the priest who blessed him, is a good one for us. As we practice faithful stewardship and bring our offerings to the Lord from our contentment, trusting heart, he will use those offerings to speak to others with mouths and lives of those whom you support.

So when it comes to Christian focus in your personal stage of life, where are you? Alert and sharp? Or has faith's focus sagged and the demanding daily schedule and the effect of this world caused you to lose some of your focus? If that's the case, **may Scripture's words through Paul to Timothy encourage us today toward a focused heart:**

1. **Flee!**
2. **Pursue**
3. **Confess!**

As we do this, may we see the focus of our Savior who would not be deterred from saving us, but went to the cross willingly for our sins. And may that cause us to re-sharpen our focus to fight the good fight of faith and to let our love speak! Amen.