1 Timothy 6

Series: “Tim Bits”

Sermon: “What’s Your Treasure?”

I am not sure how many of you have ever taken the time to visit a website called the Darwin Awards. As you can guess from the name, the site is named after Charles Darwin the author of the *Origin of Species,* and generally considered the father of evolutionary theory. Now just to be clear, the website is not a website devoted to promoting evolution, rather its stated goal is as follows: “the Darwin Awards commemorate those who improve our gene pool by removing themselves from it.”

Essentially, what the site does is it reports on people who through their own stupidity, end up killing themselves, thus being unable to reproduce, proving Darwin’s theory of the survival of the fittest. The site does not include people who commit suicide or are murdered, those they profile are just…well, not too bright. Case in point, is a story out of Finland in 2013, where two brothers in law were united in their common interest of collecting war weapons; mostly weapons left over from WWII, and found in dig sites etc.

By the time of their accident, these two gentlemen had collected 100 fragment grenades, bazooka shells, fuse materials, and assorted ammunition. They accumulated their collection by searching old battle sites with metal detectors. The two men enjoyed their rather unique hobby, despite the fact neither of them had any training in disarming live munitions. You can tell how this is going to end. On a Friday night around 6pm, the two men who were in their twenties, were in the garage where they kept their collection.

The older man, who was twenty-seven, was finishing defusing a grenade, and was carefully pulling out the payload. The object in question was not a regular grenade, but a large 75 mm anti-tank grenade. In trying to render the weapon inactive, the man set it off with obvious consequences. The man working on the weapon died in the ambulance to the hospital, and the other survived with serious injuries. Fortunately for the rest of the town, the other ordinances did not go off, or the whole town would have been leveled.

Frankly, I think life is dangerous enough without tempting fate, so to speak. I always comforted myself with the idea that living in Canada, particular central Canada, I avoided a great many threats to my health and life. The weather, for the most part is pretty calm, there is only a handful of dangerous animals roaming around, and fewer still in the city. We have very good emergency care, and food is plentiful.

However, I now know how misleading this sense of security can be. Every day in this city, people are killed in auto accidents. Now we have the West Nile virus, and Zitka virus. Some of my most anxious moments every day, is trying to cross Don Mills Road, or Lawrence Ave. I fully understand why some people get so anxious that they fear leaving their homes; they become agoraphobic, or become obsessive compulsive about germs.

It really doesn’t matter where you live, or what precautions you take, life can still be hazardous. And to top it off, every week, we gather in this place to face a grave danger.

That may surprise you, but the truth is there is danger lurking in this hour together. In fact, the danger comes down to just one moment in the service. No it’s not the children’s story time, and no it is not the sermon. I am not referring to the hymns we sing, even if we do so out of tune.

What is this dangerous time of the service I am referring to; it’s the offering time. That’s right, the offering time. It is fraught with grave danger. Why is it dangerous? Well, first let me lay out some helpful background for you. In the book of Deuteronomy, we read about the very first order of worship our Jewish ancestors undertook. And like all worship services there was included an offering.

The event in question, occurs just as the people of God are to enter the promised land. It was a long time coming-forty years to be exact, and a generation has come and gone. Moses gets up before the people to give them some instructions. “When you have entered the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in, take some of the first fruits of all you produce from the soil of the land the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket.

Then go to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name and say to the priest in office at the time, ‘I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the land the Lord swore to our forefathers to give us.’ The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the Lord your God.’” (Deut. 26: 1-5) Sounds like an offering plate doesn’t it? That dear friends, is the dangerous moment, the crucial moment.

And we just do not take it seriously enough. It was at this moment that a person worshipping God came to their senses. Holding their basket, all kinds of thoughts would race through their hearts and minds. “Why am I giving God my first fruits? Why don’t I go home, and wait, and bring him my second or even third fruits?” “Maybe I’ll take this perfect pomegranate out of the basket, and put in this one that a bit blemished or overripe.”

In this moment, holding their basket, a person could even reason that “God gave them this fruit to enjoy. He wants me to have it. I don’t need to share this with God. So give me back my basket.” The danger comes at the offering time because at the offering time is where we forget where our hearts need to be. It is the time we forget that everything we put in the basket, and everything we keep, both come from the generosity of God.

If you read on in the passage from Deuteronomy, Moses tells the people what they are to do when they eventually enter the land. He states, “When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give to you…” What did he give them? The list is there. Cities that they did not build. Houses filled with good things they did not build. Wells they did not dig. Vineyards, and olive groves they did not plant.

Then Moses adds, “Then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” Clearly it is easy to forget. It is easy to forget that everything we have to present to God, comes from God in the first place. It is easy to forget that we live in homes God has provided. We eat food God gave us. None of this comes from our hands as much as from God’s.

Can you see the danger yet? The offering is a dangerous time, because it is the moment you are being asked what your level of commitment is to God. It is not out of line to think of it as a test. A test about where your heart is. What are your priorities? Every week we are called on to demonstrate who or what gets our first fruits. It is a moment where we are being asked what we truly value.

It always surprises people, when I tell them that Jesus talks a great about money; considerably more than even about prayer. He knew the importance of our attitude towards money. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

I guarantee you that your heart always goes where your money is; without exception. You are just kidding yourself if you do not believe this to be true. Whoever you are, whatever your financial situation-your heart goes where your money is. If Jesus were speaking to us today, he might alter his words a bit. Those words “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Today he might say something like, “Show me your checkbook, your Visa statement, your receipts, your online accounts, and I will show you where your heart is.”

Think about it this way. You buy shares in let’s say Tim Hortons. Would you not agree that you now have a vested interest in Tim Hortons? You read any and every article about Tim Hortons to check on your investment, when before you owned the shares you basically ignored them. You care now about Tim Hortons because you are invested in it. One minister said, “As surely as the compass needle follows north, your heart will follow your treasure. Where money leads; hearts follow.

Your heart moves towards whatever you treasure. So we can ask ourselves: do we have a heart for God, a heart for the poor, a heart for refugees etc. We can say we have a heart for these things, but the offering tells the truth. Stewardship is not about amounts you control or spend or give; it is about your heart. As a simple example: ask yourself if you spend more on entertainment and restaurants a week, than you give to God. You know what you treasure then.

So how do we keep this offering time from being so dangerous? In Matthew’s gospel Jesus talked about being on guard against greed seeping into our lives.

“Beware, and be on guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” (Matt. 6:15) Many of us know what it is like to be on guard against something. Diabetics need to be vigilant about their sugar levels, and problems with their feet and eyes. People like me with heart issues need to be careful what they do to avoid overworking their heart.

In our spiritual lives we need to be on guard against all kinds of things like greed. Greed is a universal problem, even in the most unlikely places. Ron Blue a financial advisor visited a rural village in Africa. He asked one of the villagers what was the biggest problem facing his village. He expected to hear something like a shortage of supplies or clean water etc.

He was not prepared for the answer he got. The man said that the biggest problem facing his village was “materialism”. He explained, “If a man has a mud hut, he wants one made of stone. If he has a thatched roof, he wants a tin roof. If he has one acre, he wants two. Materialism is a disease of the heart.” You see, even in places of scarcity, where people lack for most luxuries that we take for granted, materialism is alive and well.

We always seem to want more than we have and our maxed out credit cards and hefty lines of credit prove this to be true. So people say things like, “I think I will go to the mall and get something to make me happy.” More stuff will not make you happy. Someone once asked John D. Rockefeller the question, “How many millions does it take to satisfy a man?” His answer was: “The next million.”

Step one in making the offering time less dangerous is to guard our hearts against greed. That way the next time the offering plate comes to you, you will not be tempted to say “It’s mine and I’m going to keep it.” The next step is understanding who you are, and that is where 1 Timothy comes to bear on us. Verse 17 reads, “Tell those (command those) who are rich in this world.” Who is he talking to? The rich.

And what does Paul say, “Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works, and should give generously to those in need, always ready to share with others whatever God has given them.”

So, who does Paul say is supposed to be rich and generous? Those who are rich in this present age. Whew! Thank goodness! That lets me out. I am not rich. So, here at Donway we can let the rich keep everything afloat. For the refugee crisis, let the Dragon’s Den stars look after them. Let the last winner of LottoMax look after the homeless. But hold on a minute. Let us ponder a moment on what actually makes someone rich.

Yes, we are rich in friends and family, rich in salvation but we are talking about money today. Who are the rich? Am I rich? I dare you to visit a website called [www.globalrichlist.com](http://www.globalrichlist.com/) and see how you stack up against the world’s population in terms of wealth. It is truly eye opening. I am probably stupid telling my employer what I learned about myself. Laura and I, with our combined family income are in the top .13 percent of the world’s wealth.

In fact, in world terms we are 7,662,157th wealthiest people on the planet. If you consider there are roughly 6 billion people in this world, then there are roughly 5.77 billion people poorer than we are. Canadians are very rich in worldly terms. That’s a nice thing for us. But what did Paul say, those who are rich in this present day are to be generous. You and I we are rich. We don’t even have to win the lottery to be rich.

Knowing God has made us rich should encourage us to be more generous. Yes, there is danger in this moment of offering, but there is also a gift. After telling Timothy to command the rich to be generous he writes, “In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”

George W. Truett, a well-known pastor in Texas, was invited to dinner at the home of a very wealthy Texas man. After the meal, the host led him to a place where he could get a good view of the surrounding area. Pointing to the oil wells covering the landscape, the Texan boasted, “Twenty-five years ago I had nothing. Now, as far as you can see, it’s all mine.” Looking in the opposite direction at his sprawling fields of grain, he bragged, “They’re all mine.”

Then he turned east toward huge herds of cattle, and bragged, “They’re all mine. Then turning west at a beautiful forest, he said, “That, too, is all mine.” Then he paused, expecting Dr. Truett to compliment him on his great success. But Dr. Truett placed one hand on the man’s shoulders and pointed heavenward, toward the sky, and simply asked, “How much do you have in that direction?” The man hung his head and confessed, “Not much.

Where is your heart? If you are not sure, check where your treasure resides and let us ask God to help us be a generous people and make the offering time less dangerous.