**Life That Is Truly Life**

**The Word**

Read together 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (and Revelation 3:14-22 and Matthew 6:19-23, 31-33 time- permitting)

**The Big Idea**

God invites us into a life where we give ourselves away in service to his kingdom by investing our time, talents, and treasures in the things that have eternal consequences. Such a pursuit, far from robbing us of life, actually offers us life that is truly life.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Take a few minutes to consider 1 Timothy 6:17-19 together. What’s standing out to you most?

2. Consider one or two of the following questions for group discussion:

a. Consider the dot and the line analogy from Randy Alcorn and his five-minutes-after-you-die test. Five minutes after you die, looking back on your life in this world, what will become clearer to you? What do you imagine wanting to change about how you’re approaching your life?

b. Consider the thought experiment given on Sunday: A life where life-style spending continues to increase with increased income vs. a life where everything made beyond a modest income level is given away in service to God’s kingdom. Honestly assess in which life you think you’d be happier.

c. Consider the analogy of the two restaurants: 1) a cafeteria line with limited supply where you go through once vs. 2) A fine restaurant with a great chef where you serve the patrons and receive plenty of good food on your breaks. Under which image do you find yourself currently operating (or maybe you see elements of both)?

3. “Chances are you’ve never met an unhappy generous person.” Where can you testify to the joy of generosity in your own life or in observing someone else’s life?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Our new Grace in Action Initiative

 A. The kingdom focus: stewardship, generosity, and sacrifice to seek first the kingdom

B. Last week we saw how the early church community had experienced “life that is truly life” in the gospel and that erupted in lives of radical generosity and sacrifice

C. This new initiative is our response to the Laodicean challenge we identified over a year ago. Living in Orange County always presents us with the danger that we will be under the spell of the treasures and pleasures of this world.

II. There’s an interesting pattern in Scripture when talking about worldly treasures

 A. The authors don’t just shame us and call us sinful and greedy

B. Rather they call us foolish and deceived and call us to pursue a far superior treasure in the gospel

C. Consider the rich man who builds bigger barns to store up his excess crops. Jesus doesn’t say, “you wicked man.” He says, “you fool.”

D. Consider the man who discovers a treasure hidden in a field and sells all he has for it. He isn’t considered sacrificial, he’s considered having done the only rational thing.

III. The Laodicean Church (Revelation 3:14-22)

A. They are under a spell

1. Their faith is lukewarm and they’ve lost their passion for Jesus

2. They are enamored by the treasures and pleasures of the world

3. In their worldly treasures they have a sense of self-sufficiency, so Jesus has been pushed aside because they don’t think need him.

 B. Jesus breaks the spell and shows them true reality

 1. They are self-deceived: “you don’t realize”

2. In reality, they aren’t rich in the most important ways. Rather, they’re poor, blind, naked

3. Jesus calls them back to himself as the one who offers true riches, clothing, and sight that is far superior to what the world offers.

C. “If we consider the unblushing promises of reward … promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased.” – C.S. Lewis

IV. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

A. Notice he doesn’t call the rich Christians sinful or attempt to trigger shame in them; rather he calls them to gratitude/enjoyment of what God has given them, and he calls them into better treasures through generosity

 B. Reality check: there is “this present age” and “the coming age”

 1. The dot and line analogy (Randy Alcorn)

 2. The primary spell cast over us is this idea: “This world is my home. This is where I should pursue security, wealth, fame, and comfort.”

3. 5 minutes after we die, how will we look back on our lives in “this present age”

C. In light of reality

1. Put your hope, identity, and security in God, not worldly wealth

2. Break the spell by being rich in good deeds, generous, investing what you have in God’s kingdom which goes on forever.

3. There are so many ways to invest in God’s kingdom by using our time, talents, and treasures as God leads us

4. In this way, we can experience life that is truly life

 5. “Chances are you’ve never met an unhappy generous person”

V. Matthew 6:19-21

 A. Storing treasures is great; we just need to store them in the right place

 B. Your heart naturally follows your treasures

 C. If your eyes are healthy (=if your focus is in the right place) all is well

1. Our default focus is the here and now: Childhood / College / Job / Marriage / House / Kids / Work / Retirement / Die

 2. Oftentimes we just have a Christian version of that same focus on this life

D. God is promising to take care of all those earthly things if we simply focus on his kingdom (6:31:33)

 E. Server analogy

1. Life as a cafeteria line (you only go through once and there’s a limited supply, so grab as much as you can).

2. Life as a nice restaurant with an outstanding chef (God), and I get to serve him and others knowing there is plenty left for me. In the restaurant, we have a role of servant to the greatest boss in the world. One who knows our needs and has promised to give us food, drink and a servant's uniform.

3. Again, Jesus is pointing out two ways to live, life and life that is truly life.

VI. Matthew 13:22-23

A. A kingdom-focused life bears fruit. Spiritual fruit. God wants to use a person who is good soil. He promises amazing things will happen. After all, it's a miracle that a seed can enter the ground and sprout into a field of wheat! (v. 23)

B. The seed among thorns didn’t produce a crop because 1) Worries of this life 2) Deceitfulness of wealth

C. We can trust in God with our worries, and we can be clear that money will never give us what it promises to give us. Rather, financial resources are given to us to expand the Kingdom of God.

VII. Conclusion

 A. We are inviting you into the Journey of Generosity

B. It removes the daily worries for the day, it puts wealth in the right perspective. It allows us time together to allow the Word of God to take root in our life.

C. Jesus is offering us life that is truly life with him: “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” (Revelation 3:20)

D. Join us at the Journey of Generosity on February 21/21 (or March 8th)