

Ecclesiastes 5:8–6:12

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[0 : 00] Ecclesiastes chapter 5 beginning with verse 8. If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter.

For the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them. But this is gain for a land in every way, a king committed to cultivated fields.

He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income. This also is vanity. When goods increase, they increase who eat them.

And what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? 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.

There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun. Riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture.

[1 : 03] And he is a father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. 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 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? Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness and in much vexation and sickness and anger.

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. 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. For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart. There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind.

[2 : 15] A man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires. Yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them.

This is vanity. It is a grievous evil. 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.

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

Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good, do not all go to the one place? All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied.

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? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite.

[3 : 32] This also is vanity and a striving after wind. Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he.

The more words, the more vanity. And what is the advantage to man? For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow?

For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun? This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. I want to talk today about money.

More particularly, the anxiety that money or the lack of it brings. Money is a pressure cooker.

It's a stress inducer. Money, in the middle of the night, is a question bringer.

[4 : 46] At the end of the day, when one is trying to make all the bills work, it's money that keeps one anxious.

My grandmother used to tell me, grandson, money isn't everything, but it sure helps along the way.

There have been seasons in my life, our life as a family. There have been seasons in yours, maybe you're in one now, where the anxiety concerning money almost overwhelms.

And in the middle of the night, the doubts are raised. Are you good?

All the time? All the time you are good? All my life, you have been faithful?

[6 : 07] So, so good? We all live under the cloud of money.

More particularly, the anxiety that comes with it. The picture in verses 8 and 9 of our text only seemed to amplify the questions of my mind.

For we see oppression of the poor, do we not, and violations of justice and righteousness, which we are amazed at, but told by the preacher of this text, that, well, that's just the way it is, and perhaps always has been, and there are higher officials over other officials, and it seems like they all get their cut, or even at the end of verse 9, the king himself has cultivated fields by all the labor that we bring, but for us, we're left with the anxiety, which then makes us think, I've got to get some, I've got to go after some.

Perhaps money is, well, it's created such anxiety in me that I've got to find my way to it, and sooner the better.

I've noticed in undergraduate programs, anecdotally, that back when I went to school, there were very few business and finance majors, but the schools are filled with them now because the youth, unlike my day, are not naive.

[7 : 58] They know money and the anxiety that it brings. The writer really wants to tell us this morning that money can't ultimately satisfy.

Oh, give me a chance, you might say. Yeah, I've said it myself. The movements of the text from verses 10 and on present a number of proverbs that are bound together like barnacles that attach themselves to the bottom of a boat that slow its progress concerning all the hopes you had when you set sail chasing after the wind.

And in the opening set of proverbs linked like chains that we need to be aware of on money, there are seven that I've discovered in verses 10 through 17.

And they all seem to say to you and to me this morning that remember this in the midst of your anxiety, the love of money is costly.

It's costly to make it our love. Poverty has its problems. Underemployment has its struggles.

[9 : 57] Barely making it month to month is almost overwhelming. But remember this, he says, the love of money is costly and the cost is too high.

Okay. Look at verse 10. He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income.

If I can just get the raise, then I'll have enough. If I can just get that job, then the pressure valve will be released. And what he wants us to know is as you live under the anxiety of it all, the one who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income.

Simply this, remember this morning, no matter the amount in your account, more there can fix some things, but isn't going to get it all the way done.

So it's costly to make that your love. The second proverb lingers right behind it. The barnacle of verse 11 that drags me down as I chase the wind.

[11 : 26] When goods increase, they increase who eat them. And what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? Not only does the amount in my account never satisfy, but according to this proverb, holding wealth only leads to it being eaten up by an ever-enlarging entourage.

The more we make, the more other mouths are fed by it, is what he's saying here. All you get to do is look on.

Now, it's great to create wealth for others. What a privilege. But the weight remains on you as you watch an ever-increasing band of people dependent on you.

And now they are eating while you are seen, and yet you now know that they will never be satisfied. It's an irony.

That which cannot satisfy yourself, when it increases, only finds more people consuming it in search of the satisfaction while you look on.

[12 : 44] Which leads to the third proverb there in verse 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.

Wow. Anxiety gonna keep you up? And wealth is gonna keep you up. Either way, you're gonna be up. You got an ever-present infant in your home.

Can't sleep, even though I've got money. The fourth proverb, there in verse 13, there's a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun.

Riches were kept by their owner to his own hurt. In literature, I'm thinking of Scandinavian mythology, where they create this notion of dwarves and dragons that are susceptible to greed.

And the great dragon, and the great dragon, in a sense, is hurt, injured, irretrievably so, by their own greed.

[14 : 07] This is what's happening here. I think of what Tolkien does later with that Scandinavian myth when he creates a creature named smog, who has all the money you could imagine, but ultimately to his own injury.

It backfired on him. He was killed by it, as Bard ridded the world of his presence. All these four, then, begin to speak to us who are under the weight of anxiety.

Okay? Thank you. Thank you, writer. Thank you, God's word, because I feel like I need a little more. Thank you for reminding me this morning that no matter the amount in my account, it will never be enough.

Thank you that I can see other people prospering from the generation of it, but I myself am not ultimately satisfied by it.

Help me remember that it, too, leads to a lack of sleep and that it can injure those who have it. I think one of the ancient myths says, the clinking gold and glow treasure, these rings will be death.

[15:39] For you. The fifth proverb of the seven seems to sit right there in verse 14. And those riches were lost in a bad venture.

If I hold it, hoard it, I'm going to be hurt by it, so I'm going to invest it to gain more of it, but in doing so, I lost it to the point where the one who had it has nothing to give to a son who needs it.

It's fleeting. It's like life itself. These wonderful proverbs to help me on a Sunday morning.

And then verses 15 and 16, the sixth of the proverbs, 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? And moreover, all his vexation days he eats in darkness, much with sickness and anger.

[17:04] Not only does he not have anything in his hand to give to his son, but notice the language there. He's going to a place and he has nothing at the end of verse 15 that he can take with him.

I've got nothing to give. I've got nothing to bring. The striking truths are just being hammered down like brass nails on the heart of a congregation that knows well the anxiety of money.

And then finally, 17, moreover, all his days are spent in darkness, anxiety, sickness and anger. That is for the one who loves money and we need to know that the love of money is costly.

Let me put it this way. The borrowing costs that one incurs for the love of money are just too high of an interest rate to sustain us.

You know, we're getting ready. I'm not in finance. Some of you are. But there's like a certain built-in cost to borrowing money. It's a percent.

[18:27] Like let's say it's going to cost 5% to borrow money. There's a cost to borrowing money. And then the bank says, so if to borrow it is 5%, I'm going to give you a loan at 8% so that I can make 3%.

But the point of the drill is the love of money has a borrowing cost that's just too high. You would think that this lesson from the first seven proverbs here would be enough.

Like, okay, good. Benediction. I'm good now. I'm anxious. Still anxious. But at least I know that brother over there who seems to have it all.

I know he's anxious too. But it's not enough. The power and allure of wealth is so great.

And so, to the cost incurred to the love of money, 6, chapter 6, verses 1 to 12 reveal another proverb that's expanded on that will convince you not of the cost for the love of money, but the limitations of money are clear.

[19:47] Here's the limitation, chapter 6, verse 1. There is an evil that I have seen under the sun and it lies heavy on mankind, a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him the power to enjoy them.

It's got limits. Money in and of itself does not guarantee enjoyment. I know it's hard to believe, but you've got to realize earlier this week at 6:50 p.m., on February 4th, Elon Musk posted on X and said, whoever said money can't buy happiness really knew what they were talking about.

Okay, Elon, give me a shot. But it can't ultimately satisfy and the wealthiest among us is telling you that.

This is a heavy thing to have possessions, honor, lack nothing, and yet have no power to enjoy them.

And that one singular proverb in chapter 6 now reverberates with six echoes that call back to the barnacles of the previous seven where we once had an entourage that looked on.

[21 : 31] we now have here strangers, but a stranger enjoys them. Where we once had a father and a son with nothing to give, we now have in this section of verse 3 a father with a hundred children, and yet he himself is not satisfied.

we now have death and burial. We have the inability to take it with us.

And just as that early moment of the seven proverbs ended in darkness and vexation and sickness and anger, so too verse 4 will in vanity it goes in darkness and in darkness its name is covered.

Lord, this whole enterprise has limits. I'm better off now this morning for knowing it.

The love of money is costly. The limitations of money are clear. Let me put it in the language of the call to worship wherein we heard that God is both the depository and the dispensary were learning that, well, the cost for me to go after money is too high and the return on money is too low.

[23 : 06] It can't... Well, let me put this we are asking it to do more than it can do. So where then do we turn for God's wisdom on wealth?

You might think at this point the pastor better go to the gospel because we just need Jesus not money. Well, we'll get there but just a moment.

You might say, well, a good gospel connection on a sermon like this? Maybe we ought to talk about the return of Christ where all the injustice gets fixed, all the inequalities are dealt with, all the oppressors are gone and righteousness reigns.

Yeah, let's talk about the return of Christ. You might say, well, no, no, we need heaven. We need soon and very soon. We need to walk on streets of gold as my fortitude for the present.

You know, there's a song, a couple of you old folks like me might remember it. How's it go? Sing the wondrous love of Jesus.

[24 : 30] Sing his mercy and his grace. In the mansions, bright and blessed, he'll prepare for us a place. How's it go? When we all get to heaven.

Here it is. What a day of rejoicing that will be. See, I could do that too. I could do heaven right now. The rejoicing is something in the future.

That's not what the text does. It doesn't go to the return of Christ. It doesn't tell you everything's going to be done at the end even though it is. It doesn't go to the cross of Christ. Even though there's where my ultimate satisfaction comes from.

It doesn't go to heaven. But look what it does in verses 18 through 20. Yeah, there it is. Between the cost being too high and the limitations too clear is the wisdom of God on wealth.

Laying down right there in the middle of the text. Behold, as if to draw our attention to it. Verse 18. What I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment and all the toil with which one toils under the sun for the few days of his life that God has given him for this is his lot.

[25 : 45] Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them and to accept his lot and to rejoice in his toil, this is the gift of God for he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

I can take you back to the day you first believed under the language of Andre Crouch and give you fortitude for the present. I can take you forward to heaven itself and put you on streets of gold to enable you to handle all the anxieties of the present.

But the text takes you to the present and says you can enjoy God now. It's a word for today that God is concerned for the anxieties of your life.

Not just to ultimately meet them but to have you try to write out that check over the dinner table and say thank you God.

I acknowledge you exist. I acknowledge that you are the giver of all gifts and you've given me what I got. and I got enough for today.

[27 : 05] There's the word enjoyment. It's not heaven what a day of rejoicing that will be.

It's today. What I have seen to be good is the one who goes home, eats, drinks, and finds enjoyment in their work and what God has given to them.

Look at the repetition of the word. Verse 19, everyone to whom God has given the power to enjoy and rejoice and then verse 20, joy.

That's the wisdom of God on wealth. To know that the love of money is costly, the limitations of money are clear.

The contentment with money comes when you just are able to go home over a bowl of soup and enjoy the flavor off the spoon.

[28 : 11] The pistachios in the bowl. Lisa's always said we always have pistachios in our house because they're called the poor man's luxury. I mean the Queen of Sheba liked pistachios but I can have some too.

Maybe not as many as she did but when I crack one open and I take that I'm enjoying the present. This is the wisdom of God on wealth.

So let's go forward today. Say he's good. all the time. He's good.

I got just enough. And man I'm going to lay my anxieties down on him and have him see me through.

So Jesus said don't fear your heavenly father knows you have needs and he'll meet you.

[29 : 30] Our heavenly father we do now pray that you would free us correct us from this anxious heart that would have me pursue the love of money.

Remind me remind us that the cost is too high. Lord help me not to ask and help us not to ask money to do more than it can or it cannot ultimately satisfy.

And so help us to return out these doors today and to our own places of abode to friends and family to a meal in scarcity or in plenty and enjoy what it is that you have given to us that you would receive praise from us in Jesus name amen.