

Spiritual Disciplines Series: Simplicity
1 Timothy 6:7-10
WRCoB 8.16.20

With Kevin's fine sermon last week
On the discipline of study

We round out the four inner spiritual disciplines
In this sermon series.

Next, we look at the four outer spiritual disciplines

They are

1. Outward Disciplines
 - a. Simplicity
 - b. Solitude
 - c. Submission
 - d. Service

Today we discover the discipline of simplicity.

One of the great lyricists in folk music, John Prine
Died this past spring from Covid 19.

He wrote a song that I learned back in the 70s
Called "Spanish Pipedream."

It came out of the sentiment of the times
Following the 60s
And the rejection of the status quo.

The chorus goes like this.

2

*"Blow up your TV, throw away your paper
Go to the country, build you a home.*

*Plant a little garden, eat a lot of peaches
Try and find Jesus on your own."*

I relished the thought back then
Because it paralleled my own search
For the "simple life."

Because even at eighteen
My life seemed way, way too complicated.

And in various ways down through the years
I've tried to maintain a simpler lifestyle
With varying degrees of success.

I suppose it's is in my blood.

After all, it's our Brethren tagline.

3

"Continuing the work of Jesus
Peacefully, Simply, Together."

Historically, the Brethren, along with our cousins
The Amish and Mennonites
Have tried to live a simpler life.
Again, with varying degrees of success.

My parents lived through the Great Depression.

Neither had anything during their growing-up-years.

But they learned to find joy in simple things.

And so consequently

We, my siblings and I

Grew up under the rule of frugality!

Elise Boulding, a Quaker sociologist

Comments on this word, frugality.

4

"Frugality is one of the most beautiful and joyful words in the English language, and yet one that we are culturally cut off from understanding and enjoying. The consumption society has made us feel that happiness lies in having things, and has failed to teach us the happiness of not having things."

My wife, Judith, grew up in a very simple life

Having to carry water from the river

And firewood from the forests.

But as she tells it

They didn't know any better

And lived a happy childhood.

But how about now?

How about you?

Do you find your life filled with stuff?

Do you feel your life is overly complicated?
Pulled in a million directions?
Out of control?

Do you wish you had more time
To devote to simpler things?

Like taking your favorite person
For a walk in the woods?

Or sitting on the front porch rocking chair
Visiting with the neighbors?

Well, me too.

The corona pandemic had forced us
To live a slower life.

But as things are opening up
We move back toward our normal hectic pace.

~~

Living a simple life is a choice we make.

5

Confucius says, *"Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated."*

We **can** live a simple and balanced life
In a crazy and mixed-up world.

We **can** replace our anxiety-filled life
With a peaceful existence.

We **can** live a simple life in a complicated world.

~~

Our opening words from Deuteronomy
Remind us to be careful
When we reach the apex of affluence.

Because having reached it
We forget that it was God
Who made it possible.

6

Psalm 62:10b NRSV . . . if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

Proverbs 11:28 NIV Those who trust in their riches will fall

The Apostle Paul reminds us
That we brought nothing into this world
And we take nothing out.

7

1 Timothy 6:8 NLT So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.

~~

Jesus had a lot to say about wealth.

Jesus knew material possessions
Interfered in our relationship with God.

8 Matthew 6:21 NRSV For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus knew how difficult it would be
For those with wealth to enter Paradise.

9
Matthew 19:24 CEV In fact, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to get into God's kingdom.

This verse was his response to the rich young ruler.

The rich, young ruler asked Jesus what he must do
To find favor with God.

Jesus told him to keep the commandments.

He said he did.

Still he felt something was lacking?

10
Matthew 19:21 NIV Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Now why would Jesus say that?

Because he knew the rich, young ruler's anxieties
Went hand-in hand with his wealth.

Jesus knew possessions complicated his life.

Jesus tells the man, "Hey, keep it simple".

11

Matthew 19:22 ESV When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

What Jesus tells him, he tells us.

Remove the physical clutter in your lives

And in doing so, you'll remove the spiritual clutter.

But Jesus, how do we do it?

How can we find joy in a simpler life?

Let's look at another one of Jesus' teachings.

The disciples left everything to follow Jesus

But they worried about the same things

We worry about.

If we follow Jesus

How are we going to pay the bills?

How are we going to provide for our families?

What's our retirement going to look like?

And Jesus tells them.

12

Matthew 6:25 NRSV “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

13

³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ ³² For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

~~

Herein lies the key to a simpler and anxiety-free life.

Seek first the kingdom of God.

Everything else falls into its proper place.

In everything you do, do it for the sake of God.

When we do this, our perceived needs change!

We begin to enjoy the simpler things in life.

14

Terri Guillemets *"Life is amazingly good when it's simple and amazingly simple when it's good."*

Jesus clarifies that freedom from anxiety
Involves a simple trust in God.

Does that sound overly simplistic?
Of course it does.

And for that very reason
Many won't strive for it.

But if you're willing to try
Here are some steps to get there.

First and foremost
15 Practice the spiritual disciplines.

Get close to God.

Meditate, pray, fast, and study
Seek first God's kingdom in everything you do

Secondly, **16 Declutter your lives.**

Possessions do get in the way
Physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Have More With Less, the Mennonite cookbook says.

William Morris suggests; *"Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful"*

Thirdly, **17 Get rid of debt.**

Debt has a way of causing anxiety.

The less debt, the more peace-of-mind.

Consider frugality a good thing.

"Live simply so others may simply live."

Fourthly, **18 Slow down.**

19

Socrates once said,

"Beware of the barrenness of a busy life."

Busy lives can be shallow lives.

We all have appointments, and schedules

And full calendars.

But if we do not slow down,

We will certainly miss the finer points in life.

Fifthly, **20 Rid yourself of addictions.**

I know, it's tough.

But the more we free ourselves from addictions
The freer we become
To enjoy the good things in life.

Six, **21 Spend more time on relationships
than on possessions.**

And that doesn't mean
Running up and down
Getting the kids to all of their activities!

If nothing else
Plan to have supper together as a family
If possible, every day of the week.

Seven, **22 Spend more time outdoors.**

I know I talk about this all the time.

But the great-out-of-doors is a great stress reliever.

Run, walk, bike, hike
Fish, hunt, garden, or just soak up the sun.

Look, smell, breathe, and listen to nature
It does our soul and body good.

Eight, **23 Work on time management.**

Learn to say no.

Except when your pastor is asking you.

Set boundaries.

They tell us not to be possessive
But please be possessive of your time!

Spend time doing nothing.
It's not wasted time.

Unplug!

Remember, life is amazingly good when it's simple
And amazingly simple when it's good!

~~

And so, may God grant you the wherewithal
To hold God's kingdom first.

And then take a little advice from John Prine.

*"Blow up your TV, throw away your paper,
Go to the country, build you a home.*

*Plant a little garden, eat a lot of peaches,
Try and find Jesus on your own."*

Keep it simple.