

United Methodist Church

Solon, IA

October 30, 2011

Rev C A Kress

First: video clip of Adam Hamilton as he preaches upon Cultivating Contentment

Restless Heart Syndrome

Philippians 4:8-13

prayer

(presentation - - - based on "Cultivating Contentment" - chapter 3 of ENOUGH: Discovering joy through simplicity and generosity by Adam Hamilton, Abington Press) The notes in italic come from the video presentation by Adam Hamilton.

***Recollections of the wild-fires that devastated southern California in 2007 – their suddenness and total destruction. People were hardly able to escape with their lives, much less any of their possessions.*

***Luke 12:15 "One's life doesn't consist in the abundance of possessions." –*

***Natural disasters remind us that everything in this world is temporary. Things can be swept away in an instant. Furthermore, when we die most of our things will be out-dated, worn out, or simply of no value to anyone else. So we fully understand Jesus "One's life doesn't consist in the abundance of one's possessions."*

*** However the world continually tells me my life DOES consist in the abundance of my possessions. I am bombarded with messages such as, "If you had a little bit more, you'd be happier, if you had this thing or that, you'd find more satisfaction in life. If you had a bigger house or a nicer car you'd be happy – or, at least happier than you are right now.*

***This leads to a dangerous condition named by Hamilton as Restless Heart Syndrome.*

***The primary symptom of RHS is discontent. We are never satisfied. The moment we acquire something, we scarcely take time to enjoy it before we want something else. We are perennially discontent. This is the nature of RHS and if it's left unchecked, it can destroy us.*

There IS a certain discontent God intended us to have. There are some things which we should be content with and others we should not. The problem is that we get the two confused. James Mackintosh, the Scottish philosopher said this: **"It is right to be contented with what we have, but never with what we are."

***Therefore it's good to be discontent with our moral character, spiritual life, pursuit of holiness, desires for justice and ability to love. We should grow and improve in these areas. We are meant to become more than what we are today. But we tend to be content with these things.*

***Likewise, those things with which we should be content are the things we find ourselves discontented with. At one time or another most of us find ourselves discontent with our jobs, our church, and even our relationships. But, there is no perfect thing, job, relationship, child, house...etc. This is what our discontentment does to destroy us.*

****So, what can we do about it? There are four ways to cultivate contentment in the appropriate areas of our lives. And I have found that when we simplify, we are content, and when we are content, we simplify.*

FOUR KEYS TO CULTIVATING CONTENTMENT

Scripture: The Apostle Paul: "I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry; of having plenty and of being in need." Paul wrote those words from a prison cell in Rome. He was waiting on news of his fate – if he would be executed or not. So circumstances and contentment do not go hand in hand. We can find contentment in any station of life.

How do we cultivate contentment? Here are four keys:

1. Remember that it could be worse!

John Ortberg says there are four words we should say whenever we find ourselves discontented with something. "It could be worse."

..as you walk into your apartment, condo or house... it could be worse!

..as you get into your car....it could be worse!

..when you sit at the dinner table... it could be ???

(Actually Ortberg recommends you think these words rather than say them aloud :)...

Video ends & Carol continues:

The second recommendation comes when considering that purchase or to upgrade our lives in one way or another:

2. Ask “For how long will this make me happy?”

I (Carol) went to a conference in Washington DC about 18 months ago. I had my trusty red lap top and my little cell phone with me. But, I have to tell you, when I saw everyone pulling out their net books and smart phones and i-pods/i-pads & i-phones, I felt like I was living in the ice ages! The hotel where the conference was held was right next to a shopping mall and before I came home I was at the mall checking out the prices!

When I struggled with buying a house or a car or something, my father used to tell me to “sleep on it, sleep on it.” That's a good idea.

So, Hamilton's third and fourth point will be addressed together. They are:

3. Develop a grateful attitude. And I will talk of this point along with the fourth point, which is

4. “Where does my soul find satisfaction?”

These two recommendations bring us back to the scripture from Philippians.

Paul wrote, “I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need.”

I'm reminded of his writing in 2 Corinthians 11:25-28:

“Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was pelted with stones. Three

times I was shipwrecked. I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers; in danger from bandits; in danger from my fellow Jews; in danger from the Gentiles. In danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea, in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food. I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.”

And yet, Paul writes, “I have learned to be content with whatever I have” (Philippians).

Paul is writing to the Philippians to thank them for sending a bit of cash. (That's interesting in as they are very poor). In this note he is explaining to them, “Thanks you, but I'm really fine. Because my life is in God's hands and things have a tendency to work out.”

He's choosing an attitude of gratitude.

His message for us is this; life is changing all of the time. Events and situations will come and go. Some of them are going to be good and some will be bad. But we're always in God's hands.

So now, you heard a little message from the Apostle Paul. Adam Hamilton has done a little preaching on the cultivation of contentment and you've heard me talk about faith and trust. It all weaves together, and it ties in with this month's emphasis upon financial stewardship.

When we choose to cultivate an attitude of contentment and trust we go so much further down the road together than when we are cultivating attitudes of anxiety and discontent. The management of money is a spiritual discipline. And when we are faithful, God is faithful too.

This morning we want to pass out a gift. It's a little key tag. On one side is written “Contentment.” On the other side is a little prayer which reads, “Lord, help me to be grateful for what I have, to remember that I don't need most of what I want, and that joy is found in simplicity and generosity. Amen”

You are encouraged you to put this tag on your key rings so it will serve as a reminder to you. Pray the prayer when-ever you are in circulation. Because it's really true. Contentment isn't found in things. It's found when

we bind our lives up with Christ and the things of Christ. He is the one who can provide all that we need.

Things could be good, or things could be bad;
but GOD is always good.

Amen!