

Sermon 10-21-2018 Understanding God's Gift of Wealth Ecclesiastes 5:10-20

Dear Blessed by the Lord:

"She was breathless and overcome." I Kings 10:5b

The Queen of Sheba once upon a time visited King Solomon of Israel. This visit is recorded in the Old Testament book of I Kings. The Queen of Sheba was overwhelmed when she saw the wealth of King Solomon. She told Solomon: "But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed not even half was told me in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard."

--- I Kings 10:7

When the Queen of Sheba saw King Solomon's wealth she was left speechless. We often hear of the wisdom of Solomon but have you ever heard of the wealth of Solomon?

His annual income from his gold mines alone was around 20 million dollars. The throne he sat on was carved ivory overlaid with beaten gold. All of Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold and those of his house were of pure gold. Solomon had a bodyguard of 60 valiant men of the tallest and handsomest of the young man of Israel with their long black hair freshly sprinkled with gold dust every day, glittering in the sun.

Solomon knew something about having earthly wealth. He wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. In this book he writes about a journey he took in his life trying to find fulfillment in this world. While he was on this personal journey he had drifted away from the Lord. He was trying to find fulfillment in this life apart from the Lord. When it comes to trying to find fulfillment in this life without the Lord, Solomon knew what he was talking about.

Solomon found out that having money and wealth doesn't satisfy or bring fulfillment to one's life. He wrote here in Ecclesiastes 5:10

"Whoever loves money never has money enough..."

Solomon does not say whoever “possesses” money never has enough...it is not wrong to possess the blessings of riches which God gives...but Solomon writes as the Holy Spirit led him to point out that if one “loves” money he will never be satisfied. There is a difference between “loving” money and “possessing” money.

The point being made here is this: If one “loves” money he will never be fulfilled. Solomon is speaking to the greedy, to the materialist, to the money-hungry person and is telling him you will never be satisfied.

God is the one who allots a portion to us and life should be lived in that truth.

Money can buy us tons of comfort but not an ounce of contentment. This is the meaning of verse 10.

How often haven't we seen the result of what Solomon says in vv11-12. We can point to real life examples when someone suddenly falls into a large sum of money and see how it changes the person's life drastically.

ie Lottery winners!

Elvis Presley was a poor kid from Memphis who struck it rich when his musical talents were discovered and he became an overnight sensation. He became rich and all sorts of people started to latch onto him. They lived off his income. Solomon is saying with increased money and possessions comes an accelerated number of people and worries.

More money, more people, more people, more worries, more worries, less sleep.

v12

Think of a man who works eight hours a day at the local factory. After work he throws the baseball around with his son. He then has a bowl of chili for supper and watches TV through the 10:00 news with a bag of chips before going to bed. Within minutes he is snoring away getting a full night's rest. There's not much anxiety connected with his lifestyle.

The rich however, have a lot of stuff on their plate. Solomon says the rich do not have peace of mind. They often have people around them that are just after their money. The rich man goes to bed still with a lot on his mind regarding his money.

Proverbs 19:4 Wealth brings many friends

When a man's possessions increase the number of people who live off him also increases. From the outside the wealthy may seem to have it easy...but on the inside there's a lack of contentment and much frustration. Again, Solomon is talking about wealthy people who "love" their money and who do not have a relationship with the Lord.

The lesson here is this: What a grievous evil it is to have wealth without the proper attitude toward it.

In vv13-15 Solomon forces us to face the moment of death. Every funeral reminds us that we can't take it with us. Wealth can be quickly made but also can be quickly lost. It may be lost through a bad investment or from a sudden death. When wealth is hoarded, when wealth is one's only focus in life it will harm its owner.

No one has ultimate control over wealth.

Remember, Solomon knew riches...he lived with riches. He wrote in Proverbs 23:4-5: **"Do not wear yourself out to get rich;** have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle."

Money does a good job of making itself wings and flying away out of our wallets.

v16-17 Solomon says those who live high off money often die hard.

There are many in this world who lived fast, made money, spent it fast, fell fast and died hard. The fast lane materialist who lived in earthly opulence never found the truth.

Every man has his price...

Howard Hughes was one of the richest men in the world in the 1930's and 40's. He lived among the rich and powerful in Hollywood and Washington D.C. But in the latter years of his life he lived a joyless life bordering on lunacy. He allowed his hair to grow down to the middle of his back and his beard reached down to his waist. He let his finger nails grow without trimming them. Hughes said: "Every man has his price or a guy like me could not exist."

Sometimes we think hardship can drive people away from their faith. But often it is the times of peace and prosperity that can lull us into a halfhearted faith. Solomon paints a picture of how easy it is to become caught up in daily life, work and 'stuff' so that our faith becomes an afterthought.

The Lord told the Israelites: "When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you --- a land with large flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant ---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. Fear the Lord your God, serve him only...Do not follow other gods..."

Some things we may "forget" when we have it too good include:

- The source of true wealth. We stop acknowledging God and look to ourselves as the source of our blessings.
- The purpose of wealth – to bring glory to God. Once we have it, we are tempted to think of it as ours.
- The true character of God. We may come to think His only role is to give us the things we desire out of life.
- Who we were created to be. We lose sight of God's greater purposes for wealth.

The Lord blesses us with money and possessions. It's not wrong to be rich. But, the Lord calls us to have a proper attitude toward the blessings he gives us. vv18-20

Finding sufficiency in God and joy in generosity no matter our circumstances will always define our wealth.

Don't get caught in the greed trap

As we eat and drink and live out our lives we are to enjoy what the Lord has given us. The Lord is telling us through Solomon: "Don't get caught in the greed trap. Don't attach yourself to the dollar sign. There is utter folly in making second things first.

Enjoy life! Laugh more! Find pleasure in the simple things. Delight yourself in the Lord and live in His grace and forgiveness. Our work can be satisfying because it serves a greater end and is done for a greater purpose than to amass stuff.

Find fulfillment in your work that the Lord gives you. Invest your riches for God's work and ways. Invest your time for His glory. Give generously as the Lord blesses you.

You will find a rejoicing in your labor as you keep your focus on what is really important in life.

Our priority is the Lord.

- His Word
- His will
- His ways
- His presence
- His work

Live in the knowledge of the God who has our times in his hands and who for Jesus sake will not let us go. Our lives and possessions are God's lot given to us.

The way to live is finding fulfillment and being content with what the Lord gives us and using what He gives us to serve Him.

Solomon had everything this world could offer: power, money, fame, etc. But he discovered that without the Lord in his life...his life was empty...zero...nothing. He tried to find fulfillment apart from the Lord and came up empty.

Seneca the Roman said: "Money has never yet made anyone rich."

Find contentment in Christ! What I have in life is my portion which God has allotted to me. Stop pursuing whatever the next thing is that comes along that promises to entertain us.

Slow down. Ponder what it is to be a creature whose needs are met by a loving Father. Look our culture in the eye, and tell it "no". Long for what God is doing in Christ for you and for the world --- Seek first the reign of God and all these things will be added unto you.

What did Jesus say:

Matthew 6:33 **"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."**

Real wealth is from above not on earth. Real wealth is spiritual not material.