

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Seek where you may to find a way. All that we're singing about is serving God and seeking to serve him in who you are, in what you are, and what you have. Now, Amos was talking to the Old Testament people about how they cut corners, how their God really was their wealth, so that they were so focused on gaining profit that they would cheat and steal and change the weights and measures and do whatever they could to cut corners so that they could gain just a little bit better profit margin. And then we've got Jesus talking to the Pharisees and to everybody else, basically saying, you cannot love God and money. You're going to love one and you're going to hate the other. You can't serve them both. So we really want to make sure that the theme that we're getting out of this Sunday is God is calling you to serve him in your vocation, in your calling, in whatever you have and whatever you are.

Money is not evil in and of itself. It is the love of money that becomes the issue. Money is a tool like a gun or a shovel or a hammer or anything else. It's a tool that can be used. It can be used for good and it can be used for evil. And we all know, we've seen how all of those things can be used for good and can also be used and have been used for evil. It's not the tool its self. It's our desire and our use of that tool that becomes the issue. And so we are called to remember that we own nothing. Nothing that we have, nothing that we are is ours. We are simply stewards of the gifts that God has given. The life that we have, our very lives itself, we would not be here unless God gave us life.

The hands and fingers and toes and brains and muscle that we use to earn the money to pay for this stuff is not our own, it is a gift given to us from God through our genetics, through our DNA, through our parents. But it is given to us by God. How does Luther describes it? My eyes, ears, and all my senses and food and clothing, house and home, wealth and children and family and animals and everything else is all a gift given to us By God. The money that you earn is only earned because God has given you the intellect or the strength or the ability to do what you need to earn the money. So we are called as Christians to recognize that we are nothing but stewards and managers of the gifts that God gives us and everything is a gift from God. So how are we called to use it and what are we called to use it for?

That is really the focus. We are called to take everything that we have, all that we are, to use it for the glory of God, for the benefit of others and for the glory of God. The dishonest steward is commended for his shrewdness, not because he was dishonest, that's not the point, but because he understood that he was unfaithful and dishonest and he didn't use the gifts that his master had given to him the way that he was supposed to, which is true for you and me if we're honest with ourselves.

We are stewards of the gifts God has given. How many of you have used those gifts properly and well in all circumstances, in all ways, or have we squandered some of the gifts that God has given to us?

But just like the dishonest steward understood the nature of his master, that his master was loving and generous and kind and forgiving, so also we are called to recognize that even though we have not lived up to two God's demands, he is still gracious and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Why? Because he has paid the ransom that we owe. The debt that we owe is far beyond our imagination. We could never repay it, but he did. He paid the ransom on the cross. That's why we celebrate that is because he paid the price so that we might use the gifts for his glory and for his honor, that we might be wise stewards, shrewd stewards, to take our calling, our vocation, our skills and our abilities and to use them for the glory of God, not for our own gain.

Now, that's not to say you shouldn't be able to pay for your food and get a good job to earn the money to do whatever it is that you need to do. However, when that becomes your focus, when what you have is not good enough, but you need it richer, you need it better, you need it shinier, you need it faster, you need it stronger and then you'll be satisfied. Therein lies the problem.

You see, God has given us each a position and a calling in life, our vocation. Now here in 1 Timothy, he's got a vocation that can be somewhat challenging. Timothy is a young pastor and Paul is writing to explain to him how he should structure his ministry, how he should view his life and his ministry and what he should be doing, how he should act, his character, his behavior, and what does it mean to be a pastor or a minister, an overseer in the church? Well, one of the things is it is not given for women to hold this office. This is one of the passages that we read that we understand that only men are called to the office of pastor. Now, this is not to say that women are inferior to men or that they're viewed as somehow less than men in the eyes of God.

All are created in the image of God. Male and female are in the image of God. We both work originally created in the image of God. We both lost it in the garden and we both regain it in our baptisms. We are equal before God. He loves us all the same, and he views us no differently. However, we have different vocations and even though only men are called to be pastors, it's not men in general, it's only specific men. So the role of pastor is not to be given to women. That is what he said. But it's also not given to 95% of men either. It's not a male-female thing. It's what has God called you to do? What vocation has he given to you? Now he's given that vocation to me, and so there are requirements and standards that I am to live up to use this vocation to be a good steward of this vocation for his glory,

which means we focus on the word of God and we focus on what it says and what it says here about women is a little bit challenging.

And so I'm going to walk on a little bit of thin ice here as I tried to explain and thread the needle of what God is talking about here because it's still true. It's the word of God. We may feel uncomfortable hearing it because of the battle of the sexes and feminism and everything else that had been going on, but we still need to wrestle with what it says and to take it seriously. So part of the reason why he is told that women are not allowed to teach or exercise authority of a man is that Adam was formed first and then Eve and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

Now, it is true that Eve was listening to the serpent and she ate the fruit, but we needed to again take the whole counsel of God and the whole word of God.

Elsewhere it says that sin came through one man, Adam. So we're not saying that it's all Eve's fault, although that's kind of what Adam implied in the initial interaction with God. If you had not given me this woman, everything would've been all right.. Women are the problem.

Think about this. God shows up. What did you do? Eve said, "Well, the serpent gave me the fruit and I ate." And Adam said, "This woman that you gave to me, she gave it to me and I ate." So he's not even blaming the woman. He is blaming God, but he said, if you hadn't created women, life would be good. I would've never eaten the fruit by myself. Come on. We know that to be false. This passage is not saying that women are completely to be blamed. However, it is saying that women are deceived. They failed to live up to their vocation. Their vocation is to submit to their husbands. If you're married, that's the role or your father or the authority, your pastor or whomever if you're single, that's the authority, but you are to submit to the authority and to listen to them. God spoke to Adam before he created Eve and said, look, you can have anything to eat except that treat.

And Adam also failed in his vocation because he was supposed to tell Eve and teach her so that she would know what God's word said. Instead, what happened? Eve's sitting there by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent comes and talks to her and the serpent says, did God really say? And Adam's sitting here going, no, actually he didn't. But did he actually say that? No. He kept his mouth shut and said, "I wonder how this is going to work out." He did not fulfill his role as the head of the house either. Both were at fault. Eve was deceived, but Adam failed in his responsibility as well because Adam was right there. It's not like he didn't know what was going on. When Eve ate the fruit, what did she do? She handed it to Adam who was like an arm's length away.

The man was called to take God's word that had been given to him and teach it and share it with his wife. And he did not do that. The wife's role was to listen to her

husband, and she didn't do that either. It's not about male and female, it's about living in our vocation. If we spend all of our time trying to focus, well, pastor doesn't like women. We're missing the point and we spend all of our time trying to figure this one out. We're missing the point. The point is, how do we find a way, as our hymn says for salvation? And we find that through the gifts that God has given the gift of his salvation on the cross, we focus upon that so much so that what does he say? First of all, before you get into the role of men and women, and before you get into anything else, first of all, I urge you to use supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving for all people.

Treat everybody equal, the needy and the poor. Don't do like Amos is talking about the people did and Cheating them and looking down upon them, but also pray for the kings and those in authority and not just the ones that you like or you think are doing a good job. Pray for all in authority. I mean, think about it. At Paul's time, Nero was the authority. Nero, the one that dipped Christians in tar and lit them on fire so that he might have light in his calm name. Nero, who blamed the Christians for the burning of Rome. And Paul is saying, pray for him. So it's not just the politicians and the leaders that you like and agree with. It's for everybody. If they are doing good, regardless of whether you like him or not, pray for them to continue to do good.

If they're doing evil, pray that they might change their ways and follow after God, whether they recognize him or know him or not, so that we might live in peace. So that in that peace, we can then share the gospel with those around us so that they might know the true riches that are theirs. There's so many people that are focused on wealth and health and this life and this world and the things that you can get in this world that they don't recognize that there's something beyond.

What we have in our vocation is the confidence that God is with us. He prepares us for the one thing that nothing else can. We learn and we receive in God's Word. We learn how to die. We learn how to face death without fear because we know that when we die, we will be with Christ. And so therefore, there's nothing to be afraid of. The rest of the world doesn't know that. The rest of the world is afraid of death. And so let us be shrewd in our witness. Let us be shrewd in the use of our money, our time, and our talents. Let us be shrewd in our use of our vocation as husband or wife, father or child, neighbor or citizen, employer, employee, whatever it might be. Let us use all of our vocations and all of the gifts of God for his glory, to thank and praise him primarily and firstly, and also to serve and obey Him so that others might see his glory and understand the great gift that they have received. And it is theirs.

It's not about men and women and the fighting over our positions and in authorities. It's about God's gift. Now, it also talks about women who are supposed

to dress modestly and not have gold and jewelry and pearls and not braid their hair. Well, I mean, we got people wearing jewelry and braiding hair and all that other stuff. Are you all wrong and evil? No. We have to understand what it indicates. It's not that we're negating the words of God, but what do those signs indicate? It's wonderful to get yourself ready to be in the house of the Lord, to present your best.

However, if you come into the house of the Lord and you go, look at me, pay attention to me and how beautiful I am, the focus is on the wrong thing. So the goal here is it's not about the specific thing, it's about the attitude about the thing, whether it be money, whether it be gold, whether it be jewels, whether it be authority and head of the house or submission to your husband or the authority of the pastor is the overseer over the people. It's not about the thing itself, it's about your attitude about it. Do you chase at the word of God when it says this, that or the other thing?

Then it's time to turn to the word of God and ask, how can I use this gift of womanhood, of manhood for the glory of God? And speaking of womanhood, what does it say? She will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control. Now, what again is that saying? That women must have children in order to be saved? No, absolutely/ not all women can have children. Not all women are called to be married. Some are called to be single and live a single life. It's not about the actual childbearing per se. It's about using the vocation that God has given to you for his glory. If you cannot have children, then that doesn't cut you out of salvation. It just means that you have a different vocation.

But women and the entire world are saved through childbearing or at least the childbearing of one woman and one child, and that of course, being Mary and Jesus Christ. The whole world is saved through the childbearing of Mary bearing the Son of God who dwelt with us, who was not a dishonest servant, but a perfect one who took our place, who fulfilled all of our debts, who ransomed us with his very precious blood so that we might serve God, so that we might thank and praise and serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.

So let us hold fast to the word of God even when it's uncomfortable, even when we're not quite sure whether we like what it says, because God's word is true, and we will learn and we will grow, and we would become more faithful stewards if we wrestle with God's word and we conform our lives to his word, not our own ideas or our own desires. We cannot serve God and our own desires. We will love the one and hate the other, or we will hate the one and love the other. We cannot serve them both. Let us serve God. Thank him. Praise him, serve him, and obey him. This is most certainly true. May his grace, mercy, and peace be and abide with you always now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.

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