

There once was a family with a garden out back, and every spring the man and the children would prepare the ground for planting, spading the soil, mixing in the manure, raking out the lumps, planting the seed, ^{for the summer} pulling the weeds, carrying water for the plants, harvesting the produce, canning all that God gave them from the ground. and everynight they were tired when they went to sleep, and everymorning they woke up refreshed, and they were content.

Then one day the neighbor stepped into the yard to see what the man and the woman were doing, and seeing them carrying the countless pails of water, he said, why do you work so hard at watering your ~~land~~ garden, you should get a hose, you will wear yourself out with all that work. But the man said, "I do not have money for a hose, I guess I'll just have to work a few more hours at my job to get the money, and he did, and he wasn't so tired at the end of the day from watering. But soon the neighbor returned and watching them hoe and pull the weeds he said, "You work too hard at weeding your garden, you might to get a cultivator that you can push, then the weeds will be quickly killed and you won't wear yourself out with all that work. So the man again worked extra hours until he could pay for the cultivator that he would push.

But the next spring the man saw his neighbor working in his own garden ~~is~~ and he saw something new. A gas powered rototiller. And he said to himself, "How easy it is for him, following that machine around, and I ~~still~~ work here for hours, spading and mixing my soil. I need a rotor tiller, so he worked even more hours than before at his job, to pay for the machine that saved him so much work. With it he prepared the soil, and weeded the rows in his garden and he had more time than before. So much time in fact that he decided ~~to~~ he needed ~~some~~ recreation to get some exercise, so he took up golf. Soon every free moment would ~~take~~ ^{find} him ~~at~~ ^{at} the golf course.

Before long his wife decided that being home all the time alone was no good, and since they needed money for all the things they needed like a new TV and a cable hookup to ~~see~~ so that they would have something to do in all the hours they were free, she decided to get a job. And the children ~~was~~ were growing older, and with little to do they found jobs that they too could have more money and more things. Until one evening as they sat at table together (a rare event I might add) they made a decision, the garden had to go, they were just too busy to spend the time on it this year. And that year they went camping each week and got away from it all!

Today we are ~~celebrating~~ observing Stewardship of Creation Sunday, a day on which we consider our use of the resources which God has provided us, the land, the air, the water and the energy resources which are so essential for our life. Now I could talk to you about soil erosion and lowered water tables and depleted energy resources and the impact on the land and on our communities of coal and oil development. And I had planned to do just that until I read the second lesson for today. "There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world, but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire ~~things~~ 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 through many pangs."

Contentment, Content, words for which we increasingly have no meaning. For we are programmed by our radios and TVs, and newspapers, and even more so by each other to think that more is better, that less is disaster. But never enough of that more. I know a man who five years ago was making ten thousand dollars a year and when I would talk to him we would talk about many things but never how hard it was for him to make ends meet. Today he makes close to twenty-four thousand dollars, even after inflation a significant increase, yet now when we talk he talks of nothing but of how poor he is. And he believes it is so for the more he has the more he needs. Where once there was some contentment in his life, now there is nothing except a voracious hunger for more.

And what does this have to do with the stewardship of creation, of the wise use of the resources of land and air ~~resources~~ and water and fuels? Just this, the coal will be mined and the air polluted and the water used up and the land destroyed because of the more that we demand. To make the many gadgets, to provide for our recreation to keep us believing life is getting better even as daily we are less content, less at peace to do all these things we are risking the destruction of the very things we need for our life and our survival on this earth.

Some lonely voices today are saying that less is more, that contentment with the simple gifts that God provides will bring us to the realization that the best things in life are indeed free. One of these lonely voices is that of the writer of 1 Timothy, speaking words that we

would do well to take into our hearts and our lives.

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