

Message for Sunday, March 8, 2026

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4: 6; 1 Timothy 6:6-8

Title: Simplicity

WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Giving Options; Special Offering for March is Old Town Mission; Learn to Knit/Crochet class will be on Monday, March 23rd at 10:00 in the Fellowship Atrium; Please announce what days you will NOT be having Bible Study.

FELLOWSHIP OF LOVE SONG

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Worship God with joy and thanksgiving.

1 P: Make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

L: We are the sheep of God's pasture.

P: We are the lambs of God's flock.

L: Come! Let us worship the Lord.

UNISON PRAYER

Living water, flow through our hearts today.

Quench our thirst in our desert wanderings, and strengthen us for the road ahead.

--

Bathe us in your fountain of eternal life, that our spirits may flow with faith and love,

--

through the power of your eternal Spirit.

Message for Sunday, March 8, 2026

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4: 6; 1 Timothy 6:6-8

Title: Simplicity

Amen.

L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

OFFERING/SONG

SCRIPTURE: ECCLESIASTES 4:6; 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-8

⁶ Better is a handful with quiet than two handfuls with toil and a chasing after wind.

⁶ Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment,

2 --

⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it,

--

⁸ but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.

L: The word of God, for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

MESSAGE: SIMPLICITY

“So, if the son sets you free you are free indeed.” John 8:36. Freedom in the Christian life has always been a difficult nuanced conversation to me. If you’re like me you’ve heard this verse before and have heard variations on this theme. That if you are made free in Christ your life is so much better than it was. Let me ask you a pointed question though, is it really better?

Message for Sunday, March 8, 2026

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4: 6; 1 Timothy 6:6-8

Title: Simplicity

You see often when I hear this idea that by being Christian brings you more freedom there is usually a big “but” attached to it. Over the years every conversation I’ve ever had about freedom in the church usually results in someone reminding others what they can’t do as opposed to what they can do. You are free to wear whatever you want, but ladies remember you don’t want to cause the men to stumble. Men you can feel whatever you want, especially anger, but if you feel sadness don’t tell anyone because you know men have to be strong. Christ has made you free, but you know you have to look a certain way, act a certain way, vote a certain way. That’s an awful lot of buts to freedom.

3 Over the past few weeks, we have been exploring spiritual disciplines and this week’s spiritual discipline is a difficult one. Not necessarily because the practice is difficult but because we have assumptions to what this discipline may mean. This discipline is the discipline of simplicity. The core intent of simplicity is freedom in Christ, freedom from anxiety, freedom from stuff.

I think most of us agree that we would like simpler lives. Most often we dream of being a kid again, not having worries or cares. Or we put ourselves in a time in our lives where we didn’t worry about where dinner was coming from or over our next pay check. There is nothing wrong with this type of wondering and desire for a more simplistic time. Innately we have an idea of what it means to live simply what we don’t innately understand is what this is as a spiritual discipline.

In the course of researching for today’s message I found there was an idea of what simplicity is that I want to reject. I read in a number of places that simplicity as a spiritual discipline is single minded focus on bringing the kingdom of God into existence. In other words, a single-

minded focus on doing everything for God. I don't think this is a great example of the spiritual discipline of simplicity. Let me give you an example of why, are my kids important to me or not? If I focused solely on the kingdom of God in certain theological circles I would say then my children were individually important. You see what is more important is sharing the gospel to as many people as possible. To counter this I would argue that being a father and providing for my children, teaching them to be good people and to have their own relationship with God is the best use of my time for the kingdom of God. The problem is if the sole focus is on the kingdom of God, unless you are very strong theologically, it can be manipulated to mean something you didn't intend.

4

So, what is simplicity as a spiritual discipline if it's not single-minded focus on the kingdom of God? Well, I've alluded to it a little bit already. We all know what clutter is. The build up or accumulation of things often in one or two places in our house. Simplicity is clearing out the clutter in our lives with a particular focus on the spiritual life.

Jesus is consistently clear in the gospel that material things can get in the way of the kingdom of God and in the way of our relationship with God. We see this repeatedly when Jesus talks about money, such as the rich young ruler who didn't want to give away his wealth which stood in the way of a relationship with God. WE see this in Jesus' driving out the money changers in the temple. The clutter of the way the world operates impeding the spiritual lives of people.

This spiritual discipline is a bit more difficult to talk about than the other two we've already done. Simplicity is very individual; it is about what gets in the way of your relationship with God. So, for some of you it may be your wealth that gets in the way. Now hear me out I'm not

talking about only money. You ever see someone so determined to hold onto a house because of the history in the house that they are driving themselves into the ground? That's holding onto wealth and getting in the way of what is the most important thing.

For some people what's getting in the way is time management. You spend your time in cluttered activities. Watching TV, playing a game, or gossiping, sorry I mean social media. That you've put this activity in between you and your relationship with God. Simplicity is about freedom to live as a genuine person as God has called you to be.

5 If you look at your life and feel that it is cluttered and you have all sorts of activities and you're not sure if you should cut some things out, maybe try these three steps to simplicity. First, find something in your life that needs simplifying. This may be direct literal clutter. Clean that living room or that closet! It may be something more ethereal, your schedule because you keep saying yes to things. Again, it's personally up to you.

Second, reflect on what you need to do about it. Write it down! If it's something like a literal clean up, list what you want to get done and why (remember this is a spiritual practice as much as a physical one). If it's more spiritual like your schedule, write out what you are doing, and why you are doing it. Sometimes you'll find you say yes just because you didn't want to let someone down, which is not healthy for you. Other times you find you said yes because you really care about it, this gives you a chance to reorient to what is most important to you.

Finally ask for accountability. It's easy to say I'm going to simplify, it's harder to carry through and do it consistently. Use your friends your spouse to help you stay on target. And don't forget to start small. Find a small area you want to simplify and try that. If you think you're going to

Message for Sunday, March 8, 2026

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4: 6; 1 Timothy 6:6-8

Title: Simplicity

simplify your whole life you've got another thing coming to you. Remember this is a spiritual practice and while I don't think the Kingdom of God is your single-minded focus I do think you should be looking at what adds to your relationship with Christ, and will develop you as a better follower of Christ. This changes the single-minded focus into it being a part of your spiritual growth. I think when you do that you'll find that you focus more on God than you would originally.

Simplicity is a state of being alive where you are made free from the anxieties of keeping up with everything and of valuing things over people. Go ahead. Give it a try. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER/ PASTORAL PRAYER

6 SONG

BENEDICTION

SONG

GOODBYE