

## CONTENTMENT IN GODLINESS

28<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

(PROPER 21 C)

### READINGS<sup>1</sup>

#### ***Psalm 146***

*Praise the LORD!*

*Praise the LORD, O my soul!*

*I will praise the LORD as long as I live;*

*I will sing praises to my God all my life long.*

*Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help.*

*When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish.*

*Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God,*

*who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them;*

*who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry.*

*The LORD sets the prisoners free;*

*the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.*

*The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;*

*the LORD loves the righteous.*

*The LORD watches over the strangers;*

*he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.*

*The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.*

*Praise the LORD!*

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<sup>1</sup> New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition of the Bible (NRSVU)

### **Timothy 6:6-19**

*Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it, but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.*

*But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

*In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.*

*As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches but rather on God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.*

## REFLECTION

I once heard a story about a very skillful local fisherman who is well-known and loved by his villagers because of his skill and generosity. Every morning, he and his boat will go out into the sea to catch some fish. In the afternoon, he will return to the shore, sell some of his catches in the local market, and give away some to his friends. At night, he will spend time with his family and then play guitar and sing in his local cafes.

One day, a rich businessman comes to his village and meets the experienced fisherman. The rich businessman tells the fisherman that he can actually expand his fishing business by buying more boats and employ more people.

“And then, what would I do?” asks the fisherman.

“You can franchise your fishing business and ask other fishermen to pay you for using your brand,” says the businessman.

“And then, what would I do?” asks the fisherman.

“You can make your business go public and offer an Initial Public Offering (IPO) in the stock market,” says the businessman.

“And then, what would I do?” asks the fisherman.

“You can grow your fishing business to be the biggest in the country or in the region or even in the world!” says the businessman.

“And then, what would I do?” asks the fisherman.

“You can then sell your business to your rival or to the highest bidder, and make lots of money!” says the businessman.

“And then, what would I do?” asks the fisherman.

“You can retire, go back to your village, fish for fun, sell some of your catches to the local traders, give some to your friends, spend time with your wife and children, play guitar and sing songs in your local cafes,” says the businessman.

Just like the rich businessman in the story, we often do not really know what it actually is that makes us truly happy: we often assume that we will be truly happy only when we have increased our wealth or our influence or power or prestige.

But like what the story tells us, lasting happiness has actually little to do with any of these things.

Even people in the ancient world knew of the peril of assuming that more wealth or influence or power or prestige would make us happy. Our reading today from the letter to Timothy is one of those readings in our holy Scriptures that warns us about the peril of pursuing wealth to find contentment. The letter reminds us that

“we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it....”<sup>2</sup>

So, where can we find lasting happiness in life? The letter to Timothy is quite clear on one thing: happiness cannot be found by accumulating wealth because

“the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil....”<sup>3</sup>

Friends, we *are* what we love. We *become* what we love. If what we love is money then the letter to Timothy warns us that we will be

“trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Timothy 6:7 NRSVU

<sup>3</sup> 1 Timothy 6:10 NRSVU

<sup>4</sup> 1 Timothy 6:9 NRSVU

The letter warns us that even the Christians who are eager to be rich

“have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.”<sup>5</sup>

So where do we find lasting contentment in life?

For the letter to Timothy, there is a great correlation between *contentment* and *godliness*. The letter says, “there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment....”<sup>6</sup>

But what does *godliness* mean? Godliness means to be like the God whom we worship; to take the characters of God and to do what God does. It means we are to

“pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness ... do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share....”<sup>7</sup>

Only when we do all these things that we will have lasting contentment in life or, in the words of the letter to Timothy, we will

“take hold of the life that really is life.”<sup>8</sup>

In other words, only by doing these that we will truly live!

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Timothy 6:10 NRSVU

<sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. 6: 6 NRSVU

<sup>7</sup> 1 Tim. 6:11, 18 NRSVU

<sup>8</sup> 1 Tim. 6:19 NRSVU

These are exactly the kind of things that the fisherman, in our story at the start of the reflection today, does in his life. Instead of pursuing for more wealth or influence or prestige or power in order to be fulfilled in life, the fisherman finds fulfillment in life by being “rich in good works, generous, and ready to share”. In the afternoon, he generously *shares* his catches with friends. In the evening, he *shares* his time with his wife and children, and his talent with the other villagers in the local cafes.

We see this in Psalm 146 as well.

The psalm begins with the warning:

“Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help.”<sup>9</sup>

Note that the psalm doesn’t ask us to not trust other people whatsoever. No. In many occasions, we do rely on other people to help us.

You may have heard the news about the mobile network failure that affected Optus costumers recently. Because of this incident, many of these costumers were unable to contact 000 in emergencies. So far, there were four deaths that could be linked to this outage because they could not reach out to the first responders in critical moments!

This tragedy points to the fact that, in our moment of vulnerability, we need other people to help us, otherwise there will be catastrophic consequences. In other words, the event points to the fact that we depend on one another to survive!

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<sup>9</sup> Psalm 146:3 NRSVU

So, Psalm 146 doesn't tell us to not rely on one another. The psalm warns us to not put our trust *specifically* on "princes". Historically, the word "princes" points to the powerful rulers of the Persian empire during the time when the psalm was written. In other words, those with power and prestige during the time of the author of Psalm 146. The psalm warns us not to rely on people like them. We may expect that people with power and prestige will save us, or will even give power and prestige to us. Psalm 46, however, warns us that these people, most likely, will only serve their own interest and not our concerns.

Happiness, therefore, is found when our hope is not on power or prestige or on those who have them; happiness is found when our

"hope is in the LORD...."<sup>10</sup>

Psalm 146 opens and ends with the statement, "Praise the Lord!" Likewise, our life should also begin and end with praising God. In other words, we will find fulfillment when our entire life is a praise to the God whom we worship; when our life is in full alignment with the God whom we praise; when we become like the God whom we follow.

But who is this God whom we ought to worship with our whole life? What kind of divine being is this God? Psalm 146 declares that God is a God who

"executes justice for the oppressed ... gives food to the hungry ... sets the prisoners free ... opens the eyes of the blind ... lifts up those who are bowed down ... loves the righteous ... watches over the strangers ... upholds the orphan and the widow ...."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Psalm 146:5 NRSVU

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 146:7-9 NRSVU

True happiness is found when we do all those things that God has done throughout history.

No wonder that Jesus says that the first of the greatest commandments is

“to love God with all our hearts and our soul and our mind.”<sup>12</sup>

In other words, we will fulfill the very purpose of our life when we love God with the entirety of our life. One of the Church’s Fathers, Augustine of Hippo, once famously says to God,

“You have made us for yourself,  
and our hearts are restless till they rest in you.”

Indeed, when we mirror the God whom we worship, we will fulfill the very purpose of our life. It is only then when we will truly find true contentment in life; when we will be happy at last!

Amen.

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<sup>12</sup> Mark 22:37 NRSVU