

^{6,6} But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. ¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. [English Standard Version]

Today's scripture – given as advice for the early Christian Church – applies to the same Body of Christ 2 millennia later: Pursue "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness" (v. 11). The passage goes on, however, to focus on the danger of the love of money. Yet it does not completely reject the rich.

Indeed, wealth in, and of itself, is not evil. Throughout the scriptures, there is a place for the proper use of wealth. The good wife in Proverbs 31 is praised for her entrepreneurial skills. Throughout the royal psalms, the wise king is also a wealthy king who uses his power and resources to secure justice and defend the rights of the poor. Throughout the wisdom literature, the wise person tends also to be wealthy, so long as that wealth is gained justly and is used to help the poor. While indeed, the overarching attitude toward wealth in the New Testament, especially in Jesus' teaching, tends to warn about its corrupting influence—yet examples are also given of wealthy people who use their money in the service of the kingdom of God, including the **women** who supported Jesus and His disciples during His earthly ministry.

In vv. 17-19, Timothy is instructed to give six commands to the wealthy people: (1) "not to be haughty," (2) not to set their hopes on "the uncertainty of riches"—God provides richly! (3) "do good," (4) "be rich" in good works, (5) be generous, and (6) be ready to share

All this means that wealth in and of itself can be an especially corrupting pursuit. Nonetheless, if wealth is used for God's purposes; ***we do not become its servants.***

Today, I believe that I have been directed to focus on one part of the scripture lesson, *i.e.* the part of the discussion in verse 7 – the issue of CONTENTMENT.

How many times have you caught yourself believing that the purchase of one certain thing – clothing, jewelry, book, trip, gift, electronic device – whatever – just something that you can buy – will bring you satisfaction or contentment. But, you found that before very long after its purchase, the luster has worn off. Once achieved, the object of the chase loses its appeal. Once it is obtained, something else is lusted after to give the fix.

Or maybe you haven't "caught" yourself doing it. Maybe you need a May Seaver to call it to your attention.ⁱ

Can you look into your closet, or your basement, or the trunk of your car, or elsewhere and find yourself wondering why you have certain things.

Today, I want us to look at whether or not, like Mick Jagger sang, "we can't get no satisfaction" regardless of how much we try.

THAT is the bad stewardship – when we keep trying and trying and never can satisfy our longing for more and more. There is no amount that is enough.

We buy so much stuff that we just throw away. Research done by Columbia University and a trade journal called BioCycle shows that we throw away, every single day, **7.1 pounds of trash for every man, woman, and child in the country.**ⁱⁱ

George Carlin is known for his comedy routine some while back entitled "STUFF," in which he said: ***A house is just a place to keep your stuff while you go out and get more stuff.***

He ***used*** to be right. But, that simply is no longer true:

The self storage industry in the United States generated more than \$22 billion in annual U.S. revenues (2012). Total self storage rentable space in the US is now 2.3 billion square feet.

In other words, every man, woman, and child in American could stand in the storage buildings rented in America – all at the same time. ⁱⁱⁱ

We are a nation of hoarders – looking, looking, trying to find satisfaction. And we are not.

But, there is a way.

I explained it to the children in the Children’s Sermon. ^{iv}

...

Can you think of anything for which you spent \$10.00 in the past week that gave you more satisfaction than saving a life?

The **membership** of the United Methodist Church IN THE UNITED STATES ALONE is about **7.5 million**.

The **goal for Imagine No Malaria is \$75 million**.

Two things about those two numbers stick out to me:

(1) if every US UMC member made a \$10 contribution, the goal would instantly be met.

(2) If every US UMC member made a \$10 contribution, we would save as many lives as we have members.

It’s an new twist to the old evangelical mantra: **“Each one bring one.”**

Now it’s **“each one save one.”**

I’m going to invite you to try it out. I believe that there is not a person in this place who cannot afford to save a life – TODAY.

If you don't have \$10.00 in cash or check today, you can take the facsimile of a \$10 bill on the tear off sheet of your bulletin. Just print your name on it, and that will be your IOU.

I am going to invite every person who is here today to take this experiment – use your money in the most satisfying way you can in God's Kingdom. Jesus said, **“No greater love than this, for a person to lay down his life for another.”** You don't have to lay down your life – just \$10.00 – to save a life.

And I'm going to offer it as a **money back guarantee**.

If, after one week, you don't believe that this saving a life was a most satisfying way to spend \$10 of your resources, you let me know – privately or publicly (your choice.) I will refund your \$10.

There are offering plates on each side of the sanctuary. Would you come, now. Come.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

SHORT SKIT DONE BEFORE SERMON BEGINS:

NARRATOR (Robin): Leave It To The Beaver, starring,

Janet Harman (understudy for Lida Widdecombe) as May the dutiful wife who always wears pearls even when she is scrubbing the bathroom, **[who enters bottom level, and exits after all introductions]**

Mark Stotler, as Mort, the wise father who always wears a suitcoat and tie even when he is reading the newspaper in the living room, which he spends most of his life doing, **[who enters bottom level, and exits after all introductions]**

Jennifer Rhule as Molly, the sister who did not die in Vietnam nor become a police officer in LA, **[who enters top level, and remains]** and Scott Johnson starring as THE BEAVER, **[who enters top level, and remains]**

NARRATOR (Robin) continues: **This week's episode: The Seaver family learns about SATISFACTION.**

[standing on the raised area of the chancel/choir level]

[Beaver has his back to the audience and is rummaging through an imaginary closet [where choir sits]

Molly: What are you doing, Beaver?

Beaver: [jumping up, startled and turning around, speaking nervously, at first] Nothing! What are you doing sneaking up on me like that, Molly?

Molly: I didn't sneak up on you, Beaver. But what are you so jumpy about? Did you lose something, or are you hiding something?

Beaver: Gosh, Molly. You are starting to sound like Mom and Dad. I'm just looking into my closet. No reason. Just looking.

Molly: Can I help you find something?

Beaver: Yeah, I'm looking for my transistor radio ... Oh! Molly! You tricked me. OK, I'm looking for a transistor radio. I'm going to trade it to Lumpy for something.

Molly: Beav! Where did you get a transistor radio? No, wait. Don't tell me. You didn't break into your college fund bank in order to buy that radio, did you?

Beaver: Well, shucks, Molly. They were running it on sale down at the Hecks store. I'd always wanted one. Like, forever. I just couldn't help myself.

Molly: So, how come you can't find it, if you wanted it so much?

Beaver: It was just what I wanted. And it had this thing called an ear plug, so I could listen to it in bed at night without anyone ever knowing. But, well, after a while, I got tired of it. And I can't remember the last time I saw it. Will you help me find it?

[Mort and May enter on floor level/downstairs as Beaver and Molly back away toward the door from the choir loft beside the wheel chair lift, so as they cannot hear them]

May: Mort. What are we going to do? I found this transistor radio under the Beaver's bed. I'm afraid about where he got it. You don't think that he broke into his college fund and bought it, do you?

Mort: Think, May? I don't have to think he did. I'm sure he did. And what's more, he sneaked around, so we wouldn't find it. And then he got tired of it, and forgot where he put it.

May: How can you be so sure, Mort?

Mort: Because I did the same thing when I was his age. I bought a pair of stilts. But don't worry. He'll grow out of it eventually. It's just a stage. He'll grow up, and not spend his money on such foolishness, that he thinks will satisfy him, but it will for only a short time.

May: Are you sure, Mort? What about that two speed sabre saw you bought last year. Remember how much you wanted it. How many times have you used it? And you even put it on a credit card in order to buy it.

Mort: Now, May ... I hate it when you are right. Maybe we do need to have a talk with him. Nip this thing in the bud.

May: Do you think it will help? And how can you talk to him about it when you do the same thing.

Mort: Once again, you are right, May. I guess **YOU** had better talk to him. [short pause. Then calling loudly upstairs:] Beaver! Come down here. Your mother needs to talk to you.

May: Playfully smacking Mort. Oh, Mort! You are incorrigible!

NARRATOR: Well, how do you think this will end? Will May able to convince Beaver where to find real lasting satisfaction? Will May be able to teach Beaver what Mort has not been able to learn as an adult?

We'll be back to find out, right after a word from our sponsor, who will show us how we can know true happiness in life, when we drive a Buick.

ALL EXIT and sermon begins.

ⁱⁱ <http://stateimpact.npr.org/texas/2012/06/04/how-americas-trash-became-a-worldwide-problem-an-interview-with-garbiology-author-edward-humes/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.selfstorage.org/ssa/Content/NavigationMenu/AboutSSA/FactSheet/default.htm>

^{iv} I gave each of the children a \$10.00 bill when they came up and we talked about what can be bought with it. Then I told them about one child dying every 60 seconds from malaria, mostly children under the age of 5 years old, in Africa. I explained how they could, if they wanted, donate that \$10.00 to a special UMC fund called Imagine No Malaria, that was saving lives. Just 3 years ago, one child died every 30 seconds. That's the progress we are making. And for their \$10.00 donation, a child's life would be saved. Save a life? Buy 7 iTunes songs. Buy 2 Big Macs. The choice is entirely up to each child. Save a life; keep the \$10.00 for themself.