

## Ecclesiastes- Chapter 6

If you haven't already let's turn together to the book of Ecclesiastes in chapter 6. Today we have a fairly short chapter ahead of us, just 12 verses and many of the verses tied together so I guess what I'm saying is this will be a little on the shorter side today.

Now as I say that I recognize that as I say that, I have said that same thing for the last few messages out of this book and it seems as if it has taken just as long if not longer than normal, but nonetheless today I think we will be a little shorter.

Next week though, be prepared to be a little longer if we look at that chapter in its entirety. Not sure about that yet. I haven't decided whether to split that one in two parts yet or not.

Now, let's remember for a moment what this book is about and what we have been reading as today is a continuation of those thoughts. First of all, we have been seeing that life apart from God really has not lasting value. Everything under the sun, that is apart from God, eventually goes away and that includes our own selves as well.

Last time, in particular, we looked at the vanity of following after wealth apart from God. Now mind you, God in our verses last week did not say that wealth was bad. In fact, he told us to enjoy the portion that God has given us as it is the gift of God not worrying day to day over what we have knowing that God is in control.

What we saw last time instead was the vanity of the love of money. We saw how the love of wealth and the pursuit of wealth leads to anxiety and stress. We saw how it can lead to physical illness or injury. We saw the danger of risky investments with unsure partners and the danger of losing it all and having nothing to leave for the next generation. We just saw man in the

mess of things that the word of God calls a sickness.

It really was a message that centered again not around the issue of money and wealth, but a man's focus. If his focus was not on God he might be brought to ruin. If his focus was on God, he could enjoy the blessings of God without worry.

Now as we get into chapter 6 we are going to see Solomon build even further off the things he said in the last portion of chapter 5. Let's read our chapter together.

*Ecc 6:1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:*

*Ecc 6:2 A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.*

*Ecc 6:3 If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he.*

*Ecc 6:4 For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness.*

*Ecc 6:5 Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other.*

*Ecc 6:6 Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?*

*Ecc 6:7 All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.*

*Ecc 6:8 For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living?*

*Ecc 6:9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.*

*Ecc 6:10 That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither*

*may he contend with him that is mightier than he.*

*Ecc 6:11 Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?*

*Ecc 6:12 For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?*

Let's return to verse 1.

*Ecc 6:1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:*

This verse marks the next subject following the vanity of chasing wealth without chasing God. The "an" here before the word "evil" is like saying another. There is another evil. This is the change of subject from the last chapter. Remember that there weren't chapter and divisions. Those were put there for us to find things faster. Chapter and verse divisions are helpful, but not inspired. This is Solomon's way of letting us know he is changing the subject.

Now, the word "evil" here is speaking of misfortune or tragedy and our verse tells us that this misfortune or evil is common to man. That means as we look out around the world even today what we are about to read is still something that is commonly going on because man's nature has not changed.

Let's look on to see what it is,

*Ecc 6:2 A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.*

Here we have a man that is presented before us again who is living life under the sun, apart from God. He is not the man of God we saw at the end of chapter 5 that enjoyed the fruit of his labor. Rather this is a man that God has blessed with wealth even though he himself might go

through this life without worrying the least little bit about God.

You see God also blesses the godless whether they accredit it to him or not.

Our verse has a godless man to whom God has given much. That is the premise here. He has as much as he could possible want. Yet in the end, his wealth is a curse because God does not allow him to enjoy it. That is he could buy anything he wanted except for happiness.

And then we have another presented in this verse, a stranger, who takes it away. That is one who is not related to him. A person might do this in an unlawful way such as stealing from him. Might even do it in a lawful way, but in either case the one who has the wealth doesn't enjoy it while the ones who are making a living off his wealth are.

Solomon says it is a vain thing to have more than you could want and have nothing at all to bring you happiness. Do we not see this event today? Some of the wealthiest men have no happiness in that wealth. If wealth and happiness were synonymous then Hollywood actors should be the happiest people on earth, but we know that is not the case.

Case in point, I cannot read these words without thinking of a man by the name of Howard Hughes. I suppose the younger ones here may not have ever heard of him, but I imagine everyone older than me certainly has. Howard was a man who was blessed with so much. He made money in aviation, movie making, real estate. In his day and time, he was a genius and one of the wealthiest men alive. Yet he became a recluse who lived a most miserable life overcome by OCD and paranoia.

He stayed locked up watching the same movies over and over, eating the same thing every day, and not carrying about his hygiene at all.

He was a man that had it all, and yet God took away from him the desire to enjoy any of it and it was those that serviced his estate were the ones that enjoyed the fruit of his labor.

Scripture here calls this an evil disease. It called loving money in the last chapter an evil disease. And here it is an evil disease not to be able to enjoy what you have. Certainly, it was for Howard Hughes.

Let's read on,

*Ecc 6:3 If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he.*

Our first man in this chapter was the man who had wealth and was never able to enjoy it and we are told that is a great misfortune or evil.

This verse gives us our second man. A man with a lot of children. Solomon probably knew what it was like to have a lot of children with all the wives he had even though the Bible only records three. But he wrote in the Psalms.

*Psa 127:3 Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*

*Psa 127:4 As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.*

*Psa 127:5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*

That is the way that it should be. A person's children should be one if not the greatest of blessings in this life. They are to their parent's strength and happiness.

Now having only two children myself, my heart is set in a panic mode of even being like Brother and Sister Short with their crew. Their quiver that seems pretty full, but I think even Brother and Sister Short would agree that having a

hundred children is an awful lot. It's not unattainable though.

We find some in the Bible who certainly had a lot. Solomon's son Reheboam is recorded having the most having 28 sons and 60 daughters. In many cases, like in the case of Solomon, all the children are not recorded.

But again, the number of 100 children in Solomon's day was not impossible. It's not even today. There is a man in Zimbabwe with 15 wives that as of 2014 had father 128 children and I don't know if he's still going or not. Wasn't able to find that out.

Not long ago a polygamist in Canada was believed to have fathered 145 children through about 27 wives.

Just crazy. Crazy, crazy, crazy. That's not a quiver. That's an arsenal.

That said, in Solomon's day it would have been a great blessing to have these many children and this is what is meant to be shown for us in this verse. A man who is blessed beyond compare with children and not only that, but also a man who is blessed with a long life.

Seems great so far. Lot of kids. Lot of years. But here again is a man who is not content. For whatever reason he can't enjoy them and in the end he has no burial.

You know one of the things that always strikes me when we read through the word of God is that Ishmael came to be at his Father's funeral. Think of that. Here is a son that Abraham sent packing, yet there was respect enough at his death that he came and helped Isaac bury his father.

Our verse here though, presents us with a man who has fathered 100 children and doesn't have a funeral. His children and grandchildren don't

mourn him. They don't care for one reason or another if he lives or dies.

Now Solomon has inflated the numbers to show us the shame, but how many men have fathered 1, 2 or even 3 children only to have abused them physically or emotionally or shown so little interest in them to such an extreme that at the end of his days his own children don't care if he lives or dies.

I remember attending the funeral of one, one time where there was no sermon. No religious words of comfort for there was no comfort that could be given. But people stood up to share a memory or two and I remember the words of a daughter which was what everyone else was thinking. She began, "I hated my dad." "He was the vilest man I have ever known." Such a heartbreak. But you know what, at least she cared enough to be there.

The man here no one comes to mourn or bury. Solomon says a man who dies this way is a man who would have been better to die at birth than to have wasted a life such as this.

Solomon now gives us in the next couple of verses a short description of the one that is miscarried or dies shortly after birth.

*Ecc 6:4 For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness.*

*Ecc 6:5 Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other.*

The child who is miscarried or dies shortly after birth may never have a chance to live life under the sun. May never have the chance to acquire wealth or have a hundred children. Yet that child will be mourned for more in the hearts of those that loved the fruit of the womb than the perverse one we read about in verse 3.

I don't know how many of you all have had miscarriages. In a room this size certainly more than a few. We have had two that happened early on. But you know sometimes I still think about them because I know that there was life there and though I never held them or heard their voice we loved them and mourned over them. Solomon said these miscarriages and stillborns are better off than those who lived, fathered many children, saw many days and in the end were despised by those that normally would have loved him.

Let's read on,

*Ecc 6:6 Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?*

Solomon is telling us here that the number of days a man lives doesn't make life good. If the men like we have mentioned already who have all the wealth and can't enjoy life or the man who should be rich with family and yet is so perverse under the sun that his family has nothing to do with him. That this man could live 2000 years and still die miserable and alone and, in the end, he dies just like the one who is stillborn.

The one place that is mention here at the end of verse 6 is not speaking of heaven. It is not speaking of hell. It is speaking of death itself. Dust to dust as we have read. Here we have nothing more than the grave being spoken of.

Solomon is truly presenting an awful scenario and again I don't think times have changed much. There are some who are so perverse and miserable that if you doubled their life it would be just that many more people who are injured and hurt by them. The only thing that would seem worse than no one to mourn your loss is when they rejoice in your death.

I remember watching the scenes in January 1989 when Ted Bundy after confessing to brutally killing 30 women was put to death and how the

people outside clapped and shouted with joy. For those that lost loved ones you understand why as justice was served, but such a waste of life. Truly Solomon would say he would have been better off born dead.

Let's read on.

*Ecc 6:7 All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.*

Here in this verse we have a figure of speech that represents more than what is written here. The mouth symbolizes the whole man- his flesh. The appetite symbolizes the need to satisfy the flesh.

Solomon says here that everything a man does he does it to satisfy his flesh in some way. He may work for food because he is hungry. He may work to buy something that makes him feel good or something that is nice to look at or something he believes will make life easier for him. Everything is motivated by satisfying the flesh.

Even labors of mercy and compassion satisfy the need for the flesh to want to help another. It is self-satisfying at times to help others.

Solomon in our verse here says we keep feeding the flesh and the flesh keeps wanting more. I think we would all agree with that.

Now let's look on to verse 8.

*Ecc 6:8 For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living?*

Here is a statement about the reality of life and the positions of men whether they be rich or poor or wise or uneducated.

Now remember, Solomon was just talking about how the man that lived and no one loved is not better off than the one who never lived at all.

Here in these verses it is the same concept. The one with no earthly education but has the smarts

of how to eat is no worse off than the highly educated one who eats. They both eat. The poor man who knows how to survive from day to day still knows how to survive from day to day and in the end the same fate awaits all of them- death.

Let's continue on.

*Ecc 6:9 What the eyes see is better than what the soul desires. This too is futility and a striving after wind.*

Solomon here gives the same wisdom he has given us before only in different words. You see what Solomon speaks of is that it is better to be satisfied with what you have right now than to be led by the lust of something else.

It seems as is we started chapter 1 stating this very thing. That is, if you aren't happy with what you have you will never be happy with what may come. If you can't be happy in the house you are in, you will not be happy in the next house you get for very long.

If you're not content with the iPhone you have you probably won't be content for long with the next one that comes out and thousands prove that every fall by lining up for the next one when they haven't even got the last one paid off yet.

We all know this is true, but we often live life quite oppositely. Most often, we would rather trade the bird in the hand for two in the bush. Solomon says this never being content is futile. It never has a good ending. Might seem like it for a while, but never long.

Let's read on.

*Ecc 6:10 Whatever exists has already been named, and it is known what man is; for he cannot dispute with him who is stronger than he is.*

This verse speaks to us about the sovereignty of God. Whatever exists, it has all been ordained of God. He is working all things out according

to his will. The man with all the wealth, that God takes away or the man with all the children and dies alone. It is all according to God's plan.

Scripture says that it is known what man is. God knows who we are. Knows the nature of our hearts. Knows the futility of our steps.

Man cannot complain against God. The man with all the wealth in the world that he can't enjoy cannot dispute with a sovereign God that his money doesn't bring him happiness. The man who dies alone because of the perverseness of his character cannot bring a charge against God because he failed. He cannot say to God you made me this way and because you made me this way it is all your fault. Furthermore, man cannot even be like Job say God has oppressed me too much.

Job in fact learned what Solomon states here. Man cannot contend with God. He is sovereign over man in every way and he is working out his will over all.

*Ecc 6:11 Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?*

Here is Solomon's question. Does chasing after riches make a man better than the one who dies poor? Does chasing after education make one better off than the fool when he dies.? All of these things man chases for comes to an end and then we come to an end and are we better off in that end than those who chased no end at all?

And now we come to then end in verse 12,  
*Ecc 6:12 For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?*

Verse 12 tells us that no man knows what is best for our own lives. This phrase about "vain life which he spendeth as a shadow" that speaks

about sometimes the brevity of life. In truth, all of our days are short. Man is a vapor here today and gone tomorrow. We may think we know what's best, but at the end of the day none of us know what tomorrow will bring.

Now that brings us the end of the chapter, but not the end to a thought. You see since none of us know what tomorrow may bring whether another day of life or the cruelty of the grave, it should beg the question have you prepared for the reality that death may come?

How do we prepare for the grave? It is through trusting in the one that rose victorious over death, hell, and the grave. Trusting in Christ.

When we trust in him the things of this earth that man chases after, they don't seem nearly as important anymore. The chasing after the wind doesn't seem worth it.

What's worth it? Being content with what we have and looking for his soon appearing- living our lives under heaven and not under the sun.