

Heisted, Hungry, Helpless! No Wonder I'm Not Happy...

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

Reading: Psalm 66

Bethany Baptist Church

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Join me this morning in Ecclesiastes 6. We'll consider all twelve verses. today:

The end of **Ch.6** brings us *half-way* thru Solomon's documentary on the *pursuit of fulfillment*. Israel's king continues last week's examination of *wealth & happiness*.

Last week we considered the relationship between *riches & greed*: *He who loves money* (greed; covetousness) *will not be satisfied w/ money*.

This morning, Solomon examines *having* wealth & **enjoying** wealth. Just because you *have it*, doesn't mean you get to *enjoy it*!

The conclusion is the same in either case: *vanity*. You think these things will *fill you up*, but if you aren't wise, you'll end up *empty*.

Prologue to Solomon's point: *Wealth & honor & days of life & many offspring* may not *last* & won't guarantee *satisfaction*. The *belly* is never full for long, no matter *who you are*. At the end of the day, you are powerless to *argue* or *altar* God's sovereign plan.

Three evils that frustrate fulfillment under the sun.

1. **Heisted.** The rich man gets *plundered* (vv.1-6).
2. **Hungry.** The full man grows *hungry again* (vv.7-9).
3. **Helpless.** No man under the sun really *knows what is good* (vv.10-12).

...pray...

Heisted! Sounds like movie title, doesn't it!

1. Money is simply not the key to contentment. For so many reasons. Solomon has another case study in the frustrations that surround the pursuit of wealth. He says it happens all the time...
2. It all begins when a man gets *rich!* In fact, the description of this guy sounds *very fulfilling: riches & wealth & honor!* Then it gets *better: his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires.* Can you *imagine it? You got it!*
 - a. We aren't told the *surface story* behind his *incredible accumulations of assets: inheritance or hard work or spoils of war or good fortune?*
 - b. Instead Solomon cuts straight to the ***theology of wealth: God gives riches.*** This is simply a *corollary* to the *doctrine of the sovereignty of God.* **Eph 1:11** – *God works all things after the counsel of His will.* For all people, not just the *humble & submissive saint!*
3. It all gets *ugly (v.1 – evil)* when everything *goes away.* The *foreigner - enemy, godless pagan* (context of **OT Israel**) plunders his *riches & wealth, & soils his reputation.* *Heisted!* There is *nothing* left to enjoy. A *severe affliction!* Such *futility...*
 - a. We aren't told much of the *surface story here, either: war (foreigner) or crime or intrigue.* The bottom line is: *heisted – robbed, gone!*
 - b. More *doctrine,* Solomon provides an unapologetic ***theology of calamity: God withholds pleasure.*** **Let's reread v.2** – Do you see it: *God has given riches – yet God has **not** empowered him to eat (enjoy).*
 - i. Here in **Eccl 6,** God orchestrates this frustrated tycoon's "*frustrated enjoyment,*" thru the deprivation of a *foreigner.*
 - ii. Yet God's word is *clear;* this *joy-vacuuming disappointment* is God's *doing.* This is another *corollary* to *God's sovereignty.*
 - iii. Beloved, if you can't admit that God's hand has to be in calamity (*somehow*), you open the door to a very *emasculated understanding* of God. (PAUSE)

4. Solomon's picture gets even *darker*; the *richer* you are, the *harder* you fall! Solomon had *all* these things: *riches & wealth & honor* (v.2); *many children, long life* (v.3). But what does it all mean, *under the sun*?
- a. If your *world* is your *wealth* (and its *pursuit*), and *God takes it from you*; if you are left so *desolate* that you can't even afford a *proper funeral*;
 - b. You're worse than *dead*! Not just *dead*, our text's example is about as *graphic & disturbing* as we can imagine. A *miscarried child* that never lived to *bear a name* or *see the sun* is better off than the man whose *life* is his *wealth*, and his *wealth* is taken from him.
 - c. The child has *rest*, but the man who has watched his *silver* come & go like a *freight train loaded w/ empty dreams* will *never rest*.
5. Do you think that *big bucks & a long life* will fill your *empty spaces*? You could live **1000** years. You could live **2000** years *under the sun*. God could take all the *riches & wealth & honor & children & years* from you in *heart-beat*. You won't have them to *enjoy*. How sad if those things *defined* your life!
- a. And then *you too* will enter *eternity, empty handed*.
- Job 1:21** – “*Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave & the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD.*” Did you catch our *two theology lessons* in Job's confession: the *doctrine of wealth & the doctrine of calamity*, all subsumed under the heading of the *doctrine of God's sovereignty*.
- b. So Solomon writes (6): *do not all go to one place (→ death)? The prosperous & the completely anonymous. The old man & the never born. We will all stand before our King & Judge, and no matter what we owned or what we did in the life, we will then be empty handed.*
 - c. Our only *hope*, our only *appeal*, our only *eternal treasure*, will be Christ our Savior! *Crucified* in the place of sinners.

The rich in this life get plundered ... & the full soon grow hungry!

Hungry. The full man gets *hungry* .

1. Solomon introduces our *second evil* w/ a simple economic principle: *all you do is for what you eat*. **Read vv.7-9. → It's never enough!**
 - a. Here is Solomon's simplified explanation of your life: *work eat work eat work eat work eat...and then start all over*.
 - b. Solomon's thinking about *more* than *groceries*, of course. The word translated *appetite* in my **NASB** is the Hebrew term *nephesh* – *soul*. His point is that nothing *under the sun* satisfies you permanently.
 - c. No matter how full you are at *supper*, you'll always be ready for *breakfast*. No matter how much *wealth* you acquire, you'll always want *more*. You can be *making* it faster than you can *count* it or *spend* it – you still won't be *content*.

2. Everyone is on the *same treadmill*. Why do some people *always* have to have a *new car*? A *bigger house*? Why do so many *marriages* end in *divorce*? *The human heart, apart from grace, does not have the capacity to be content (2x)*. (STOP)
 - a. The *wise men* (a good guy) & the *fool* (a bad guy) both grind away in the same *squirrel cage*. The *poor man* is there, too.
 - b. Solomon's metaphor is just our *sin nature* being played out at the *dinner table*. *Work eat work eat work eat* – but never enough. The *unregenerate heart* isn't wired to be *content*.

3. *A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush!* That's the Preacher's point in **v.10**. He's talking contentment. *What the eyes see* – in other words, what you *really* have. *What the soul (nephesh) desires* – what you *wish* you had.
 - a. **Look closely w/ me at v.9. Which does the Spirit say is better?** Be *content* w/ what you have!
 - b. Do you see the *wrap-up* at the end of **v.9 & v. 2**? We've seen them time & again in Solomon's search for significance. ***Futility... emptiness***. That *treadmill* is going nowhere.
Eat all you want...acquire all you can...you'll be hungry again by morning!

Helpless. Every man *comes & goes* (vv.10-12).

1. All the *commentaries* on *Ecclesiastes* agree: the *sovereign power of God* is *all over* this morning's passage. In our *blessings*, in our *calamities*, in the answers to our *greatest needs*. **Read vv.10-12.**
2. The idea in **v.10** of being *named* suggests being *known* (or, *understood*). The un-named *knower* is God. He *created & named & sustains* all things. That includes *you & me*. God knows how we are.
 - a. Solomon wrote elsewhere: *The ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches over all His steps.*
 - b. Solomon's father David wrote: *O LORD, you have searched me & known me.*
3. The un-named *strongman* in **v.10** is *also* God. Care to *argue* w/ Him? Many people *do*, you know; you may have *argued* w/ Him! Look back up at **v.2** – that *doctrine of calamity*. Have you ever suffered a loss or setback that caused you to *question God's goodness?* Or His *power, wisdom, love...perfection?*
 - a. Several years ago, Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote a best-seller: *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Kushner is no mere *academic*, this religious leader was working thru the *death* of his son. **Why?**
 - b. We *feel* for his trial, but we can't *agree* w/ Kushner's conclusion: *when things go wrong, give God a break, He makes mistakes, too!*

4. **No!** God is not *like us*, only *bigger (stronger, smarter)*. God is *other* than us (→ *holy*), and that includes *perfect*.
 - a. To *argue* w/ God (**v.10 & 11**) is not simply *foolish*, it's *sinful*. Have you ever tried to explain something to someone who won't *quit talking* long enough to *listen*? (...*wives*...!)
 - b. When God allows a *calamity* in your life, maybe you should stop *complaining* and start *listening* to Him. What is He trying to *tell you*?
 - c. And if His explanation isn't very detailed (*be still & know that I am God*), then *bow* you head & heart, and acknowledge Him as your *good & wise & loving King*. Ever *holy*...ever *perfect*.

5. Solomon *underlines* his point that God is *sovereign* & you *aren't*, with two questions (**read v.12**).
 - a. Man's life is *short*. It may seem *pointless*. His impact may seem no weightier than that of a *shadow*. You are *helpless*! Who knows what is *good* for man?
 - b. Man is *helpless*; his life is *full of questions*, even *looking back* over what he *can* see. So who knows what *tomorrow holds* for you?
 - c. *Under the sun*...who can say!?!
 - d. Solomon's point: our God *knows*!

There were some very *big ideas* in this morning's exposition. I want to briefly remind you of them; let's boil it down to *two thoughts*: *God is sovereign; man is restless.*

1. **God is sovereign.** That is a fancy way of saying *God is actively in charge of everything (king)*. Including *events & even truths* that may make us *unhappy*:

I am the Lord, and there is no other, the One forming light & creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these. Isa 45:7

And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, "What hast Thou done?" Dan 4:35

So (e.g. in Eccl 6) God might *bless* you w/what the world calls *wealth*, then *take it away*.

2. **Man is restless.** We *complain, want more, talk back*. That's our life, *under the sun*, and that's *not good* – it's *futility & striving after the wind*.
3. God's word says that when life is hard, you must pull these *two truths* together, and learn to *trust Him*, & learn *contentment*.

"Can I not, O house of Israel, deal w/you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel."

Christian, are you *blaming God* for some *calamity* in your life? Do you need to *acknowledge & accept* God's good hand, even in what seems *unexplainable* to you?

W/o Christ? God warned you this morning that your *years are few & your life is a shadow*. **What are you waiting for!** God's Son *died for sinners*; He was *raised* on the 3rd Day & God is *satisfied* – **turn to Jesus; trust Him to deliver you from your sins!** You *must...*

...pray...