

Can Riches Satisfy?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 July 2016

Preacher: Cedric Moss

[0 : 00] And this morning our attention will be directed to a larger than usual section from verse 8 in chapter 5 to verse 9 in chapter 6.

! This is a little different from what is in your bulletin. In your bulletin I indicated that we would end at verse 12, but as I studied I was able to see that the passage actually breaks.

Logically at verse 9, so that's where we will end this morning. And for those of you who are joining us this morning for the first time, this is a message series. This message is a part of that series in the book of Ecclesiastes. In his commentary on Ecclesiastes, Douglas Sean O'Donnell introduces this section that we have come to with a very interesting story from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Anybody read Chaucer's Canterbury Tales? I have not read, but I'm eager to read it after reading this particular story.

Here's how he recounts the story. The story is called The Pardner's Tale. The Pardner's Tale. He writes,

Sure enough, that is what they do. The man returns and they stab him to death. Then to celebrate, they lift their cups and drink the poisoned wine.

[2 : 34] They too die. The old man was right. All three greedy men found death under the tree.

That's a made-up story. It's not something that really happened. But the lesson behind the story is true.

And what is true is that there is a dark and dangerous side to riches that we easily overlook.

And sometimes we can overlook this dark and dangerous side to riches even as we desire riches for ourselves. And in this passage that we have come to this morning, the preacher brings us face to face with this dark and dangerous side of riches.

And what he shares with us is not a tale like Pardner's Tale. What he shares with us is the very Word of God. So please follow along this morning as I read from the English Standard Version, Ecclesiastes chapter 5, starting in verse 8 and ending in verse 9 of chapter 6.

[3 : 55] 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 higher 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 when, 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.

[5 : 07] And those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is the 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, 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 tours 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.

[6 : 34] 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. It is a, if a man, sorry, if a man fathers a hundred children and lives many lives, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with this 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.

[8 : 10] This also is vanity and a striving after wind. Let's pray together. Father, we pause this morning to first of all thank you for your word.

Lord, we thank you for your care that is expressed in the preservation of your word for your people. And Lord, we ask this morning that you would open our hearts and minds to understand and to receive and obey the truth of your word.

Lord, I ask for much grace to be faithful to this text to serve these people who are assembled here, people who I love and want to serve, but I'm aware, Lord, that my love for them falls far short of your love for them.

And so would you care for them, Lord, by granting illumination in your word and the presence of the Holy Spirit both to teach and to convict and to transform our lives.

We ask you to do this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, that's quite a long section of Ecclesiastes.

[9 : 39] It is the longest that we have considered to date. And just to be clear, as we work through Scripture, as we preach God's word, the goal is to take sections of Scripture in logical sections.

So the reason that this is long is that the preacher in Ecclesiastes is considering a main topic in a very lengthy part of the book.

That's the reason that it's longer than some of the other sections that we have considered this morning. The preacher in this section, in Ecclesiastes, is focused on one issue, one primary issue. It's the issue of riches. And he is really addressing a primary question. And the question that he really is addressing is can riches satisfy? And again, for those of you who are joining me, the author of Ecclesiastes identifies himself as the preacher.

And that's what Ecclesiastes actually means as well, the preacher. So that's why I'd be referring to the author as the preacher. And when we consider this section, I believe that the overall point that the preacher makes is actually the answer to the question whether riches can satisfy.

[11 : 05] And here's what that answer is. Here's the overall point that he is making. God alone satisfies the hunger of the human soul.

And that is what we are able to derive from what the preacher is addressing in this section of Ecclesiastes. God alone is able to satisfy the hunger of the human soul.

And the reason is that the hunger of the human soul is a spiritual hunger. Yet in our quest to satisfy that spiritual hunger, we go after material things.

We pursue all manner of things, but in particular, material things. We pursue money. I've heard people say we are very tansy.

We like things. And so in our lost and fallen state, we believe that money can do what only God can do. That's the blindness of the fallen state.

[12 : 12] We believe that money can do what only God can do. And in a sense, we reason that money can meet our needs.

And if we have enough of it stored away, then it can take care of our future needs as well. And it gives us a sense of security in the future. And this is the reason that money is the primary counterfeit God.

Money is the primary God that we will go after instead of the true and the living God. And this is why Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, He said, you cannot serve God and money.

There are many other things He could have said you can serve, but it is money that He sets on the side of God. He says, you can serve God and money. Because money is our number one counterfeit God of choice.

The human soul goes after it, seeking to satisfy all of its longings. And what the preacher helps us to see in this passage is that riches can satisfy our souls.

[13:20] For those of you who are taking notes this morning, I've organized my thoughts in this lengthy section under three headings. And they are, number one, poverty and oppression.

We see that in verses five, sorry, in chapter five, verses eight through nine. And second, riches and wealth.

And the preacher discusses that in verses nine of chapter five through six of chapter six.

So this next section is chapter five, verse nine, through chapter six, verse six. And then finally, work and appetite. And the preacher discusses that in verses seven through nine of chapter six.

So first, poverty and oppression. As I've mentioned already, the overarching topic in this section of Ecclesiastes is riches.

[14:22] That's what the preacher is addressing. But what's interesting is that's not exactly where the preacher starts. Where the preacher starts starts is, he starts by giving us a view of poverty and oppression.

Looking at it, what he says in verses eight and nine. 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. Here are these two verses. The preacher has in view a situation where there are layers of leadership in a bureaucratic government.

He mentions it's a province. So this is some territory in a larger sphere of rule over which a king is. And the way governments would have been set up in those days is you had kings who controlled vast territories, vast amounts of land, and so they had to have all kinds of systems of underlying leadership, layers of leadership, officials over territories and provinces and so forth to cause this thing to actually run.

So this is what the preacher has in view. Some king over a huge bureaucracy. And the point that the preacher is making is that such an arrangement creates the context for abuses, oppressing the poor, and violating justice and righteousness.

[16:05] Now theologians who are much smarter than I say that this reference to officials watching over each other where he says if you look again in verse 8 he says the higher officials watch by higher.

I'm told by those who are smarter than I that what this speaks about is being protected. They're kind of like watch for each other's backs. That's the arrangement that they would have had in this particular setting.

It's a huge setting. People are filled with concentrated power and so they abuse it and the way the system works is all of the officials just watch over one another so the ones up top they just watch for the ones below them and everybody gets greased and everybody gets taken care of and so you have this system that is very very corrupt.

That's the way it's maintained. It's maintained through this corruption because the high officials protect those under them and their main goal is to line their pockets. So when an official on the lowest level of the bureaucracy is oppressing the poor and violating justice and righteousness and the person appeals to the person over him, well the person doesn't really hear him, they send you back and they just turn you around and nothing really gets done.

And you can imagine how this would have been so prevalent in the day in which the preacher would have been writing.

[17:47] this kind of corruption where the ultimate power, the king, could have been living in a far-off country. And so people, the officials did whatever they wanted to do.

And it was all designed to maintain the structure, the corrupt structure of the bureaucracy. And the main goal behind these kinds of arrangements is revenue. That's what the king wanted.

The king really could care less how the money was coming. The king just wanted them to have the monies coming in. And generally what would have happened was the poor would have been the ones who were going to be oppressed.

The poor would have been the ones who have gotten the short end of the stick, not the rich. But notice what the preacher says in verse 9. He seems to be contrasting this harsh bureaucratic system of government with one that is more focused on productivity.

So in verse 9 he says, this is gain for land in every way. A king committed to cultivated fields. And what he seems to be saying is that a king who is committed to cultivated fields and having productivity and things are working the way that they should work.

[19 : 03] And obviously he's talking about an agricultural economy, economy based on farming and so forth. that would be a better arrangement than this system where the officials are just interested in eking out of the people money for themselves and money for the king.

And so the preacher is basically saying that this system is more focused on the bureaucracy and getting the revenues needed more than productivity and a king who is focused on cultivated lands that would be a better arrangement.

Now I know for us this morning this is a little different than what we would be familiar with, what we would have experienced, but there are some elements in it that I think are also common to us as well.

There are some elements that we could identify with. We can identify with bureaucracy. We can identify with going to a government office and not being able to get things done. One of the offices that came to mind as I was preparing is immigration.

Going there and trying to get something done, I've concluded that I believe more prayers are created in immigration than anywhere else in this country just because of what you're up against as you go there.

[20 : 20] Layers of people. And you ever see now in government offices you just can't keep track of the titles. Some of the titles are so confusing that you would think that someone who is underneath a person is over them based on the title.

Deputy, Assistant, Director, and then you have the senior deputy, Assistant, I mean all sorts of different things.

And they have all these people and they pretty much just cooperate to keep the bureaucracy and to keep things going the way they should go. And that arrangement is fertile ground for injustice and fertile ground for the oppression of the poor.

And the reason I say it that way is that the rich generally can get by. Actually the rich tend to take advantage of bureaucracies.

It works for them because they can bribe. And generally speaking what the rich is able to do is one, they can get things done more efficiently by paying a few dollars and they have the resources to do that.

[21 : 25] And then many times when it comes to paying their taxes they don't have to pay all they should. Because they can give, they have enough to give corrupt officials something and then they get to pay less and they get by and meanwhile the poor pays more than their fair share of what they should pay.

So although there are some elements, although the context being an agricultural economy that the preacher was in is different from ours, there are some elements that are very similar for us as well. And this is not, in our context, it's not related to a particular government. I think this is the way our system is designed. Our system is designed to benefit the wealthy over the poor.

So in our country, the poor carry the burden of the taxes. And it doesn't matter which government is there. That's the way it's designed. The reason that so many people welcome VAT and didn't complain about VAT is because VAT is a tax primarily on the poor, not on the wealthy, not on the rich.

And that's why we have it. And so the whole idea of an inefficient system of government breeds corruption and it breeds oppression of the poor, not of the rich.

[22 : 53] rich. Now when you consider this, as you think about the oppression that the poor receives, both from scripture and from our own experience, no one in his or her right mind wants to be poor.

No one voluntarily says, I elect to be poor. Nobody wants to be poor. We don't want to be poor because in addition to all the other disadvantages of being poor, one of the first things we see is that when you are poor, you are weak and you are vulnerable and you are subject and more likely to be oppressed.

oppressed. And so rather than wanting to be poor, we would rather be rich. We would rather have resources. And as desirable as it is to not be poor and to have resources and even to be rich, there is a danger that is associated with it.

There is a danger associated with both the desire to be rich and also the actual possession of riches. And the preacher knows this. And so it is instructive that the preacher addresses poverty first and then goes on to address this issue of money and loving money.

And so the preacher, I could almost imagine that he is leading us to the point of saying, I don't want to be poor. I want to be rich.

[24 : 34] And then the preacher interjects this blunt statement after verse 9, verse 10, look at verse 10, and he bluntly says, he who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income.

So he moves us from thinking about poverty and all the oppression that sometimes comes with it for the poor, and he quickly interjects in the thought that we must have, I don't want to be poor, and he says to us, he who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income.

This brings me to my second point, riches and wealth. Riches and wealth. And this section is verse 10 of chapter 5, and this carries through to verse 6 6.

Here in this statement the preacher seems to be saying, I know the picture that I've painted about poverty can cause you to desire money and wealth, but money and wealth will not satisfy.

Money and wealth will not satisfy. He's pointing to the limitations of riches. They cannot satisfy. He's saying that loving money and loving wealth is really vanity.

[25 : 56] That word in the book of Ecclesiastes, it means a vapor, it means a mist, it means a fleeting breath, it's something that's meaningless. He says if you love money, if you love wealth, you love a mist, you love something that's nothing, it is meaningless, it is a vapor that just evaporates into nothingness.

And here what we have, we don't have idle words before us, we have the words of a person who is speaking from personal experience. This preacher is not talking off the top of his head.

Remember earlier in Ecclesiastes, he told us of the personal experiments that he undertook with riches and wealth and finding pleasure in them and he found that they just don't satisfy.

And so the preacher, when he says, he who loves money will never be satisfied with money and he who loves wealth will not be satisfied with his income, the preacher is speaking from experience.

And in verse 11, the preacher tells us something that's practical about money and wealth. He says, as goods increase, so do the people who eat them, legitimately or illegitimately.

[27 : 17] There's some people who never knew they had so many family and friends until they became rich. And then there's some who never knew they had so few family and friends until they became poor.

And his point is that as the wealth increases, as the income increases and things come in, it just goes. Sometimes you need people to maintain it.

It just goes more mouths to feed, more people to take care of. It comes at a cost. It comes with some burdens that you didn't envision right up front.

And so what the preacher says, he says, the only advantage that this person gets as the wealth increases, he says, they get to see it. That's what he says at the end of verse 11.

He says, but to see them with his eyes. What is his advantage? But to see them with his eyes. And the preacher's point is that riches have limitations.

[28 : 24] He also points to another hazard that comes with the acquisition of riches, and that is the possibility of overindulgence.

In verse 12, he talks about the person who just can eat too much. And food is one of the gifts that God has given to us.

Food is a gift that God has given to us to enjoy. And so for some people, as they have more and more resources, the most natural form of enjoyment is to eat and to drink and to take pleasure in food and in drink.

And so the preacher points to this over indulgence as well. And you can see the contrast between the person who now has abundance and the laborer.

And what he says is that the laborer, he works so hard that no matter whether he had a lot to eat or little to eat, he's so tired he has sweet sleep. But to the person who has so much, he says that his full stomach will not enable him to sleep.

[29 : 36] next the preacher gives us another reason to be more realistic about riches. He tells us they are uncertain in verses 13 through 17.

He gives us this account of something that he saw. This is something that he observed. He observes a man who was careful with his money. A man who was careful to save. He stored up obviously a significant amount of money, kind of like a life savings. And the preacher observed that this man still ended up losing it all in a bad venture. We're not told about the details of the venture. We don't know how he actually lost it. And I think the reason we're not told is that it doesn't matter. The fact is that he lost it. And we know there are many ways in this life that ventures can bankrupt people. There are many ways that a person who has saved a significant amount of money can actually lose it and even lose it overnight. And what makes it worse for this man that the preacher observes is that this man has a son.

[30 : 44] He has a son and what the preacher says is he has nothing in his hand. In other words, in this time, one of the most important things for a father was to leave an inheritance to his children.

And this man being so careful to store up all this wealth and perhaps in the venture that he ran into, it was to gain more. But he lost all.

And now he has an empty hand and he has a son. He has nothing to leave for his son as an inheritance. And the preacher makes the point that this man came into the world naked with nothing in his hand and he is going to leave this world naked and empty handed as well.

And the preacher calls it a grievous evil because after all the toiling that this man has done, he carries nothing out of the world and all of his days in this fallen world is filled with toil and vexation and sickness and anger and then in the end he leaves it with nothing in his hands.

The plans that he had for saving and storing up his wealth were all frustrated and they were all destroyed. And friends, this morning we should be careful not to miss the fact that the preacher is not just addressing some man that he saw, some experience that he had, the preacher is also addressing us.

[32 : 18] Whether or not we hoard resources and try to store them up, the fact is that we are going to leave this world just as we came, we came in empty-handed and we're going to leave this world empty-handed.

We came with nothing and we're going to leave this world with nothing. We bring nothing in, we take nothing out. and the preacher is making the point that riches are so uncertain.

Yet, in our pursuit of riches, we are not mindful of how uncertain they are. We actually think riches are so certain that we go after them with all of our strength, only to find out that it can be lost in a bad venture, in a bad decision, if we're lost by natural disasters.

Now, to that sobering account of the man who lost it all, in verses 18 through 20, the preacher holds out to us a vision for the good life.

I think he sees that we can be so easily despaired by this situation, this example of the man who lost it all, that he holds out to us this vision of the good life in verses 18 through 20.

[33 : 43] And what the preacher says is that the good life is recognizing God as the giver of all that we have, and we eat and drink and we find fulfillment and enjoyment in our work and not in our possessions.

Notice that two times the preacher refers to his lot. He does in verse 18 and then he does in verse 19. And what he's pointing to is he's pointing to what we would call a divine lot.

It is an allotment from a sovereign God so that whatever our circumstances are, we recognize them as a divine allotment.

It is something that God has sovereignly allotted to us. Mixed with our decisions, mixed with our choices, mixed with opportunities and all the other kinds of things, there's a sovereign God who's over it and he divinely gives and sets our Lord.

But here's what's interesting as you consider this good life that is held out to us. In verse 18, the preacher is not referring to a person who is wealthy.

[34 : 59] Look at what he says in verse 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 Lord.

He's not talking about a wealthy person, he's just talking about a person. He says this is good, this is what does seem to be good, that you would enjoy the gifts of God.

And the most basic and widespread and general gift that God gives to people is this gift of the enjoyment of sustenance, the enjoyment of food and drink.

And then also he talks about finding enjoyment in the work that we do. And remember earlier in Ecclesiastes we saw that God is the one, who gives that to people.

But here again what I want to point out in verse 18 is that he is not talking about a rich person.

[36 : 06] He talks about the rich person in verse 19. He's talking about any person in verse 18 but in verse 19 he says everyone 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. So he makes the point that even for the rich person, the person who has a lot of wealth, a lot of goods, and also the ability to enjoy them.

He said that is a gift from God. God has given that to that person. God has allotted that to that person. That's the good life. To have the ability to enjoy whatever your lot is.

Whether it is marked as a rich person with an abundance and enjoying the fruit of your labor and enjoying your work or it's just a person. who is enjoying the provisions of God and enjoying the toil that has been allotted to them from the sovereign hand of God.

Now see, we may take this for granted. And I think many of us do. We take for granted this enjoyment of life. This enjoyment of the good gifts that God gives us, whether we're rich or poor.

[37 : 34] We take that for granted. We assume that if I have enough, I'll be happy. I won't take a poll this morning, but I am persuaded that there would be many of us this morning who really believe if I had enough money or more money, I would certainly be a happier person.

I would enjoy life more if I had more money. We don't see it as a gift from God. We think it's a consequence of having more and having the desires of our hearts.

But the preacher says, no, that's not so. The preacher says it doesn't automatically follow that if you have more goods, you're going to have more happiness. If you have more money, you're going to be a happier person and a better person to be around.

The preacher says, no. No. Money and happiness do not necessarily go together. As a matter of fact, there are people who would testify that when they gained more money, they had less happiness.

When they gained more goods, when they accomplished more things, they had less goods. And so, the preacher pulls out to us something else that he saw.

[39 : 00] And I think we've seen this as well. He says in verse 1 of chapter 6, 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 power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them.

This is a reality that I think we've seen. Many of you would probably know Howard Hughes, very wealthy American, one of the wealthiest men who have ever lived.

He actually lived in Grand Bahama for many, many years. He owned the Xanadu Hotel. One of the most unhappy men. He's ever lived.

He's one of the wealthiest men. And interestingly, he was so wealthy and he splurged a lot, but it wasn't, you wouldn't consider it splurging based on what he had.

[40 : 16] We would consider it splurging based on what we have, but based on what he had, he spent a little on himself. And he left the vast majority of his wealth to go to philanthropy.

And to this day, his wealth is doing a lot of good and making a lot of people happy. And so we see what the preacher is saying is not some illusion, it is actually the truth.

There are people to whom God gives an abundance of goods and wealth and riches and even honor, but does not give them the gift of enjoyment of what they have, of what he has given to them.

And the preacher says this too is vanity, it is a grievous evil. He says it's like a nothing, it is meaningless, it is a mist, it's not anything that you can wrap your hands around.

But let us not miss what the preacher says in his introduction because we could lose it because of this idea that a person would be so wealthy and yet not be able to enjoy what he has.

[41 : 39] Notice what the preacher says in verse one. He says this is an evil that lies heavy on mankind. It's not just isolated to a very wealthy person, but it's isolated to people, it is related to people in general that they can have things rather an abundance or rather just a modest amount and not have the gift that God gives to be able to enjoy it.

The preacher's point is not that it only happens to the wealthy, the preacher's point is that it happens to people in general. I notice the illustration that he gives in verse 3 of chapter 6.

Here the preacher describes the ideal life that a man would have in his day. In the preacher's day, the ideal life that a man would have desired was to have a lot of children and to live a long life. And just to have food and drink, and he was a happy man if he had that. And to make this point, the preacher says, if a man had a hundred children and lived a very long life but did not enjoy life's good things, the gift of contentment and enjoyment of the things that God gives us, he says, a child who was born dead is better off than him.

A child who was stillborn, he says, is better off than this man who has the ideal life, a lot of children, a lot of years, with no enjoyment. And the reason he has no enjoyment is because an abundance of things does not guarantee enjoyment in life.

[43 : 41] The things are a gift and enjoying those things are a gift from God as well. And to draw the contrast and to make the point in a very dramatic way, the preacher says, if a child is stillborn, the child is better than that man.

He goes on to say, even if this man lives for 2,000 years and has no enjoyment, he's going to go to the same place as the still born child to the grave.

And his point is that the enjoyment of this life's goods is a gift from God, and he doesn't give it to everyone. God does not give the gift of enjoyment of this life, the things of this life, to everyone. God. And we should be able to see that because remember earlier he talks about the rich person to whom God gave many things and he also gave the ability to enjoy them.

That's what he says in chapter 5 and verse 19. And then now he gives us this example of the man who was wealthy beyond his desires, but had no enjoyment.

[45 : 05] And this illustration that he gives is the man doesn't even have a burial. And what he points to there is he points to this man's isolation.

Because one of the cultural practices was that when you were really cared for in death, your body would be cared for.

You see examples of the Old Testament where sometimes someone was killed and they would take great risk to go and get that body. You think of Saul for example.

To just respect the body and take care of the body and to give the body a decent burial. And it would seem like this illustration that he is pointing to as this man lived such an isolated life, a fractured life from his hundred children and no doubt grandchildren that he dies in isolation.

He is not respected in death, not cared for in death, seemingly not even missed in death. And the preacher's point is you can have a lot of wealth and this could still be a lot because there are no guarantees.

[46 : 20] Wealth has limitations. Wealth promises a lot of things but it can't deliver those things. And ultimately God is the one who gives it and God is the one who also gives the ability to enjoy it.

Now at this point we could all be minded to say, you know what, forget the whole thing. Forget the wealth. I don't want the wealth because wealth can't guarantee me anything. We can be turned off from wealth.

And the preacher seems to say to us in verses 7 through 9, well you still have to work. work. And he goes on to address the relationship between work and appetite.

This brings in my third and final point. Work and appetite verses 6, chapter 6, verses 7 through 9.

The preacher tells us rather bluntly that the reason we must work or toil is for our mouths.

And it's an ongoing toil because our appetite, is not finally satisfied. And notice he tells us that there is no distinction.

[47 : 35] We're all dependent upon food. We all have appetites that crave food. And no one is different from the other person. It doesn't matter who we are. All men are equal at this point.

Look at what the preacher says in verse 8. He says, the wise man has no advantage over the fool. You can be as wise as you want to be, as full as you want to be foolish.

Appetites are the same. They have to be satisfied. And we work to satisfy them. He says, beneath all the things we do, when we say, you know, I'm working for this and saving for that, he says, no, bottom line, you are toiling for your mouth.

You're toiling for your appetite to satisfy it. He also says in verse 8 about the poor person. He says, and what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself for the living?

And here he's talking about someone who just kind of knows how to get by, this poor person. He knows how to react and respond in different situations to get what he needs.

[48 : 46] He says, what advantage does he get? And the point is, he doesn't gain anything at the end of the day because what he gets, he has to consume. And that's his life, just getting to consume, just getting to consume.

Some work for it, some beg for it, but it all goes the same place. And this is a very difficult proverb that the preacher ends with.

In verse 9, when he says, better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite. This is also vanity and the striving, after wind.

What the preacher seems to be saying is that unlike our eyes that see reality and is able to fix on what we see, our appetites are roving and wandering, considering all manner of things that we desire in the moment to satisfy it.

And I think we've all been there. We're hungry, but you know our mind, what do you want? I want this, I'm not sure I want that. And our appetites rave, and then sometimes we get something that we thought we wanted and we didn't like it and so our appetite is roving for something else.

[49 : 59] But the preacher seems not just to be talking about biology. The preacher seems not to be talking purely about a biological appetite where we are mindlessly hungry for food.

He seems to be including our conscious desire for different things to satisfy our appetite.

Wandering from one thing to the next, if I can get this, I'd be contented. If I can get that, I can be contented. But whatever the preacher means with this difficult proverb that he concludes this section with what is clear from it is he saying to us that the reason we work is our appetite.

And the preacher concludes by telling us that this wandering appetite that we have, this appetite that is never satisfied, that we eat and then we're hungry again, we eat and we're hungry again, and we work and we eat and we're hungry again.

He's saying it's vanity. It's a circular nothingness. It's vanity. It's a striving after the wind. It's like going outside and chasing the wind around and trying to catch it.

[51 : 25] He says this makes no sense. It's pointless. It's meaningless. Why do we do that? But an appetite that is not finally satisfied is not pointless.

To the human eyes it is pointless. For a person looking from the outside and just watching us as we live this life and all they will see is that we toil and we eat and we toil and we eat and we live in darkness and we get sick and we do all those things and then we go to the grave.

That's what they would see. that's the full extent of what the naked human eyes can see. The naked human eyes cannot see anything more than that. Now scripture tells us about life beyond going in the grave but the naked eyes can't see that.

And so from a secular point of view you can just see this whole thing makes no sense. You come into the world with nothing, you work hard, you accomplish a lot of things and then you leave it with nothing.

And all the work that you do, bottom line ultimately, is to serve your appetite. But there is a point, there is a divine point to this appetite that is not satisfied.

[52 : 57] And for many of us we miss the point. The way we interpret our never satisfied appetite is that we need to do our best to ensure that our basic need will be met for ourselves and our families.

That's the way we see it. I need to eat so I need to work and I need to care for my family as well. And then we think about the future and we realize well you know, I don't know about the future, this may happen, that may happen, and so we try to save and acquire resources that we will be able to take care of these needs in the future and we will not go hungry and our families will not go hungry. And we even think about other needs as well beyond just food. We think of clothing and shelter and we think of things like health insurance and life insurance and we think about transportation and all kinds of other things and we begin to see the need to store up beyond just today because these needs are out there.

These needs are in the future and we sometimes get worried about what the future holds. and worried about hardship and we hear stories about the Great Depression and how people were in dire straits because they were not prepared for that.

And even as we do that, even as we store up for the future and we plan for the future we easily forget how wealth can so easily and so quickly be lost.

[54 : 25] think about the customers of Clico. Think about the former employees of city markets. Their plight is often in the newspaper.

A never ending turmoil of legal twists and turns where the assets are being dissipated.

almost always when I drive on the East West Highway and I look across and I see that building, the former city markets headquarters that's dilapidated and trees are growing into it and it's all destroyed.

You know what that is? That's the pension savings of some of the employees, former employees of city meat markets. Or more close to the home, the former employees of Bahama, many of whom had dreams riding on a career with that company.

So how would he respond to all of this? How would he respond to what the preacher says to us about poverty and oppression and wealth and riches and our appetites work?

[55 : 50] First of all, I believe that we have to understand the purpose for which God has given us appetites that are never satisfied.

The lesson is found in what the Lord saw to teach the children of Israel in the wilderness in Deuteronomy 8 verse 3 where the Lord said to them through Moses and he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

that is the point of hunger and that is the point of a never satisfied appetite. We don't live by bread alone. We live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

And so it should not just spur us on to work for food. It should remind us of our need for something more important than food. In John chapter 6 Jesus said to them in John 6 verse 27 do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give you for on him God has set his seal.

And then he goes on to say in verse 35 of John chapter 6 I am the bread of life whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

[57 : 39] Jesus is speaking about spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst. And really the opposite of what he said is also true. Whoever does not come to Jesus will remain spiritually hungry and remain spiritually thirsty and they will continue to try to satisfy their hunger and thirst with the things of this life riches and achievements that can never satisfy but more importantly will not last.

And even if they last for the duration of this life they will not last beyond this life because what the preacher recognizes is what Job recognized is that we came into this world with nothing and we will leave this world with nothing.

we came into this world with empty hands we will leave this world with empty hands. And so this morning as I close I ask you have you come to Jesus for the satisfaction of your soul that only he can offer.

Riches will never satisfy. Material possessions in this life will never satisfy. Have you come to Jesus?

And by coming to him I mean that you've recognized that you are lost in need of forgiveness and in need of a new life that only Jesus can give. A life that will give us happiness no matter what our material circumstances are.

[59 : 13] No matter what is in our bank account. That's what Jesus offers. He offers what wealth can never offer.

He offers a cleansed conscience. He offers the lifting of the burden of sin and guilt and condemnation and shame. If you've not done that this morning I encourage you rather than thinking that oh if I got this or got that if I accomplished this or achieved that I'll be happy.

it's a dead end street. You don't need to go down that street to find out. There are many voices. The voice of the preacher shouts to us. There are people in contemporary life who shout to us and tell us.

It promises more than it can deliver. This issue of wealth and material things. God is to encourage you to come to Jesus and surrender to him and place your trust in him for salvation and acknowledge that only he can satisfy.

And for those of us who have come to Jesus, those of us who have trusted Jesus in the pardon of our sins, we should be reminded this morning that we have had our greatest need met.

[60 : 41] the greatest need that any human being has in this life is to know Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Savior, to have your sins forgiven, to know that there is no condemnation to you because you are in Christ Jesus.

Those of us who have done that, we can be grateful this morning that our greatest need has been met. And we should also be reminded that God has sovereignly set the lots of our lives.

Whatever there may be in a particular point in time, and it doesn't mean that what it is today will be tomorrow. Our lots change in life, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse, but what we know is that they are lots allotted from the hands of a sovereign God.

Whatever degree of material possession we have comes from God. And let us also remember that God is the one who is able to give us enjoyment. Whether it's in wealth and abundance, or whether it is having our daily needs met, God is the one who is able to give us what wealth and riches can never give us.

He's able to give us the ability to enjoy. And scripture is filled with examples that it is better to have a little with contentment than to have an abundance with strife and with envy.

[62 : 20] And so let's remember this morning that it is God whom we are ultimately dependent upon to sovereignly give us enjoyment in this life.

And that enjoyment is rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Those are the ones to whom God gives the ability to enjoy this life.

Those are the ones to whom God has given the ability to have happiness and joy in the midst of circumstances that this world would say, how can you be happy?

How can you be joyful? What is there to be joyful about? And the reason is that our rejoicing is not in what we have, but it's that our rejoicing is rooted in a person who is the same today, yesterday, today, and forever.

And our rejoicing is also rooted in having this informed understanding about riches for what it is. We're going to sing a song in a few minutes that says, when riches increase, don't set your heart upon them.

[63 : 30] Scripture tells us that. Because like a bird, they will take wings and they can just fly away. So this morning, let us remember that ultimately, God is the one who gives enjoyment of this life as a gift.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you this morning.