money, Paul told Timothy, “Run for your life from all this” (verse 11, The Message).

• How rich (or poor) are you, by the measure these verses suggest? If your “contentment quotient” is strong, reflect on how it got that way. What changes might disrupt your contentment, and for what reasons? If your quotient is lower, ask God to help you raise it. Ask the most contented person you know what values and choices led them toward contentment. In a culture flooded with messages meant to make you want “more,” how do you run for your life from all this? How can you avoid both pride and shame related to your material “success”?

**Prayer**: Dear God, help me to be a faithful steward of the money and things I have, to use them for your glory. May I never allow them to turn into a spiritually deadly trap that hides you from me. Amen.

**Lifting Our Church Family in Prayer**

**Extended Care Facilities**

* Dot Stone
* Donna McFadden
* Alta Peekstock
* Bill Breckel

**Prayers for Military, Law Enforcement,**

**Fire Department**

* Nick Imperiale
* Tyler Fix
* Brian Vautin
* Mike Morales
* Kyle Knottnerus
* Mark Kazee

**Prayers of Praise**

* Baptism of Trevor Stellges
* Wedding of Alex Dejong and Amelia Biney

**Prayers of Healing**

* Rik Dejong
* Alta Peekstock
* Debbie Still
* Noel Froelich
* Adrienne Ferrin
* Adlin Francis Lee
* Mike Dixon
* Bill Skinner
* Becky Elliott
* John Hall
* Hazel Gray
* Jim Humphrey

Jimmy Meeks



**Sermon**: The Worst I’ve Ever Seen

**Date**: Sunday November 13, 2016

**Key Verses:** Matthew 6:24-25

**Daily Study Guide**

**MONDAY November 14 Luke 8:4-8, 11-15**

In this parable, Jesus said our priorities matter. He used images of various states of the human heart (soil) to show how each one affects our ability to hear and follow God’s word (seed). When we cultivate an open, “good soil” heart, he said, then “concerns, riches, and pleasures of life” won’t be able to crowd out the good fruit God is at work to bear in us.

• What’s most important in your life? Who or what first planted “the seed” of God’s Word in the soil of your life? What are some concerns or interests that have become less prominent in your life as you’ve made God your top priority? Which of the four types of soil in Jesus’ parable best describes how receptive you are to the seed right now?

• What are the concerns or interests that most often compete with God’s kingdom to be the top priority in your life? What key choices have helped to open you to God’s work in helping you to cultivate that “good soil” heart? What shifts in attitudes, actions and values would move you further in the direction of being “good soil” for God’s Word to grow in?

**Prayer**: Lord God, the fruit you bear in my life is wonderful, and I want to be good soil for it. Give me clear vision as to what gets in the way of letting that fruit grow. Amen.

**TUESDAY November 15 Ecclesiastes 5:8-15, 18-20 What you can’t take with you**

The writer of Ecclesiastes had watched human life closely, carefully and unsentimentally. In verse 10, he noted the painful irony that “the money lover isn’t satisfied with money.” Verse 15 stated more poetically the same truth as the prosaic English phrase “you can’t take it with you.” Perhaps most important, he found that true joy and satisfaction in life come as God’s gift to us (verses 19-20).

• Have you ever experienced for yourself the truth behind the words “Those who love money never have enough”? If so, what lessons did you take away from the experience? If not, how intensely do you work at trying to have that experience someday? What choices most help you to own the things you own, rather than letting them “own” you?

• True wisdom helps us accept our limits, and especially our mortality (which our society tries so hard to deny). The Message rendered verse 20 as “God deals out joy in the present, the now. It’s useless to brood over how long we might live.” In what ways have you learned to find God’s joy in the now? What are some ways you thank God for the good things in your life, free from fear of the future or envy of what others seem to have?

**Prayer**: Lord God, you have given me the gift of this Tuesday. Accept my thanks and praise, and go through this day with me, filling every moment of it with your steadfast love. Amen.

**WEDNESDAY November 16 Proverbs 13:4, 11; 16:8, Hebrews 13:5-6 “Free from the love of money”**

Scholar John Walton saw this theme in the Hebrew wisdom of Proverbs: “While wealth is considered a good thing and even a gift of Yahweh when acquired honestly, it is not the most important thing by far. If a decision must be made between wealth and a right relationship with Yahweh or with love or peace, the latter are far better.” Hebrews echoed that view—life may bring us much money, or not so much, but in either case contentment is possible and highly desirable.

• Proverbs noted that, as a general rule, steadily working toward financial goals is wiser than chasing “get rich quick” schemes. Have you ever worked steadily toward a goal, and felt the inner satisfaction when your disciplined pursuit paid off? On the other hand, have you ever had a financial windfall, and then regretted impulsively “blowing it”?

• Reflecting on Hebrews 13, scholar N. T. Wright wrote a helpful rule of thumb: “When you love something or someone, you make sacrifices for them. When you find yourself making a sacrifice of something else in your life, simply so that you can follow where money is beckoning you, regard that as a danger signal.” What relationships, activities or values would you never choose to sacrifice just to pursue more money?

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, however much money I do or do not currently have, help me to look at it with clear eyes. Help me to see money as a tool to serve my higher values, not as the highest value itself. Amen.

**THURSDAY November 17 Matthew 6:19-24 Choose your master well**

Jesus said that making the pursuit of wealth (no matter how you want to use it) the center of your life inevitably conflicts with loyalty to God. He stated the clear, common-sense principle that “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,” and then pointedly added, “You cannot serve God and wealth.” Treasure in heaven, treasure by God’s standards, is the most precious item we can “collect.”

• Conduct a simple life audit. Review your calendar and your checkbook. Based on the time, energy and resources reflected in those two sources, what “master(s)” would you say you are serving? Can you see your loyalties shifting as you choose to invest in heavenly treasure? What kinds of changes could you make to give you greater freedom to fully serve God as Lord of your life?

• Pastor Rick Warren wrote, “If I put my money in my house, that is where my heart is. If I put my money in eating out… if I put my money in my clothes, if I put my money into a hobby, that’s where my heart is. So the question becomes, where do you want your heart to be?” How do you answer—where do your choices of priorities tend to focus your heart’s affections?

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, calling you “Lord” isn’t just a nice, polite title. It means that you rule over my life and my priorities. Give me the courage and devotion to really mean it when I call you “Lord.” Amen.

**FRIDAY November 18 Philippians 4:10-13 Learning how to be content**

From a prison cell (Philippians 1:13), Paul shared his inner response to gifts he had received from the Christians in the city of Philippi. His words showed how “needs” and “wants” fit together in his life, in good times and bad. In Christ, he said, he had “learned the secret to being content in any and every circumstance.”

• Paul did not glorify or glamorize poverty or hunger in these verses. (If it’s true that money does not guarantee happiness, that’s certainly also true of poverty!) Paul expressed heartfelt gratitude for what the Philippians had sent. How did those gifts represent God’s care for Paul’s needs? In what ways are you able to be God’s physical presence to bless someone else who is in need? • Paul had learned to be content in every situation. How did he express his “secret” (verse 13)? How, if at all, have you learned to take strength from God’s presence when you deal with scarcity? On the other hand, do you ever have trouble finding contentment when dealing with plenty? If so, how does God help?

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, keep growing in me the awareness that you, and not my “stuff,” are the secret to a contented life. Guide me toward a life of gratitude rather than grasping for more. Amen.

**SATURDAY November 20 1 Timothy 6:6-12 “Grab hold of eternal life” (the true treasure)**

Paul wrote to his protégé Timothy that the truest measure of any person’s wealth is not material, but spiritual. Verse 6 in the New Century Version says, “Serving God does make us very rich, if we are satisfied with what we have.” Paul didn’t want the often short-lived pleasures of material wealth to blind Timothy or the members of his church to God, “who richly provides” for our well-being. After describing the spiritual dangers that go with a lust for