

Message #20

Ecclesiastes 6:7-9

IT DOES NOT MATTER WHAT THE JOB IS OR HOW HARD YOU WORK AT IT, WITHOUT GOD AT THE CENTER OF OUR LIFE WE WILL NOT FIND MEANING, BUT WILL ONLY CHASE THE WIND.

People go to work everyday. Truth is many are going through robotic motions. They work, they exist, but the meaning to life is nowhere to be found.

OBSERVATION #1 – There is a purpose for labor. **6:7a**

The particular Hebrew word for “labor” (amal) is one that refers to labor that brings one to the point of being wearied, fatigued and exhausted (Gesenius, p. 639).

There is a very positive reason why a man works hard at a job; so he may provide for his physical needs. In fact, there is nothing wrong with working so we may have something to eat. This is a blessing of God and also it is the will of God (Ecc. 2:24; 3:13; II Thess. 3:10-12).

Hard work will bring relief from hunger, but it won’t bring total fulfillment or satisfaction. Truth is bread alone will never satisfy or fulfill the soul no matter how hard one works (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4).

OBSERVATION #2 – There is a pointlessness to labor. **6:7b**

The Hebrew word “appetite” is literally the word for soul (nephesh). The point of Solomon is that man can work as hard as he wants and it still will not satisfy the longing of his soul.

The words of the commentator J. Stafford Wright, of Cambridge University, are worth pondering here–“Man has to work to live but has an insatiable appetite for more. This is common to both wise and foolish. Today the business world contains many clever men who work hard because they are obsessed with piling up money, while on the other side there are those who are ever alert for quick profit–honest or dishonest” (Vol. 5, p. 1172).

OBSERVATION #3 – There is a pursuit of satisfaction for the wise man and the fool. **6:8a**

The conjunction “for” immediately connects us to the previous verse. The big question here is does the wise man have an advantage over the fool in having satisfaction and meaning to life?

Solomon has already taught us that when it comes to death, a wise man does not have an advantage over a fool, for both will die (2:14-16). Without God at the center of one’s life, the hard worker may have more stuff but he won’t have more satisfaction in his soul.

OBSERVATION #4 – There is pursuit of satisfaction for the poor man. **6:8b**

There are times in Ecclesiastes when poor people are contrasted with wise people. In Eccl. 4:13, the poor person who is wise and takes instruction from God's Word is much better off than an old, rich king. In Eccl. 9:15 a poor wise man delivered a city and was forgotten.

It seems to me that the interpretation is this—work does not bring total satisfaction even to a poor person who is wise, who knows how to live life in a wise way that pleases the living God. Even for a poor person who knows God's Word, satisfaction will never be completely found in a job. It is found in one's relationship with God.

OBSERVATION #5 – There is a preference of the eyes versus the soul. **6:9a**

Solomon's obvious point is what the eyes see is better than what the soul goes after. It is better to look at things you think will bring meaning than to actually have your soul long for them and pursue them.

The truth is what the eyes see they often want (Eccl. 1:8). In fact, it is what one sees with his eyes that often becomes the impulse of his heart and soul (Eccl. 11:9). Once the heart or the soul commits itself to pursuing something, then the person pursues it. In this context the issue is trying to find satisfaction and meaning in labor. It is far better to look various jobs and occupations over than to get the idea into your soul that you can find real satisfaction and meaning in a job.

Dr. Unger said it is far better to make the most out of what we presently see and have than to allow our soul to go after things which can only bring imaginary satisfaction. The person who is content with what he presently has is far better off than one who is discontented (Vol. 1, p. 1088).

OBSERVATION #6 – There is no profitability of labor without God. **6:9b**

Without God at the center of one's life, trying to find meaning and fulfillment is an effort in futility. It is nothing more than chasing the wind.

It doesn't matter what our job is or what our pay is. It doesn't matter how hard we work or how educated we are. Without God at the center of our lives, we are chasing the wind.

With God at the center of our lives, our job can be an exciting mission field where we actually do the will of God (Eph. 6:5-8).