

“Live the True Life!”

Lori Claudio in her September 30, 2001 sermon titled, “Living the True Life”, asked, “What prompts us to expend energy chasing after a six-figure income only to wake up and realize that we don’t know our children and/or significant other? (PAUSE) What keeps us living a life of quiet desperation, lived inside impressive walls?” (PAUSE)

Claudio answered her own questions, “We love money. Money gives us identity. It gives us power.” **She went on to say, “In verse 9 of today’s epistle lesson, Paul tells us that the *‘love of money is the source of all kinds of evil.’*”** (PAUSE) Then she continued, “Let’s look at that for a moment.” (PAUSE)

Claudio pointed out, “Debt is our most raging addiction. Why – we even have support groups for the compulsive shopper.” (PAUSE) She noted, “Debtors are becoming alarmingly younger and younger. College students, for example, are prime targets for credit companies. From

tuition to books to basic necessities and pleasures, students are encouraged to charge it up. Not knowing how to get out from under, some have been driven to commit suicide.” (PAUSE)

Claudio asked, “Is money the root of the evils that ravage our society? ...” (PAUSE) She concluded, “Paul does not tell us that money is the root of all evil, but (pause) the love of it is!” (PAUSE) (“Living the True Life”, September 30, 2001 by Lori Claudio)

Let’s look again at what Paul communicated to Timothy about the matter of the love of money. **In verses 9 – 10, he wrote, “*But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and are caught in the trap of many foolish and harmful desires, which pull them down to ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a source of all kinds of evil.*”**

(PAUSE) “***Some have been so eager to have it (pause) that they have wandered away from the faith and have broken their hearts with many sorrows.***” (PAUSE)

Our primary Scripture for today is the Lectionary Epistle Reading from 1 Timothy. The Gospel Lectionary Reading, which I did not read as part of the Scripture Reading is Luke 16:19-31. That Text is a parable told by Jesus. Luke seems to indicate Jesus shared this teaching because the Pharisees “loved money” and they tried to make fun of him because he called people to choose between serving money or God. (PAUSE) **One might understand part of the purpose of this parable about poor Lazarus and the rich man (pause) was to affirm something like Paul’s insight on the subject of the love of money.** Coming out of this expectation, let me share with you, a brief synopsis of the of Luke 16:19-31. (PAUSE)

Lazarus was not only very poor but he was also extremely ill. From the Pharisee point of view, he was someone, who should be treated as an outcast of Jewish Society. The Rich Man was very ostentatious about his wealth. He did not want everyone to think he was merely wealthy but that he was one of the few super rich. His clothing, home, food – all of those

things and more (pause) were very expensive! (PAUSE) In accordance with Jewish customs, the rich were expected to help provide for the economic well-being of the poor. So, someone would periodically bring poor sick Lazarus to the door of this extremely wealthy man (pause) in the hope that poverty stricken and ill Lazarus might receive nourishment from the food dropped from the rich man's table. Evidently, (pause) the reception Lazarus received was very poor, indeed! The rich man seems to have received enjoyment from the licking of Lazarus' sores by the rich man's dogs. (PAUSE)

As Jesus said in the parable, both Lazarus and the rich man died. Then, to the rich man's utter amazement, he saw Lazarus sitting at the Great Banquet Table next to Father Abraham, (pause) while the one, who had loved money and expensive things so much, (pause) found himself in overwhelming pain in the midst of the fire of Hades! (PAUSE) **Finding himself in such a bad predicament, (pause) does the former rich man realize he failed to treat Lazarus properly during their worldly lives?**

No! (PAUSE) Continuing to want to mistreat Lazarus, he begged Father Abraham to treat Lazarus the same way he had treated him, when they were both still alive! (PAUSE) The former very rich man wanted Lazarus to serve him by coming down to him in Hades and bringing him relief.

Father Abraham would have none of it. (PAUSE) After Abraham explained the technical problems with the pitiful Hades dweller's plan, the terrified elitist came up with another suggestion of how Father Abraham could use Lazarus to help him! (PAUSE) There was still no apology and his audacity revealed himself to be an utter fool! (PAUSE) The former rich man, at least had pity on his five brothers, so he begged Father Abraham to return Lazarus to the world of the living to warn his brothers to mend their ways, so they would not also end up in Hades. (PAUSE)

Yes, as the story goes, the lover of riches had destroyed himself and (pause) his relationship with God's Reign and Eternal Life. (PAUSE)

As an interesting aside, Father Abraham's response (pause) provided insight into why the Pharisees and other adversaries of Jesus continued to

reject him. (PAUSE) They really did not understand what God had been trying to reveal to them through Moses and the Prophets – the Truth had alluded them because of their love of money, wealth, and power!

(PAUSE) After Abraham, the Father of the Jewish Faith, rejected the final request and protest about sending someone from the dead, (pause) Jesus insinuated through Father Abraham’s words (pause) that the five brothers and their allies, would continue to reject him even after his Death and Resurrection! (PAUSE)

Jesus’ affirmation of Paul’s insight about the love of money (pause) brings us back to the Apostle’s counsel to Timothy. (PAUSE) Instead of being destroyed by the love of money and by all of the associated bad behavior, **Paul wrote in verses 11-12, 1 “*But you, man of God, avoid all these things. Strive for righteousness, godliness, faith, agape love, endurance, and gentleness. Run your best in the race of faith, and win eternal life for yourself; for it was to this life that God called you when you firmly professed your faith before many witnesses.*”** (PAUSE) Those qualities

are very important and meaningful to all of us, as we seek to follow Jesus' example of living the True Life! (PAUSE)

Before we move beyond that insight about the love of money, let's return to what the Apostle Paul wrote about the fleeting value of wealth in the early verses of today's Scripture. **In verses 6-8, Paul stated, “*Well, religion does make us very rich, if we are satisfied with what we have. What did we bring into the world? Nothing! What can we take out of the world? Nothing! So then, if we have food and clothes, that should be enough for us.*”** (PAUSE)

The Apostle Paul elaborated on his commands to Timothy about how he was to live and instruct the people under his care. **In verse 17, the elder Teacher and Preacher wrote, “*Command those who are rich in the things of this life not to be proud, but to place their hope, not in such an uncertain thing as riches, but in God, Who generously gives us everything for our enjoyment.*”** (PAUSE) Living the True Life means we put our hope and trust in God! (PAUSE)

Paul's final command to Timothy was in verse 18, "*Command them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share with others.*" (PAUSE) Contrary to the world's way of living, when one is controlled by the love of money, Timothy and we are to take charge over our lives and to live the way of agape love – follow the example of Jesus living the True Life – the New Life in Christ. (PAUSE)

The Apostle concluded our Scripture, summing up in **verse 19, "*In this way (pause) they will store up for themselves a treasure which will be a solid foundation for the future. And then they will be able to win the life which is True Life.*"** (PAUSE) The True Life – the Treasure we can store up for our future in God's Fulfilled Kingdom is (pause) the New Life in Jesus Christ – the Life of Agape Love – self-giving and sacrificial love.

Amen.

