

February 5, 2017

“Money Can’t Buy Happiness”

Focal Passage: Ecclesiastes 5:18-6:12 (NASB)

Cross References: 1 Kings 3:5-14; Job 34:10-15; 40:1-5; Psalm 37:4; Proverbs 21:30-31; Isaiah 45:9; Proverbs 16:26; Matthew 25:14-30

Lesson Idea: We should not live our lives for things, because they can never satisfy. (see Psalm 37:4)

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

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| Jan 29 Exodus 33-35 | Jan 30 Exodus 36-38 |
| Jan 31 Exodus 39-40 | Feb 1 Leviticus 1-4 |
| Feb 2 Leviticus 5-7 | Feb 3 Leviticus 8-10 |
| Feb 4 Leviticus 11-13 | Feb 5 Leviticus 14-15 |

Background:

In preparing for this week’s study, read the last three verses of chapter 5 again:

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20

18 Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one’s labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. 19 Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. 20 For he will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart.

Ad couple of other good passages to examine this week are Psalm 73 and Proverbs 16.

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men— 2 a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor so that his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires; yet God has not empowered him to eat from them, for a foreigner enjoys them. This is vanity and a severe affliction. 3 If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, however many they be, but his soul is not satisfied with good things and he does not even have a proper burial, then I say, “Better the miscarriage than he, 4 for it comes in futility and goes into obscurity; and its name is covered in obscurity. 5 It never sees the sun and it never knows

anything; it is better off than he. 6 Even if the other man lives a thousand years twice and does not enjoy good things—do not all go to one place?”

7 All a man’s labor is for his mouth and yet the appetite is not satisfied. 8 For what advantage does the wise man have over the fool? What advantage does the poor man have, knowing how to walk before the living? 9 What the eyes see is better than what the soul desires. This too is futility and a striving after wind.

10 Whatever exists has already been named, and it is known what man is; for he cannot dispute with him who is stronger than he is. 11 For there are many words which increase futility. What then is the advantage to a man? 12 For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?

DISCUSSION:

- V 1-2. the NIV translates these verses this way:
I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on mankind: 2 God gives some people wealth, possessions and honor, so that they lack nothing their hearts desire, but God does not grant them the ability to enjoy them, and strangers enjoy them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil.

What situation did Solomon see as another evil under the sun? How should all wealth, possessions and honor be seen as gifts from God? How can those gifts be lost? (see Solomon’s experience: 1 Kings 3:5-14)

- ✓ What responsibilities do the gifts of God come with? (see Jesus’ parable of the talents: Matt. 25:14-30)
- v 3-6. In what case does Solomon see that it would be better to never have been born? Why?
- v 3. Why are some people never satisfied?
- v 6. What does it mean to enjoy good things? What does it not mean? Why does he ask the question: *do not all go to the same place?* How should knowing that death awaits all of us affect the way we live our lives?

NOTE: from David Guzik, *Ecclesiastes*

If a man begets a hundred children and lives many years . . . but his soul is not satisfied with goodness:
The Preacher knew that a man could have all the

outward signs of a good life – but still not be satisfied with goodness.

i. “One could have the things men dream of – which in Old Testament terms meant children by the score, and years of life by the thousand – and still depart unnoticed, unlamented, and unfulfilled.” (Kidner)

ii. “Like the Mosaic law (cf. Galatians 3:22), the Preacher is slamming every door except the door of faith.” (Eaton)

- v 7. Why would Solomon say that all of man’s work is “for his mouth?” (see Proverbs 16:26) Why is man’s appetite never satisfied?
- v 8. How would you answer Solomon’s questions:
 - *What advantage does a wise man have over the fool?*
 - *What do the poor gain by knowing how to conduct themselves before others?* (NIV)
- v 9. The eyes only see what are close in front of them. Why does Solomon say those things are better than the soul’s desires? Why is it all considered as futility and striving after the wind?

NOTE: from Guzik:

All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied: Man works for the very bread he eats, yet it does not satisfy his soul. Solomon sensed what Moses had already said and Jesus later repeated: Man does not live by bread alone (Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 3:4).

What more has the wise man than the fool? Wisdom itself can’t fill a hungry man’s stomach. For all the superiority of the wise man compared to the fool, they both get hungry. Being wise isn’t as much of an advantage as commonly thought.

“The necessities of life are the same to both, and their condition in life is nearly similar; liable to the same diseases, dissolution, and death.” (Clarke)

Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire: The Preacher knew that in a world of such uncertainty and absence of meaning, that what one can actually see is always better than what one merely desires.

- v 10. What is the significance that everything already has a name?

- What do you think Solomon has in mind here when he talks about not being able to dispute with him who is stronger than he is? Why is no man stronger than the things that already exist? (see Job 34:10-15; 40:1-5; Proverbs 21:30-31; Isaiah 45:9)
- v 11. The NIV translates this verse: *The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone?* How do you see more and more words in our society but less and less meaning? How can you make sure your words always bring profit or advantage?
- v 12. How do we decide what is good for us to do during our lifetime? How are our lives like a shadow? How does Solomon’s last question help us focus on how we spend our lives?

NOTE: from Guzik:

He looked to life and it seemed vain and a shadow. He looked to death and saw only darkness and uncertainty. To this point there is little relief from the tragedy of meaninglessness of life (and death) under the sun.

“So the chapter will wind its way down to a depressing and uncertain finish, well suited to the state of man on his own.” (Kidner)

We can explain Solomon’s lack of knowledge of the afterlife by understanding the principle of 2 Timothy 2:10: that *Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*. The understanding of immortality was at best cloudy in the Old Testament, but is much clearer in the New Testament. For example, we can say that Jesus knew fully what He was talking about when He described hell and judgment (such as in Matthew 25:41-46). We therefore rely on the New Testament for our understanding of the afterlife, much more than the Old.

APPLICATION:

- ✓ How are you trying to get satisfaction in your life?
- ✓ How are your words bringing profit to others?
- ✓ How are you seeking to add “good” to your life?