

## Introduction

- **“Man must have an idol -- The amassing of wealth is one of the worst species of idolatry. No idol more debasing than the worship of money. Whatever I engage in I must push inordinately therefore should I be careful to choose that life which will be the most elevating in its character. To continue much longer overwhelmed by business cares and with most of my thoughts wholly upon the way to make more money in the shortest time, must degrade me beyond hope of permanent recovery.”** - Andrew Carnagie
- These are the words of one of the richest men and greatest philanthropists in world history, Andrew Carnagie. Carnagie made millions, equivalent to billions today, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century moving into the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the steel industry. Did you hear what he said? “The amassing of wealth is one of the worst species of idolatry.”
- No one likes to talk about money. Mark Driscoll says, “When we get into this issue of money, there is automatic resistance because, for some people, it is their god and you don’t wanna mess around with their god.”
- Well, Jesus must have met a lot of resistance, because if you read the gospels, you will not get very far without Jesus addresses the topic of money and finances. In one of his most pointed statements about how wealth is really a heart issue, a worship issue, in Matthew 6:24, Jesus said: **“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”** Matthew 6.24
- Here’s the problem: at our core, we know that we are tempted to love what’s in our wallet, in our purses, in our bank account more than we love God. There is a temptation for *this* to be our master. And what the Preacher is going to do this morning in Ecclesiastes is scream that

### **"Wealth Will Never Satisfy" Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:9**

- Theme of the book is found in the second verse of chapter one – “Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity”
- Of course it important to remember that the Preacher is speaking of life “under the sun.” (1:3) This important phrase is used twenty-nine times throughout the book of Ecclesiastes and when he refers to life “under the sun” he is referring to life apart from God, what *this* world has to offer, the physical, the here and now.
- Ligon Duncan says, “Life under the sun is the preacher’s way of talking about a life that is lived only along the horizons of this world.”
- The message of Ecclesiastes is simply this: life apart from God is empty, futile, unreasonable, and meaningless.

The question the Preacher would have us ask tonight is this: Why are people fooled into believing that money and riches bring lasting satisfaction? He is going to tell us that...

**MIT - Wealth will never bring satisfaction, so enjoy life as a gift from.**

#### **I. We must recognize the emptiness of wealth. (5:8-17; 6:1-9)**

The Preacher provides several convincing reasons why wealth, when pursued as the ultimate end, will leave us empty handed and unsatisfied. Here are the problems with wealth. Number one:

##### **1. Wealth will never satisfy (10).**

**Verse 10.** This verse is the key to the whole passage. It sets the tone for all that follows. The teacher speaks of the person who loves money as one engaging in a futile pursuit. This is strong language.

*Define love...* We set our affections on what we love. We pursue what we love. Our hearts gravitate toward what we love. It's on our mind; it's what we're chasing after. When we see an opportunity for more, we get all jazzed up to plot and scheme in order to find a way to go after what we love!

The love of money leaves you wanting. Ultimate fulfillment and lasting satisfaction do not ride on the train of wealth. The person who loves money and has an insatiable desire to obtain wealth will not say, "That's enough. I'm satisfied." We have the picture of someone who holds their assets with clenched fists.

Illus: No one goes to their boss who has just informed them that they are going to receive a raise and says, "Wait just a minute boss, I'm glad you are pleased with my work and the effort I have put forth but I'm really making all I need and I don't want you to give me that raise." Who says that?! The more we have the more we want.

The love of money will take you nowhere. As I Timothy 6:9-10 says, "9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs..." So the first reason the pursuit of wealth is an empty pursuit is that it cannot satisfy. But also we see in verse 11 that...

## **2. Wealth can be burdensome (11).**

**(verse 11)** – "When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage..."

I believe the NIV and NASB render this verse a little clearer, "As goods increase, so do those who consume them..." Wealth apart from God is burdensome. People strive to gain assets believing that it will be the answer to an easy, comfortable life, but the Teacher says, "Not so fast. That's not really how it works." Tommy Nelson rightly says, "[E]ven if wealth doesn't change you, it will change everyone around you."

Pic: The reality for the rich is that when wealth increases so do the vultures that begin to circle for the feast. All the rich man can do is sit back and watch his assets accumulate and pass into the hands of others. Proverbs 19:4 says, "Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend." Verse 12 provides the third reason why we must recognize the emptiness of wealth.

## **3. Wealth can disrupt your life (12). [I thought about using discombobulate for the fun of it!]**

**(verse 12)** The wealth accumulated also leads to insomnia for the rich. There are few things more miserable than sleepless nights.

(Who in here sleeps like a baby? Who in here tosses and turns half the night?) It appears that the wealthy person is also a person full of worry. Do you see the irony here? We have laborer on the one hand who has just spent his day.... who is fast asleep on his pillow. In contrast, the rich owner is popping sleeping pills and trying to find another bottle of Nyquil to help him get to sleep. Disruption comes from a life of riches.

**Illus.** – After he had made his millions John D. Rockefeller said, "I would give all that I have now if I could experience the contentment and satisfaction in the days when I was making \$3.00 a week."

## **4. Wealth is a fleeting commodity (13-17).**

**(verse 13)** "There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt."

"Grievous evil" can also be translated a "sickening evil." The Preacher says that as the rich man continues to hoard his riches, he only proves to harm himself. Greedy people think wealth will bring stability and comfort and true prosperity, but that's not true. In fact, we see that riches can be extremely elusive and fleeting. Check 14-16...

In verse 14 he continues his previous thought. Those [hurtful] riches [are now] lost in a bad venture." But it gets worse, "And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand." In other words, because his wealth has been squandered in a bad investment, he has nothing left to leave his son. I like the literal reading of verse 14,

“he has nothing in his hand.” It gives us a picture of the once tight-fisted rich man has become, a bankrupt man with empty hands. Wealth is fleeting because it can be lost through a bad investment or some other bitter providence.

You might say, “Well your talking about *that* guy. I’m not that guy. I’m the guy who makes sound investments, has a little slush there and a little savings here and a little savings there.” My wealth is not fleeting.” Sure it is. Verse 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. This is also a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind?” What a humbling and sobering truth! For all of our labors, the hours of work and sweat, we will have no lasting possessions in this life. The logic is simple: one day all will taste death and we will exit life like we entered. These verses bring to our mind the statement of Job in Job 1:21, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return...” However, there is a parallel even more pointed in the N.T. found in I Timothy 6:6-7.

If you are pursuing meaning, and purpose and satisfaction in riches and wealth, you’re barreling down the path of folly.

Listen, wealth is, at best, a temporal pleasure that is here one day and gone the next. At worst, it leaves us like the rich man the Teacher describes in verse 17: vexed, sick, and angry. Everyone wants to go from rags to riches, but riches can lead to rags and a miserable life. Having a little extra wealth is no guarantee that your life will not be marked frustration, disappointment, and regret.

#### **5. Wealth will never buy you happiness (6:1-2).**

What do we learn from verses 1 and 2? Everything we have comes from the hand of God, and we can only enjoy what God gives through him. We could put it like this: here’s something else that is vain and enigmatic: A person can have it all and not enjoy it. Money will never buy happiness. True satisfaction and joy are gifts from God.

#### **6. Wealth will never buy you contentment (6:1-9)**

He goes on to say in verse 3 that a man can have 100 kids and live a long life (two clear blessings according to Judaism), but it doesn’t mean jack if you cannot live with contentment.

It’s hard for us to grasp the depth of feeling and emotion of the Preacher at this point, but he tips us off to the despicable life that unsatisfied rich experience by way of comparison and it is a drastic comparison!! One pastor said, reading verses 3-6 is liked getting punched in the stomach, and I do not disagree. Let’s look at them... **3-6**

The stillborn do not see the light of day even once. Their life does not span even one day. They are never born. To the contrary, this rich person could live forever, but the stillborn is still better off than him. He says, the stillborn child, the sad state of a human life that never sees the light of day is better off than this rich man.

Address miscarriage...??? Address the rich and the poor in 7-9???... and hammer home contentment for all... Look at this: their pursuit of wealth has left them unsatisfied, burdened, disrupted, hurt, empty, and ultimately miserable.

Trans: If wealth will never satisfy us, then what will bring satisfaction?

## **II. We can find satisfaction through enjoying God's good gifts. (5:18-20)**

You were not made for this... you were made for God! The Preacher continues to short circuit or idolatrous pursuits... So what’s his answer? Enjoy life as a gift from God. Seeing God for who he is and enjoying him is how to get “over the sun.”

“If we find within us a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy...”

### **Work hard. Enjoy life as a gift from God...**

Verses 18-20 introduce a transition in the Teacher’s discourse. We discover that it is possible to possess wealth and not be owned by that wealth. **Read**

- The solution to the vanity of wealth lies in viewing it through the proper lens. When one holds a divine perspective they discover that while wealth should not be our supreme goal in life, it is a God given part of life that can be enjoyed.
- Note the emphasis on the divine giving. All things in life are God given. Verse 18: “God has given...” Verse 19: “God has given... this is the gift of God.” Again the activity of God is stated in verse 20 where it says, “God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.”
- Verse 18 highlights the truth that God gives people the ability to earn money. While people oftentimes begrudge going to work and punching the time clock, the Teacher informs us that in God’s providence the work we perform is an opportunity provided by His gracious hand. Moreover, verse 19 tells us that another gracious gift of God is to enjoy the wealth he has given. We should see wealth as an opportunity to enjoy life and do good with the resources with which we have been entrusted.
- When one realizes that all of life is lived under the gracious work of God, then can they (in stark contrast of the rich man in verses 10-17) experience the reality of verse 20, “For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.”

### **Application to Close Luke 12:**

Some encouragement for honoring God with the wealth He has given. Some encouragements for being Rich toward God.

#### **1. Ask God to you grant you simplicity and contentment.**

- a. “A man’s life does not consist...” Your assets do not define. Our identity should not be wrapped up in the clothes we wear, the car we drive. Our identity is Christ. He gives meaning and purpose and vision to our lives.
- b. Strive for simplicity as a manner of life. Ruthlessly evaluate needs and wants.
- c. “Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, **7** for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. **8** But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. (I Tim. 6:8)
- d. It doesn’t matter if you are rich or poor...

#### **2. Find generosity through Jesus.** How will we learn to love to give more than we love to receive? The gospel!!! (2 Cor. 8:9) Jesus is the wisdom, power, righteousness, and generosity of God!

- a. We take up an offering each week. Do you realize that it is an act of worship? When we give back to God, we are saying God you have given me everything, I see that, and I want to express my love for you by doing my part to see your work advance. (maybe hit what our \$ goes to: operations, ministry, & missions)
- b. Testimony

#### **3. Be greedy for God!** Rather than going after more and more and more of the stuff of earth, go after God. Want more and more and more of him. Pursue him with great zeal. Return to your first love. This is why Jesus says in one of my favorite verses in the Bible. “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure...” (Matthew 13:44)

- **App.** – Let me encourage you this morning, don’t be tricked into thinking the things of this world will bring any ultimate satisfaction. People who make money normally fall into one of two categories: #1) You can either work to get. Or #2) You can work to get *in order to give*. (Piper, 172) John Piper wisely says, “The person who thinks the money he makes is meant mainly to increase his comforts on earth is a fool, Jesus says. Wise people know that all their money belongs to God and should be used to show that God, not money, is their treasure, their comfort, their joy, and their security” (Piper, 168)