**Notes and Sermon from Blackburn Diocese.**

**Comments on 1 Timothy 6: 6-19**

The above verses fall under a long literary context of exhortation by Paul to Timothy, of what seems like instructions on how he and other people of faith are to live with those around them, beginning in chapter 5: 1. In this passage, there is an emphasis on interconnectedness, harmonious living and living a virtuous life which leads to godliness and contentment.

**Comments on Luke 16: 19-31**

The parable of the rich young man follows a series of parables where Jesus speaks to men in high social standing and with wealth on how to live with the weak, diseased, poor widows and the poorest in society (Luke 14:7-16:31; 18:1-30). As wealth is concentrated in the top 1% of the world, Jesus focuses on raising the consciousness of the rich, then and now, to the plight of the masses who live in abject poverty and inequality. Signalling to the consumerist culture of the time; the man is described as wearing purple, a colour of royalty, and fine linen which is a sign of his high status and affordability.  He is also having feasts every day, yet at his gate there is a poor, diseased man named Lazarus who desired to be fed (verse 20-21). His living conditions were dehumanizing but the narrator names him, as a sign of reclaiming his dignity and identity. In this text, Jesus clearly speaks against a society who has become desensitized to the suffering, the hungry and marginalised. This also includes how in such a society; the environment is seen as a platter placed for human exploitation without any concern of the impact this will have on the quality of life of future generations to come.

**SERMON**

In pursuit of contentment in a consumerist world 1 Timothy 6 contains one of the most misquoted lines, “The love of money is the root of all evil,” often reduced to ‘money is the root of all evil.’ In our rereading such an overly familiar text through ecological lenses, one is invited to ask new questions. Our questions in this sermon are; “what kind of lifestyle is being critiqued here that has adverse effects to the environment?” Furthermore, “is the Bible against one being rich?  Lastly, what kind of lifestyle are we being invited to as people of faith?

I wish to propose that the Scripture reading in 1 Timothy 6: 6-19 seeks to reframe what it means to live in plenty without the need to over consume. An apt reading to reflect on through green lenses in observance of the Season of Creation; especially in the current global wake of consumerism that destroys the environment. Consumerism is often defined as a culture within which the orientation of that society and its people is defined by what they consume.[[1]](https://preachingforgodsworld.org/season-of-creation-week-4-16th-sunday-after-pentecost/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1) Within this culture, the focus is not only on the goods and services but also on the brands and the status attached to these goods and the statement they make about one’s social standing. Although consumerism is what holds our economies in balance, there is a downside to such a culture or lifestyle when lived without caution. It promotes a ‘rat race’ in search for wealth in order to afford and increase one’s consumption and this more often focuses on the individual and seldom to the benefit of your neighbour. It leads to a life of increased debt; resulting in mental health problems such as stress and depression. On an ecological level, the earth also experiences immeasurable stress as more needs to be extracted from the earth to meet the demand. Critics of consumerism highlight that mass consumerism “exhausts natural resources, creates a tremendous amount of waste disposal, and increases environmental problems at almost every stage in the production process.”[[2]](https://preachingforgodsworld.org/season-of-creation-week-4-16th-sunday-after-pentecost/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn2)  It is in this culture that one is influenced to the notion that ‘you can never have enough’ and encourages the pursuit for accumulating more, whilst plunging yourself and creation into ruin and destruction (1 Timothy 6: 9). Leading to disharmony experienced through different social and moral ills such as greed and corruption, whilst also promoting destructive environmental actions such as deforestation, the destruction of the coastlands for development.

Paul, in this letter to Timothy reminds us that all riches are from God and it is God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy (1 Timothy 6: 17). This enjoyment is not without responsibility and self-restraint. The challenge is for each of us to reflect on the ‘rat race’ we may find ourselves in and slow down to focus on what is more important (godly treasures) such as living in right relationship with self, with God and with all of God’s creation. Furthermore, understanding that we live under God’s provision and ours is to pursue godliness with contentment, doing good, being gentle not just to neighbour but to the environment. To pursue love and be ready to share (v. 11, 18). All these virtues calling us to a life of conscious interconnectedness between God, ourselves and creation; whilst living in harmony. The invitation is to learn to keep check on what we spend on and for what purposes; while learning to be content and practicing sustainable and ethical living. This way of life leads to abundant life and is the opposite to the life of the rich man in Luke 16: 19-31 that leads to destruction and ruin.  Furthermore, it is in how we relate in our socio-material level, maintaining right and just relationships between ourselves and with creation, that we are able to grow wealth in spiritual treasures.

Let us take care of that which gives true meaning to life, whilst living with contentment and in harmony with all that God has created; both human and non-human.

**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL**

* Chandra, R.I., & Christianto, V. (2020). Koinomics: Application of Trinitarian Economics Concept Based on Luke 16:1-9. *viXra*. Pg 1-17.
* Cooper, H. (2022). Consumerism Examples That Affect the Environment. Accessed through <https://interfaithsustain.com/consumerism-examples/>
* Mausner, M. (2021). What is Consumerism, and what are its roots*.*Accessed through <https://interfaithsustain.com/what-is-consumerism/>

* [[1]](https://preachingforgodsworld.org/season-of-creation-week-4-16th-sunday-after-pentecost/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref1) Matthew Mausner, *What is Consumerism, and what are its roots.*Accessed through <https://interfaithsustain.com/what-is-consumerism/>

* [[2]](https://preachingforgodsworld.org/season-of-creation-week-4-16th-sunday-after-pentecost/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref2) Cooper, H. (2022). Consumerism Examples That Affect the Environment. Accessed through <https://interfaithsustain.com/consumerism-examples/>