

1 Timothy 11:19

“God and Mammon”

By a show of hands do we have any Clint Eastwood fans in the room? (pause) When I was growing up my Dad loved Clint Eastwood movies: “Any Which Way But Loose,” “Dirty Harry,” and who could forget all of those westerns like, “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” “Unforgiven,” and “Pale Rider.” Do any of y’all remember “Pale Rider”? Clint Eastwood plays a preacher with a dark past who comes to the aid of some miners in the mountain town of LaHood, California. When the Preacher proves he is too much for Mr. LaHood’s usual enforcers he tries to buy off the preacher.

Lahood says, “In a town as rich as LaHood, oh that preacher would be a wealthy man.

The Preacher says, “That’s why it wouldn’t work. Can’t serve God and Mammon, both. Mammon being money.

In the movie the Preacher tells Lahood he does not want to leave because there are a lot of sinners around there, and surely Lahood wouldn’t want the Preacher to leave before he had finished his work. However, the Preacher is not about to work for Lahood, and be trapped by money and greed. In a way we have a similar situation right here in Denton. There are a lot of people in need right here in Denton. There are a lot of people who are hurting. There are a lot of people who are messed up and do not really know how they got there. These are people the Church has a calling and a responsibility to help.

Now, help can take a lot of different forms. Some folks take the position let’s just give them the money to help with their current situation. Then it is between God and that person to use the money wisely. Sure! They may scam us, but that is between that person and God. Our conscience is clear. I was down at the town hall paying my water bill a week or so ago and the lady behind the counter told me I should have come witnessing to the Gospel the day before: it was shut off day; and there were lots of people who were looking for help. Sisters, and brothers. That isn’t helping people. That’s crippling people. That’s giving a person with a limp a cane that’s too short. While their need for that moment might be met we haven’t equipped them to keep from getting into that same situation the next month. I do not believe that is the Gospel. I think giving a quick hand out is about making ourselves feel better at someone else’s expense.

It has recently been brought to my attention there are a number of divorced people in our area. In the midst of the parents trying to figure themselves out the children are often tossed like an autumn leaf on the wind. I have seen these kids struggle as their parents try to get them involved in sports to provide some of the extra emotional support the parents cannot provide. Very often the kids do not know how to make good choices and wind up acting out. If their team has a good coach the child can find some stability, and that is a good. But isn’t the church supposed to be a part of that? Isn’t the church supposed to be a safe place where both parents and families can receive the support and the love of God in times of need?

Sisters and brothers there are a lot of sinners around here. Being sinners is something we know a little bit about – don’t we church? Cause we’re all sinners here! Amen? **Amen!** Amen?! **Amen!!** Yeah, but as the Church we are called to help others the same way we would help Jesus Christ. As I look around this room I see a whole lot of opportunity to serve others better. In this morning’s passage Paul challenges Timothy to do two things: Make the good confession, and challenge the rich to be rich in good deeds and to set their hopes on God who richly furnishes us with everything we need. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism put it this way. “Make all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can.” Sisters and brothers, I’ve been watching the books and we have not been doing that.

If you would. Please look up at the screen. Gary is going to put our giving trend up on the screen. These Power Point slides show our giving trend, month by month for 2017. We start the month off fine, but we are not keeping it up until the end. Some months we do not make our budget. There is too much dependence on those with fixed incomes to give at the start of the month.

Once upon a time this church was supported by five or six wealthy families. Those families have moved and their members have graduated on to glory. Now it is up to us. This church has work to do in the community. There are poor to be reached. There are children to be nurtured. These giving trends are not getting it done. We need to do better. **We can do better.** We do not need to do better to keep the lights on or to pay the salaries. We are making our bills. However, we are not reaching our community as we should. (pause) Are we too rich in the uncertain riches of this world?

If we are, “to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for [ourselves] a good foundation for the future so that [we] may take hold of the life which is life indeed,” we need to give of ourselves accordingly (1Tim 6:18-19). The members of this church have made promises to support this church through their prayers, the presence, their gifts, their service and their witness. My hope is after last week’s reminder about the way God worked through Central to start of the Methodist Protestant Children’s home here in Denton, and the way Central grew because of that work Central will look to the needs in the community right here and right now. My hope is we will look at the giving trends and realize we can do better. My hope is we will look to God and decide the bounty of God’s table needs to be shared. This morning we are going to celebrate Holy Communion. As we wait in line to come down to the alter, let’s remember God’s table is not just for us. God’s table is for everyone. If we really believe God’s table is for everyone then we need to give to make sure everyone has access to God’s table. What could we be doing to reach the poor and the lost that we are not doing now? What is it going to take to get there? What are we willing to give?

In the name of Jesus Christ – Amen.