

1 Timothy 6:6-9, 17-19
Introduction to the Brethren Part 3; Simply
WRCoB 8.22.21

We continue our sermon series on the Brethren
Using the Brethren tagline

Continuing the work of Jesus, peacefully, simply, together.

The first week, we looked at the phrase
Continuing the work of Jesus

Last Sunday it was *Peacefully*.

And this Sunday, we will look at the word, *Simply*.

~~

A question was raised at an Annual Conference in 1828
On the use of carpets.

1

AC 1828 Article 11: Whether brethren may have carpets in their houses, was considered, that it can not and should not be, because it leads to elevation (pride).

This question concerning carpets was raised again in 1846

2

AC 1846 Article 10: About pride, in its various forms, which is creeping into the church, it is thought highly necessary that the Yearly Meeting instruct and urge it upon all the overseers of the churches to see especially to that matter, and protest strongly against all manner of superfluidity and vanity, such as building fine houses, and having paintings, carpetings, and costly furniture, etc., together with the adorning of the body too much after the fashion of the world.

3 *We believe we should deny ourselves, and abstain from these things, especially the laborers in the Word, who are called to be examples of the flock.*

The subject of carpets was raised again in 1853.

4

AC 1853 Article 23: Does the answer to the tenth query, as it stands on the minutes of 1846, only forbid the grandeur of paintings and carpets, or does it forbid them altogether? We consider the advice of our brethren in 1846 sufficiently clear.

Finally, in 1878, Brethren's Annual Meeting relented.

5

AC 1878 Article 10: Will the district meeting petition the Annual Meeting of 1878 to reconsider Article 8, of Annual Meeting of 1827, and Article 11, of the Annual Meeting of 1828, and give us a more definite answer, or show, by the gospel, that if we have common plain carpets on our floors it will lead to elevation (pride)?

6

Answer: We consider the above, and decide that plain carpets have no tendency to pride and elevation, and that they may be enjoyed by us; but fine and fancy carpets are not consistent with our humble profession, and should not be in our houses.

~~

And who's to decide which carpets are plain
And which carpets are fine and fancy?

Carpeting was just one example
Of the Brethren's desire to live a simpler life
And obtain a uniformity to one another.

They opposed the materialistic and vain ways of the world
And felt called to deny themselves
Luxuries and comforts afforded them by the world.

Their defended their position in part with Paul's statement.

7

**Romans 12:2 NRSV Do not be conformed to this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so
that you may discern what is the will of God—what is
good and acceptable and perfect.**

Reading through the minutes of AC

From the mid-1800s

Until the early part of the 20th Century

Brethren obsessed about conformity in the church

Making sure everybody looked

Dressed, and acted the same.

The Brethren found a distinctive and peculiar lifestyle

Conforming to the practices of the church

But explicitly showing nonconformity to the world.

They dressed simply

They built sturdy and simple homes

They worked simple occupations.

They lived off the land

Did not associate with others outside of their faith

And tried to remain separate from the world.

This was the Brethren of my great grandparent's generation.

And so the question before us today is this.

When we look at our tagline

Continuing the work of Jesus

Peacefully

Simply

Together

Would you say

That it accurately describes who we are as Brethren?

When it comes to living the simple life

Would you say that today's Brethren

Live a simpler life than others in society?

I have described characteristics

Of the early church's attempts

To live a simple, unadorned life.

Could we describe characteristics

Of contemporary Brethren's simple living?

My premise is that Brethren continue to exhibit a simpler life

Albeit different from their ancestors.

~~

Those who are cradle Brethren

Will remember their parents and grandparents'

Aversion to costly amusements

Fancy cars, houses and bodily adornments.

When it came to spending money

They counted each penny carefully.

They believed what Elise Boulding, a Quaker sociologist
Considered a virtue.

8

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.

It is important to evaluate
The amount of material wealth one possesses.

But just as important is how those material possessions
Relates to our sense of well-being.

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

We CAN live a simple and balanced life
In a crazy, complicated, consumeristic world.

We CAN replace our anxiety-filled, fast-paced life
With a simpler, nonmaterialistic existence.

It requires not only the outward physical discipline
Of careful and deliberate spending.

But also, the inward spiritual discipline
Of finding joy in the simpler things in life.

~~

Jesus had a lot to say about wealth.

Jesus knew material possessions
Interfered with our relationship to God.

9

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart is also.

Jesus knew how difficult it was and still is
For those with wealth to enter Paradise.

10

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.

He said this in response
To a rich, young Elon Musk kind of guy.

He had come to Jesus hoping to justify his lifestyle
Or at least defend it.

And so, he asked Jesus what he must do
To find favor with God.

He told Jesus he was personally highly ethical.

But still . . . something didn't seem quite right in his life.

He felt empty
Though his pockets were full.

Jesus saw it and said.

11 Matthew 19:21 NIV 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 guy's wealth complicated his life.

12

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 you'll remove the spiritual clutter too.

~~

On the other hand

The disciples left everything to follow Jesus

And they worried about the same things, we worry about.

If we follow Jesus

How are we to pay the bills?

How will we to provide for the family?

What will our retirement look like

If we don't start saving for it now?

Jesus knew they, we, all of us, worry about these things

13 Matthew 6:25 CEV I tell you not to worry about your life. Don't worry about having something to eat, drink, or wear. Isn't life more than food or clothing?

14

27 NLT Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

Jesus knows fretting over these things

Can cause undue stress in our lives.

15

Matthew 6:31-33 NLT

³¹ “So don't worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

In my opinion, this is the key to a simpler, stress-free life.

Seek God in all you say and do.

Everything else will fall into its proper place.

Do everything for the sake of God.

When we do, our priorities, our perceived needs change.

And we begin to enjoy the simpler things of life.

16

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

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Years ago, Brethren were immediately recognized
By their plain dress and peculiar ways.

Today, it is pretty difficult, if nigh impossible
To identify a member of the Church of the Brethren.

And though we are very much a part of the world.

We try not to conform to the ways of the world.

We seek to be transformed
By the renewing of our minds.

That we may discern the will of God
What is good and acceptable and perfect.

Simple living guides our lives
How we conduct our businesses
How we raise our families
How we spend our leisure time
And how we care for God's creation.

Simple living guides our lives
In the question how we can live comfortably
Without exploiting others?

How do we live simply
So that others may simply live?

Today's Brethren live with intentionality towards a simpler life

Keeping in mind first

What it takes to seek the kingdom of God.

Today's Brethren do good

Are rich in good works

Are generous and ready to share

17

1 Timothy 6:19 Thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that is really life.