26th Sunday after Trinity
Rolling Meadows - 1967

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

1 Timothy 6: 9-10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs...But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when 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 unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.... As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty, not to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on God who richly furnishes us with everything we enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed.

DO I HAVE MY MONEY, OR
DOES MY MONEY HAVE ME?

More than 60,000,000 Americans today live in the suburbs. 8 out of every 10 new homes built in the United States last year were in the suburbs. The same thing is happening in every part of the world. Suburban communities have seen spectacular growth as millions move from the old and crowded conditions of the city to the adjacent countryside. Today 1 out of 4 Americans live in the suburbs. By 1975, it is estimated, the ratio will climb to 1 out of 3. The urbanized world is rapidly becoming suburbanized. I don't think it would be far wrong to say that the suburban way of life has become the dream of virtually every American, as it has become the ultimate hope of most people in the world.

Yet, as all of us who live in suburbia are well aware, suburbia is not all that it is cracked up to be. It is a far cry from being the end of the rainbow or any kind of utopian Shangri-la. A modern writer says with refreshing frankness: Let's face it: Many of these suburban people have 'arrived' in the eyes of the world. They are well educated. They possess social skills of various kinds. Some have advanced to positions of leadership in the world of business. They have money. They have influence. They have power. They are in a position where it is easy to forget God and to settle for the little gods of this world. They are in a position to do great good... and often they use their position to perpetuate great evils.

If there is one notable quality to modern suburban life, it is MATERIALISM. Even as I say this, I am well aware that there are a lot of people who do not lik that kind of talk. They do not think of themselves as materialists at all. "Mat erialism" is a dirty word - they prefer to describe what they are seeking as "comfortable living" or "the good life." Whatever you call it, it still boils do to the same thing. The same writer has described the goals and objectives of mos suburbanites. I don't think he has missed the mark very far. The average sub- urbanite today, he says, wants the best of everything, whether this be color TV o the latest lawn mower.... Living as they do in a prolonged period of material abu dance and prosperity, suburbanites have dreams and visions of the future that kno no limits. They live surrounded by an unbelievable array of appliances and gadge - all of which come quickly to be considered as necessities: television and air conditioning, deep freezes and fun cars, electric dishwashers and backyard swimmi pools, automatic dryers and the latest automatic cameras. To make sure that thei moods are in tune with their gadgets, they see to it that the larder is well stocked with liquor and the medicine cabinet has a generous supply of pep pills and tranquilizers.

The really disturbing thing about all of this is that somehow it does not bring happiness. There are as many divorces among people who have everything as there are among people who have nothing - frequently more divorces among them than among those who struggle to make a living. The rainbow is there, but the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow somehow always eludes their grasp. Each new purchase holds out the dream of making life different - somehow richer and more exciting. Just a little more money....if only we had one more room....if only we could live in a slightly better house.....if only we could get a new car - maybe a convertible.... and so the frenzied pace down the long hill of life continues. The need for more things to buy happiness keeps even moderately wealthy families on the brink of financial ruin. To keep up, every year more wives are taking jobs outside the home. More and more men are desperately moonlighting to provide for their familie Suburbia turns out to be a debtor's paradise. Tensions are built up. Everything

is purchased over longer periods of time. Anything can be afforded as long as th low monthly payments can be squeezed into the budget.

It is all a viscious cycle. St. Paul says so: THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BE RICH FALL INTO TEMPTATION, INTO A SNARE, INTO MANY SENSELESS AND HURTFUL DESIRES THAT PLUNGE MEN INTO RUIN AND DESTRUCTION. FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY IS THE ROOT FROM WHICH EVERY KIND OF EVIL CAN FLOW. IT IS THROUGH THIS CRAVING THAT SOME HAVE WANDERED AWAY FROM THE FAITH AND PIERCED THEIR HEARTS WITH MANY PANGS. Avarice and selfishness have their rewards, like the reward of a mouse that gets the chees with which the mousetrap has been baited.

Let no one misunderstand: St. Paul had nothing against people working hard to improve themselves. He was not against living in the suburbs. Neither am I - otherwise I would not be here. But I am very conscious of the fact that some of the values created by suburban life become ends in themselves - to be achieved at all costs - even at the price of forgetting what life is really all about — forgetting the God who gave us life and redeemed our life from destruction — forgetting about Christ who gave His life for the life of the world, who though He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich — forgetting the great price He paid that we might have forgiveness, life, and salvation. I am very much concerned that you see clearly what is at stake: that you have an eternity to lose and that Jesus may have died for you in vain!

Jesus wants no half-way Christian. He wants a man hot or cold, but not lukewarm. Can we really imagine that He died on His Cross for the flimflam that many of us want to pass off as Christianity? He wants to bring us onto the straight road to the Father in order that we may get back to His heart. In no case does He want people who do nothing but run around in circles - people who want God but won't let go of the devil and therefore get nowhere. You are not really living unless you have a real heart for your fellow men as Christ had a heart for us all. And, for one thing, that means the sacrifice of converting cold cash into hot-blooded concern for the kingdom and cause of Christ throughout the whold world.

I said SACRIFICE. How many of us are really ready to sacrifice anything?

I never cease to be amazed at the weak and feeble alibis and excuses people try t give for not pledging - for not keeping up with their pledges - for not bringing the firstfruits to the Lord, the first percentage as God has prospered them. Unwilling to say No to themselves, they find no difficulty at all saying No to God.

These same self-indulgent parents produce similar self-indulgent children, who likewise never learn to say No to themselves. Suburbia has become almost a child-centered world - EVERYTHING FOR THE KIDS, as they say. If you ask the average suburbanite why he moved to the suburbs, the chances are that he will reply, FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN. They give their kids everything but the ONE THING NEEDFUL. They never teach them about the God who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift ^ they never really teach them that being a disciple of Christ means to DENY YOURSELF and to GIVE. They only teach them to GET. The result is that in this surrounding of an oversupply of things children grow up to be leeches sucking to blood out of life itself - thinking the world owes them everything - irresponsible, unmanageable, uncontrolable.

Save this Son!

That kind of life is no life at all. It is a snare, a trap, leading to all kinds of senselessness that eventually plunges men into ruin and destruction. Instead, says St. Paul, encourage these people to fight the good fight of faith - to get out of the rat race of riches and to fight for something worthwhile. Tell them to aim at RIGHTEOUSNESS, GODLINESS, FAITH, LOVE, STEADFASTNESS, GENTLENESS. LET THEM TAKE HOLD OF ETERNAL LIFE TO WHICH EVERYONE IS CALLED BY JESUS CHRIST... CHARGE THEM NOT TO BE HAUGHTY NOR TO SET THEIR HOPES ON UNCERTAIN RICHES, BUT ON GOD WHO RICHLY FURNISHES EVERYTHING TO ENJOY. THEY ARE TO DO GOOD, TO BE RICH IN GOOD DEEDS, LIBERAL AND GENEROUS, THUS LAYING UP FOR THEMSELVES A GOOD FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE SO THAT THEY MAY TAKE HOLD OF THE LIFE WHICH IS LIFE INDEED.

Let no one leave this church this morning saying to himself, Well, Pastor Thrun, certainly tried to put his hand in our pockets so that we will give more. Take another look! That hand is not mine! That Hand is torn and bleeding - it bears the imprint of the nails which held it to the Cross. It is the HAND OF YOUR SAVIOR - and that Hand doesn't just want your money. That Hand wants YOU. He died

for YOU, and He lives for YOU. He wants YOU to live for Him. That's all He wants - but THAT IS EVERYTHING.

There is an old Ruskin story of a man who tried to swim to safety from a wrecked ship. Because he couldn't bring himself to leave his money behind, he tied about his waist a belt containing 200 pounds in gold. Unable to reach shore because of the extra weight, he sank and drowned. Ruskin asked, as he was sinking HAD HE THE GOLD OR HAD THE GOLD HIM? That is a question each of us must answer: DO I HAVE MY MONEY OR DOES MY MONEY HAVE ME?... DO I HAVE LIFE, OR DOES LIFE HAVE ME? God help us to lay hold on the only life there is - the Life which is in Jesus Christ - the LIFE WHICH IS LIFE INDEED. Amen.