

**But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.**

We begin our story town of Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Now Jackson hole has a very unique resource. This ranching town is home to the National Elk refuge. Where countless Elk spend their winters fed in times of scarcity and protected from wolves and even human hunters, but it's not the Elk per se that is the resource for this town. It's the antlers. Thousands upon thousands of pounds of beautiful antlers fall off every year strewn across the acres. And every year, people come from all over the world for the shed fest to go and collect antlers to take home, to mount, to make cribbage boards, or just even a cool picture.

We might not be interested in this idea of hunting for antlers or even Elk in general. But I think there's a resource that we all have that we're much more familiar with: Money. We all know it. We've all got some of it. It's scattered across the acreage of our jobs or allowances, investments, funds, paychecks, and the like. We use it every single day to pay for goods and services, to have experiences and education. It's constantly flowing around and changing hands, dropping to be picked up and used.

But there's something I didn't tell you about Jackson Hole. They've got a big problem because that opportunity has led to a very dark underbelly that comes from those antlers. Because some people want those antlers more than others. Some people are willing to do bad things to get them. You see, there's a massive market of millions of dollars to be had for alternative medicine from parts of the antlers. Antlers fetch a high price in order to make chew toys for dogs. And many have resorted to sneaking in outside of season to gather them before others have a chance. Some have found it much easier just to kill the elk and take them by force rather than to search for hours in the hopes of finding some. An entire black market exists for these bootleg, illegally obtained antlers.

Isn't this the case with wealth? It's one of the most misquoted passages in the Bible where you hear money is the root of all evil, but that's not what Paul says. He writes: **"The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."** The problem isn't the antlers; the problem isn't the money; it's our attachment and our desire for it that's the problem.

And it sneaks in on us so quietly, so sinister, so seemingly unproblematically. Because all of a sudden, we have a little more of it. How wonderful, and with that more comes the convenience of something new and nice, or security if there comes a time when I have less or confidence because I can feel successful. And all of a sudden, those luxuries become necessities. And the sinful nature all of a sudden sees more opportunity. If I just had more, then I would be even more secure; if I could figure out how to get more, then I would be even more ready when bad things happen. When I get more than I can have the same things that my coworkers do, I can be even more confident; I can be even more. And all of a sudden, this love plunges us into a spiral of taking no heed for what our actions mean as long as the dollars are right. We could never depart with it because I just can't live like that anymore, and we can feel like we are better than others because I have more of it, so I must have been more competent and better. It becomes a trap: **"Those who want to get rich**

**fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.”**

Money was never the evil. The wealth was never the problem. Abraham and Job were very wealthy and also heroes of faith. Judas had very little and could fit the phrase: **“Some people eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”**

It doesn't matter if we have much or have barely any. The desire can always be there. And while we struggle to see it so often, I think we all can admit that we have fallen into the trap. We all have been greedy for more. We all have found ourselves with a lack of contentment.

But there is a secret. There is an antidote to the strong desire that comes with wealth. There is a secret to contentment. **Philippians 4:12-13: “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”**

You see, the secret for contentment comes not from having enough money. Because we already know that more will never be enough. The secret comes not from airtight security because money can always be taken away. The secret to contentment comes not from good planning because tomorrow could always be worse. No, the secret to contentment comes from God's grace.

Because knowing Jesus and his blessings is the only thing that brings true contentment in this life. It is the only antidote to the poison of the love of money.

Because only Jesus, not wealth, will give you the power to weather the storms. Because of Jesus, the bad things in your life will work for your good. Because of Jesus, the good things he gives to you can never be taken away. Because what Jesus gives to you means that the best is yet to come.

Because of God's grace, even those bad things that not might but will happen, that money cannot shield you from, God promises will work out for your good in this life. Because of God's grace, your good things cannot be taken away. A crash in the stock market may deplete your retirement, but it cannot deplete the forgiveness that you have in him. A lost job can rob you of financial security, but it cannot rob you of the love that God has for you. A debt collector can take your house, but he cannot take your salvation. Because of God's grace, the best is yet to come. **“For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.”**

Jesus made us his treasure, and he is ours. And when we are no longer scared. When we are detached from the false promises of what money can give us and become convinced by the Holy Spirit of what true treasure is, money now is no longer security, it's not happiness, it's not confidence; it's a tool that God has given us for our benefit and the benefit of others.

**“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.”**

We can use our wealth in whatever capacity God has chosen to give to us as a blessing. To be generous because we know what is really important and brings true peace. To share, to share our lives with other people regardless of where they might fit on the economic strata, to use a blessing to be a blessing. To use the money God has given for enjoyment, to see it as something God has given to us to provide us with some happiness.

In Big Sky, Wyoming, the antler hunt still goes on every year and brings children and adults, families, and foreigners to enjoy and share in the fun of the hunt. And it is such a wonderful thing for those who participate. Because the reason why is the crucial part, Brothers and sisters, may we have the same attitude to our wealth. Seeing it as a blessing that God has given, but a treasure that pales in comparison the the treasure of God's grace that he has given to all of us. Amen.