

1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NRSV)

¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, ¹⁹ 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.

You know, the sermon writing process is a funny thing. Sometimes you read a scripture passage and immediately a sermon comes to mind – flowing easily. Other times, a scripture passage has to be contemplated, reflected on, and researched --- wrestled with until it offers up its meaning. And then there are passages likes this – passages whose meaning and intent are so clear ... that the challenge to the preacher is “what more need I say”? Paul has said what he wants to say quite clearly and succinctly ... what could I possible say to improve upon it? And in my experience these are the passages that are the most difficult to preach on.

All week that has been my challenge ... and all week I have delayed putting pen to paper ... or more accurately .. fingers to keyboard. But then ... as so often happens ... the Holy Spirit intervenes ... inspires ... clarifies. And I am given the gift of a

sermon. But this week that was slightly different. Usually what happens is some light will go on in my mind ... and from there a sermon develops. This week however – the sermon did not arise from within .. but without. For this week ... I lived a sermon. This weekend I saw a number of people live out this scripture passage ... did not necessarily give Paul's words a new interpretation ... but gave them legs. This weekend I saw people live out in their lives Paul's call to give freely of themselves ... "to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share". People who may not even have realised they were storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future. But people who were taking hold of the life that really is life.

Let me tell you about these people. Let's start with Shekinah, Patrick, Sarah and Naomi. Our 4 youth who participated in the OCYF winter weekend – yes, we organizers dared hope for a larger number – but these 4 young people are simply wonderful . They are the Youth who are, not only the future of our church, but its present. Youth who were willing to give up a weekend and travel down from Toronto. And in doing they shared with we who spent time with them ... their enthusiasm, their cooperation, their faith, their humour, and their hope. Gifts that they gave freely and sincerely.

And just as they were giving and generous in their spirit this weekend – so too many others were equally generous in their sharing – sharing that made the weekend what it was. Whether it was Ann Stainton – a member of the Hillcrest church who drove these youth down from Toronto at 9 at night, only to turn around and make the drive back home. Or Gwyn ... a young woman who travelled from Hamilton for the privilege of sleeping on a church floor ... and being the adult advisor for the weekend. Or Aaron, another young adult who gave up a friend's birthday party to chaperon. Or Julie who joined us after working an all-night shift at the hospital. All of these people gave generously of their time and energies to make sure the weekend would happen.

Then there were our guests who helped with the program. The people at Mennonite Community Services who patiently told us all about their services and their community ... and then gently put us to work dusting, organizing, cleaning in their relief store. Or Nancy, who blew in like a whirlwind and spent the afternoon with the youth helping them identify their strengths and weaknesses so that they may be the leaders they are called to be. And then – Philip – an unseen benefactor – a young man who has been an important part of my life since he was about 6 – now as an employee at the London Ski Club ... he was able to arrange an evening of skiing for these youth he had never even met ... and he arranged it for free. An

then of course, Albert – who is simply the best ski instructor ever! He had those youth – two of whom had never skied – on the big hill in no time. He gently instructed ... patiently accompanied us ... and then boosted everyone's confidence with his encouragement and support. The smiles on the faces ... and the fact that we skied a almost 3 hours ... speak volumes. All of these people gave generously of their gifts and experience to make sure the weekend was both enjoyable and meaningful.

And finally, the St Thomas congregation who opened their building and their hearts to us. Letting us turn a couple of their rooms into a giant slumber party. Feeding us ... caring for us. They shared generously in their resources to make this all possible.

So you see – this weekend was a sermon. All of these people who I have mentioned --- all of them were willing to generously share whatever it was that they had to offer ... whether it was time, facilities, inspiration, support, joy ... whatever was theirs to give – they gave lovingly. That is the true meaning of this passage --- that is the message that Paul wanted us all to hear loud and clear. When we give like that ... we receive back abundantly. We receive back in the smiles and the laughter. We receive back in knowing our gifts have been honoured

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and graciously received. We receive back in the satisfaction of knowing we witnessed our faith in our love – lived out our call as Christians. Not in signing a cheque or giving a monetary donation ... but in giving of ourselves ... faithfully, lovingly, humbly to one another ... and thus to God.