

Topic	The Love of Money
Reference	Ecclesiastes 5: 8 - 6:9
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Structure of the Text:

It is not like a usual sermon in that the ending is the climax, rather the text is structured in a way that the middle is the climax. This text is like climbing a mountain. If you climb up a mountain, normally you take picture at the peak, you don't take picture when you are climbing halfway, because you don't look very good. You look very tired, very exhausted, it is really tough, but as you reach the peak suddenly you are refreshed because you got the sunrise. You see the clouds, like it means you are in heaven. You feel so energize again, but after you hang out on the top for a while you realize that you have to go back down and going down again is really-really tough. When you go back, you check the photos and those are the photos at the peak. Again you appreciate the whole journey because you managed to catch a moment in the peak and that is what we will do with our sermon today.

8 If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness,

This text is about the love of money. So why it does it talk about corruption in the beginning. Very simply, because corruption is an outworking of greed of love of money. When you love money too much, you tend to care much less about other human beings and you do not care about oppressing them and the teacher continues

do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them.

What the teacher is trying to say is that corruption is common and is almost impossible to eradicate. You try to knock the guy who oppress you, guess what there is still another guy and immediately the one guy is replaced by another. It is hard to knock down corruption.

Transparency International last year results says

- Nobody scored 100 points.
- Over two-thirds of the country surveyed, the fall below the midpoint.
- The global average score is 43.

The chairman of Transparency International says, *In too many countries people are deprive of their most basic needs and go to bed hungry every night because of corruption, while the powerful and corrupt enjoy lavish lifestyles with impunity.*

It is suffice to say that corruption is common and it is nearly impossible to eradicate. As if you don't feel helpless or angry enough, the teacher goes on.

9 But this is gain for a land in every way: a king committed to cultivated fields.

Is the Bible teaching us that corruption is good, necessary evil? This one I turn to commentary from Dr Leong Tien Fock. He says, *“the Qoheleth reminds his audience that despite a corrupt government, on the whole, it is profitable to have “a king over cultivated field,” that is, “for the sake of agriculture/economy”. In other words, it is still better to have a corrupt government than have no government.”*

Otherwise there will be anarchy from within and without and agriculture and economy production will not be possible. Better a corrupt king then no king at all that is what the teacher says. By seemingly expressing acceptance of the status quo the teacher yet again draws out the feeling of hopelessness, the sense of meaninglessness, what is the point of working hard, what is the point of playing by the rules? The system is ricked anyway. So when we finish this section there are two possible reactions.

- Reaction One: Cry for justice. We say justice must be served, the corrupt must be punished.
- Reaction Two: I am going to be rich. I am not going to be bullied. I am not going to be oppressed. I am going to be at the top. I am not going to let anyone bully me.

To those two reactions the teacher goes on and he gives a statement of fact that he will explain.

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

So for those who cry out for justice the teacher says, justice will be served because those who love money, they will never be satisfied with money. It is like you seeing something, you wanting something, you getting something and then you realize that it doesn't satisfy you, it doesn't work. Have you ever had that experience before of having something but not really enjoying it? To those who want to change their destiny and say, I am not going to be oppressed, I am not going to be bullied, the teacher uses as a warning the love of money will never satisfy and it is going to give three illustrations.

11 When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?

It is like this, when you get a promotion or your boss tell you get a raise, you are really excited and the first thing you do is you call your wife and say, I got good news, I will come home and I will tell you. When you are driving your way back to home, your wife is actually planning for a big shopping. What is the point of having more money, if you can't spend it? When you get more money, people had expectations from you. So the teacher says what advantage does have

except to see it with his eyes. That means you watch your money come and go. You watch your money go to others or being used by others which is fine if you love people, but the teacher is talking about those who love money and so the owner of this wealth experience heartache and very tired eyes. The next thing that the rich may suffer is lack of sleep.

12 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.

Another thing that befalls the rich is worry. We get anxious, we worry. The more money you have, the more opportunity you have to do harm to other people. The more evil things that now you are capable of, previously you cannot, but now because you have wealth and status you are more capable and therefore you offend more people. You do more wrong things and you build up a guilty conscience and you worry, you cannot sleep. The more money you have the more other people want to do you harm, because they want a piece of your pie. They want a piece of you. The wealthier you are, the more you need to protect your property. So as a result the rich will fall into sleep depravity and these are the effects

- Trouble with thinking and concentration
- Prone to accidents
- Exaggerated emotions or mood
- Weakened immunity
- Risk of heart disease
- Risk of diabetes
- Weight gain

So this is the first illustration of a rich man. He watches his money come in and go out, he worries more and he sleeps less. Second illustration, is a Hodder.

13 There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, 14 and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand.

Kept to his hurt means that he did all he can to accumulate as much money as possible, probably he physically hurt himself. He broke his back working hard to accumulate but it could also mean that because he wanted to keep all the money for himself as a reservoir he hurt a lot of people, because his goal was more and more money and because of this he invested more and more. Sometimes those riches will be lost in a bad venture. At first, he kept all his riches but now he lost everything and now he cannot even leave anything to his son. There are some of us Asian parents, we are thrifty. We don't want to spend, we want to save money, but we are always thinking about the next generation. I work really hard so that my next generation can enjoy, but this guy lost everything in just one bad venture. Most devastatingly he has nothing to show for all his years of hard work. He has nothing in his hand and the teacher says

15 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.

In the first illustration the teacher says that money come and money go, but this one is even worse. He comes and he goes, just as he comes he goes and the teacher says,

16 This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind? **17** Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.

What the teacher has done so far is create a certain frustration, a hopelessness. What is the point of hard work, a meaninglessness to accumulating wealth? What is the point of pursuing happiness? What is the point of pursuing contentment and satisfaction when everything can be gone in an instance? If you are poor you try to work hard, cannot, got corruption. If you manage to break that ceiling, you get what you want but you have no satisfaction. Your money come and your money go. At the end of your check and balance, you got more worry and less sleep. If you try to accumulate as much wealth, you don't spend, it all could go in just one bad venture and you have nothing but sickness, grief, loneliness and frustration. Money won't buy you contentment and satisfaction. So what is the solution, now we reach at the peak.

18 Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting 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 teacher says, eat and drink, enjoy your work, accept your toil, do all this remembering God, don't forget that there is this person that exist and that person is God. The number of our days in lives are given by God, wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them is given by God, the ability to be contented and enjoy our work is given by God, blissful joy is also given by God. So it is an understatement to say that we humans are heavily dependent on God. So the point that the teacher is trying to make is that do all these things but remember that without God no one can be truly happy. So we eat and drink, enjoy our work, accept our toil in the fear of God. We acknowledge that He is God, I am not God, so we live under his rule. We obey his commandments like this

1 Timothy 6: 17-18

17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. **18** They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,

How much should we share. Can we be like the Acts church. Acts 4: 34-35

34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold **35** and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Are you willing to share your house, are you willing to share your possession? The early church obeyed what Jesus told them to do.

2 Corinthians 8:1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, **2** for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

The poor can be generous too. So we live our lives knowing that even though there is a provision from God for us to enjoy life, spend what we can spend we also have a responsibility to fulfill. We have to please God, in all that we do we have to acknowledge God.

The next section will emphasize this point. You cannot be happy without pleasing God. So in this third illustration he talks about a man who lacks nothing, everything his eyes see he can get, yet God does not give him the power to enjoy them but a stranger enjoys them.

2:26 For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

So if we refer to chapter 2 the stranger is the one who pleases God and he the wealthy man is known as the sinner who is in given the business of gathering or collecting. He is the sinner; he is the one that does not please God. Naturally one might say, this man's life is meaningless because a stranger enjoys his wealth, not his children. If he has children then perhaps his life even though he didn't get to enjoy, he didn't have the power at least he can pass onto his children, at least his life would have meant something and a lot of us we feel that way. We work as hard as I can, doesn't matter whether I enjoy my life or not as long as the next generation get a better life. We all think and we all hope for the best for our children, but the teacher says that is not what makes his life meaningless.

3 If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things, and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

Having many descendants and long life is considered the blessed life in the Jewish culture and even in the Asian community. It is not what the teacher says, because he does not have the God given power to be satisfied. So in life he cannot enjoy his wealth and in death he doesn't even have a proper burial. We don't know why he did not have a proper burial but there are two possibilities. One, because he is a sinner and in the bible the sinner does not get a burial. Two, he had so many children but because he is so unhappy his children don't like him anymore and

didn't even bother to remember him in his death. In any case what the teacher is trying to say is that this man in life he does not enjoy and even in his death he cannot have some comfort, why, because he does not please God. He is not a God pleaser and he says a stillborn child is better than him, why,

4 For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. **5** Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he.

That means because of that moment of his life the stillborn child, he did not see what life has to offer, he did not have the lack, he did not suffer the desire, the wanting and not being able to satisfy by it, he did not suffer all these things. He came and he went and he found rest.

6 Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good—do not all go to the one place?

So after three illustrations the teacher settles to a conclusion. He reiterates his point.

7 All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied.

We humans are never really satisfied. Rarely, do we arrive at a point of contentment and even if we do it is often very short lived. The joys in life does not satisfy you but they create more desire in you. So the teacher ends with a question

8 For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living?

He asks the question and he answers

9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

If we refer back to chapter 2

13 Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. **14** The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them.

The teacher says wisdom is better than chasing after the wind. To be wise is better to be chasing after the wind, to be hustling, stressing, to be disappointed, to be frustrated, to be unsatisfied, to be discontented, it is better to be wise. It is better to be poor and wise than to be rich and foolish. So how then should we live:

CONCLUSION:

- Knowing that God is in control of everything. He is the one that gives us the number of our days. He is the one that gives us power to accumulate wealth, gives us a power to enjoy that wealth and he gives us joy.
- Knowing that the power to eat and drink and enjoy our work and be contented is a gift from Him.
- Knowing that in order to receive that gift from Him, we have to please Him and be in His good graces.

Basically we have to come to an acknowledgement that God is God and I am not. God is God, He rules, His plans, is all Him. He is in control, I am not. He is God and I am not, which is a problem for humans. For those of us who know our sins well enough, we know that God you are God and I am just a human and we not only say that but we live that out in complete contentment and satisfaction, is hard. Since Adam and Eve we humans have rebelled against the Godness of God. We want to be like God. We want to be our own God. We don't want someone else telling us what to do or where to go and how we should spend our money, how should we spend our time. We want to do things our own way, at our own time, however we like with whoever we like. We want to be our own Gods and we constantly rebel against the true God, as a result selfishness abounds. When we have power we oppress the poor. When we have wealth we don't want to share with other people, we want to keep it all to ourselves and in our conscience we know that there is a God and there is a God that we must please because He is the creator, we are the creation. We must yield to his plans and must yield to his ways. We must honor him and give him the due respect, yet we choose to suppress that truth. Atheist will say, there is no God. The Christian will say, Jesus is my buddy, Jesus is not my God. He is my God in a sense that he can do powerful things for me which is partly true, but if we treat God mainly as that powerful being that gives us what we want we are merely treating God as a butler. We suppress the truth, we ignore Him.

When we come to church we listen to sermons, we know that these are commands that we suppose to obey and choose to not obey them, because we don't want to give up our throne. Human history is a long history of humans rebelling against God, they want to be their own God. Even for Israel, God made a covenant with them and says, I bear you on wings of eagles and now if you obey me you will be a prized possession, you will be a holy nation to me, you will be my treasured people and the people say, we obey you, yes we will obey you and constantly they fail and God punished them for it until God spoke again through a prophet. Through prophet Jeremiah he says of a New Covenant

Jeremiah 31: 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Through Ezekiel he said

Ezekiel 36: **26** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. **28** You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

So in this New Covenant God promises a new heart, a heart that wants to please Him, a heart that wants to say, you are God I am not, you are my God I am your people. So God promises through the New Covenant a new heart. How do we get access to that New Covenant? Through Jesus. On the night he was betrayed he said in Luke 22:20

This cup is the new covenant established in my blood, which is being poured out for you.

He was talking about his sacrifice on the cross. He says my death for you will be an establishment of the New Covenant, which means access to a new heart, a heart that wants to please God. So as Jesus gave his life on the cross as the sacrificial lamb, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, not only that he washed away our sins through forgiveness but he set us free from the power of sin by giving us new hearts. Hearts that want to please him, hearts that want to honor him as God, hearts that yield to him as king and with this new heart we may turn from lovers of money to lovers of God.

SUMMARY:

- How do we find contentment and satisfaction?
From God because he is the giver.
- To whom does he give it to?
Those who please him.
- How can I please Him?
Get a new heart.
- How can I get a new heart?
Through the cross of Jesus. By this we have access to a brand new heart, a heart that wants to follow heart after God.