

**ECCLESIASTES 5:10-20**  
**(OT: Ps 86:8-13; NT: 1 Tim 6:6-19)**

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**PRELIMINARY MATTERS**

- Section on vanity of wealth runs from **5:8-6:12** → We'll focus our attention on **5:10-20**.
- Let's enjoy our way through this section of God's word. [**Read. Pray.**]

**INTRODUCTION**

- What is **last thing** you thought about when went to bed last night?
  - Show you just watched?
  - Whether you locked front door?
  - When you have to get up/all you have to do today?
- What is **first thing** you typically think about each morning?
  - Reach for your phone?
  - That meeting or appointment you need to get to?
  - All that you need to get done?
- I have a suggestion for you: But let's get there by working through this text.

**Transition:** Main point of passage has to do with gratitude → **Choose Gratitude...**

- But to get there, Preacher starts by talking about money:
  - Uses money/material possessions as launching pad to talk about a grateful life.
  - And the point he makes about money...
    - Well, it's one we all know to be true...
    - Yet often manage to forget...
- You know the kind of thing I mean:
  - Know feel better with **full night sleep** → But forget when binge-watching show.
  - Know feel better when **eat right** → But forget when donuts in workroom.
  - Know better to be **patient** → But forget when heat of moment comes.
- In the same way:
  - Passage opens by telling us something we know → But have tendency to forget.
  - Here it is:

**CONTEXT: Money won't make you happy**

**State:** **V10: He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.**

- Note that problem is **love** of money: **V10: He who loves money... he who loves wealth.**
- In itself: Money is a gift of God that we can use to glorify and enjoy God → He **richly provides us with everything to enjoy (1 Tim 6:17).**
- But while money is a good gift → It makes a terrible lover.
  - If you give it an importance it doesn't have – set your heart/hopes on it, give all your time/energy to get it, expect it to make you happy – it will let you down.
  - Ultimately it cannot satisfy → **Bc money doesn't have capacity to fill you up.**
    - If you love money, you will always crave more money.
    - If you love wealth, you will always crave more wealth.
  - It's a sugary carb that tastes good but never leaves you satisfied.

**Illustrate: John D. Rockefeller** was one of the richest men of all time:

- Made his money on oil at the end of the 19C.
- When he died in 1937 his net worth was equivalent to 1.5% of U.S. GDP.<sup>1</sup>
- One day, reporter asked him how much money was enough, and he famously replied:  
    **“Just a little bit more.”**<sup>2</sup>
  - Don’t think this was his sincere belief.
  - More likely a tongue-in-cheek commentary from a man who had it all and understood **Ecc 5:10**:
    - Love money and you’ll never be satisfied...
    - You’ll always want → “Just a little bit more.”

**Apply:**

- In our **heads**: Most of us know this → Don’t really believe money will make us happy.
- But in **hearts**: Often fall into trap → Psychotherapist **Jessie O’Neill** calls it *influenza*.<sup>3</sup>
  - An unhealthy relationship with money...
  - Where you always want → “Just a little bit more.”
- **Philip Ryken**: *“Most Americans have at least a mild case of this deadly disease.”*<sup>4</sup>
  - Don’t necessarily want super-abundant-over-the-top-lavish-John-D-Rockefeller levels of money.
  - We want → “Just a little bit more.”
    - Pay off that debt... buy that first house... go on that vacation... get the kids through college... pay off the mortgage... save enough to retire...
    - Nothing crazy → “Just a little bit more.”

**Transition: VV11-17** passage goes on to list bunch of reasons why this won’t work → *WHY* money won’t make you happy.

- I find this helpful:
  - Bible is giving us reasons for the thing our hearts know to be true.
  - Rehearsing them helps keep us sane in this crazy world.
- He gives us 7 of them:
  - 7 reasons money won’t make you happy...
  - 7 reasons you don’t need → “Just a little bit more.”

**CONTENT: The more you have...**<sup>5</sup>

**1. The more people will come after it.**

- **V11a: When goods increase, they increase who eat them...**
- What happens when people with the lottery?
  - Long-lost relatives start appearing like cockroaches and a guy you haven’t seen for 20 years claims he’s one of your best friends...
  - And don’t forget to be generous to the government who will kindly request 37%.

**2. The more you realize it does you no good.**

- **V11b: What advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?**
- You log onto your bank account and see a bigger number on the screen – more zeros than you ever thought you’d see. That’s it.
- Doesn’t fix marriage. Doesn’t bring your wayward kid home. Doesn’t give you meaning.

### 3. The more you toss and turn at night.

- **V12:** Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.
- The laborer works hard all day, goes to bed tired, and has a great night's sleep.
- The rich man goes out for a fancy dinner, comes home, eats a sleeve of Oreos, gets acid reflux, and can't sleep.
- **Derek Kidner:** "[Consider] our modern exercise-machines and health clubs – for it is one of our human absurdities to pour out money and effort just to undo the damage of money and ease."<sup>6</sup>

### 4. The more you can hurt yourself by holding onto it.

- **V13:** There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt.
- Prosperity – money/possessions – can be spiritually corrosive.
  - One old, old commentator puts it this way: "[Riches make the rich] proud, secure, and in love with the world, draw away their hearts from God and duty, and make it very difficult for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven, nay, help to shut them out of it."<sup>7</sup>
  - Wealth can make you self-reliant in a way that hardens you to the grace of God.

### 5. The more you have to lose.

- **V14:** Riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand.
- We get a miniature case-study of a man who loses it all:
  - The stock market crashed, or the investment failed.
  - It nearly killed him to build this wealth, now it nearly kills him to lose it.
- Even worse, he was a family man and now he has nothing to leave to his son.
  - Money provides a false sense of security...
  - That can disappear in an instant.

### 6. The more you'll leave behind.

- **VV15-16:** As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. <sup>16</sup> This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go...
- **1 Tim 6:7** states this truth in plain language: for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.
- But I prefer the graphic version we get in Ecclesiastes:
  - You're born naked and you die naked. Naked in; naked out.
  - No matter what you accumulate in between, you can't take any of it with you.

### 7. The less you have.

- **V17:** Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.
- You eat in dark bc you've worked all day → Anxiety builds and takes a physical toll → Life becomes bitter, not sweet.
- **Derek Kidner:** "If anything is worse than the addiction money brings, it is the emptiness that it leaves. Man, with eternity in his heart, needs better nourishment than this."<sup>8</sup>

## Transition:

- Money won't make you happy → We know this and there are a bunch of reasons for it.
- But remember I said that isn't main point of text?
- Preacher told us about money and all the reasons it won't make you happy to highlight:
  - There is a much better way to live...
  - It's this:

## CONSEQUENCE

### Choose Gratitude...

*Stop striving for just a little bit more → Start to enjoy things as they are.*

- Let me read **VV18-20** to you → Let them wash over you as the beautiful life God offers:

**18** Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting [Hebrew word for *beautiful*] is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that **God** has given him, for this is **his lot**. **19** Everyone also to whom **God** has given wealth and possessions and **power to enjoy them**, and to accept **his lot** and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of **God**. **20** For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

- The attention turns back to **God** → And from our perspective, the **lot** he has given us.
- Do you see the gifts God gives?
  - **First:** Good food/drink, meaningful work; some measure of wealth/possessions.
  - **Second:** This is so profound → the **power to enjoy them**.
    - **Philip Ryken:** “*The world that God created is full of many rich gifts, but the power to enjoy them does not lie in the gifts themselves... The ability to enjoy wealth or family or friendship or food or work or sex or any other good gift comes only from God.*”<sup>9</sup>
    - God gives us the gifts AND he gives us the capacity to enjoy them.
- Dear ones, is this what we are lacking?
  - We have the gifts → He has assigned us our **lot**.
  - But perhaps we're missing the **power to enjoy them**?
- If so, **gratitude** is the key → It is discipline he gives us to enjoy our lot/live a happy life.

**Illustrate: Blaise Pascal** (French philosopher from 17C) → Wrote profound reflection on this.<sup>10</sup>

- “*We never keep to the present... We anticipate the future as if we found it too slow in coming and were trying to hurry it up, or we recall the past as if to stay its too rapid flight. We are so unwise that we wander about in times that do not belong to us, and do not think of the only one that does; so vain that we dream of times that are not and blindly flee the only one that is.*”
- “*Let each of us examine his thoughts; he will find them wholly concerned with the past or the future. We almost never think of the present, and if we do think of it, it is only to see what light it throws on our plans for the future. The present is never our end. The past and the present are our means, the future alone our end. Thus we never actually live, but hope to live, and since we are always planning to be happy, it is inevitable that we should never be so.*”

**Apply:** Happiness comes when we find joy in present → When **Choose Gratitude** for our **lot**.  
*When we stop striving for just a little bit more → And start to enjoy things as they are.*

- You have a terrible day...<sup>11</sup>
  - Your boss/kids yell at you...
  - Sale falls through and you end up working late...
  - Realize not eaten all day, grab something from gas station on way home...
  - Might be tempted to be miserable → Easy to find reasons to complain...
- But instead, you choose gratitude.
  - Soggy burrito/Diet Coke is your lot → Doesn't taste great but it's doing the job.
  - You get home and have a roof over your head → Maybe even loved ones who are tucked up in bed.
  - You sit down on beat-up old couch → Enjoy the relief and take a deep breath.
  - It was the worst day of your month → But there are still 1,000 small things for which you can give thanks.

*Stop striving for just a little bit more → And start to enjoy things as they are.*

- When we do that – just look at **V20: For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.**
  - Time flies bc you're having fun.
  - And for the Xn – the best is always yet to come.
    - We have the love of Jesus.
    - Sins forgiven, future secured, so in meantime we can **Choose Gratitude.**

*Stop striving for just a little bit more → And start to enjoy things as they are.*

## THE CLOSE

- Can we try that this week?
  - When you lie down in bed **tonight**, close your eyes, and think of 3 things you're grateful for.
  - Then first thing in the **morning** – before you get out of bed – rehearse those 3 things → Choose gratitude.
- You might just find joy appears everywhere...

## RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

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### Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- Arthur Brooks, *Build the Life You Want: The Art and Science of Getting Happier*.
- Michael Eaton, *Ecclesiastes*.
- David Gibson, *Living Life Backward: How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live in Light of the End*.
- Paul Jeon, *Nothing Matters, Everything Matters*.
- Walter Kaiser, *Coping with Change: Ecclesiastes*.
- Derek Kidner, *The Message of Ecclesiastes*.
- Tim Mackie, *The Bible Project: Wisdom of Ecclesiastes*.
- John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ: A Treatise in Which the Whole Controversy about Universal Redemption is Fully Discussed*.
- Philip Ryken, *Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters*.
- Philip Ryken, *Why Everything Matters: The Gospel in Ecclesiastes*.
- Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Stat accessed [here](#) 10/10/23.

<sup>2</sup> I read this in Philip Ryken, *Why Everything Matters: The Gospel in Ecclesiastes*, 132.

<sup>3</sup> There is debate over who first coined this term. The case for Jessie O'Neill is made in Ryken, 132.

<sup>4</sup> Ryken, 132.

<sup>5</sup> The wording of this list is adapted from Randy Alcorn's *The Treasure Principle* as quoted in Ryken, 135.

<sup>6</sup> Derek Kidner, *The Message of Ecclesiastes*, 56.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete & Unabridged in One Vol.*, 1,040.

<sup>8</sup> Kidner, 56.

<sup>9</sup> Ryken, 137.

<sup>10</sup> I heard this quote in Tim Mackie, *The Bible Project: Wisdom of Ecclesiastes – part 2*. It comes from Pascal's *Pensées* and can be found on page 13 of the Penguin Classics translation.

<sup>11</sup> I owe the following illustration to Tim Mackie, *The Bible Project: Wisdom of Ecclesiastes – part 2*.