

CHASING THE WIND

"Money Can't Buy Me...." Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

May 21, 2023

INTRO.: It's a joy to welcome you this morning. If you are new here this morning we are in the middle of a series, *Chasing the Wind*, from Ecclesiastes, a book in the Old Testament written by Solomon, a king in Israel. This morning we are looking at what Solomon has to say about money. Some people, when they hear that a pastor is going to speak about money, get a little nervous. If you have been attending here for any length of time you know that we don't talk much about money. As we preach and teach through the Bible, when money is mentioned, we talk about what God has to say to us from that passage. There is quite a bit in the Bible about money. As I was putting this message together, I put a post on Facebook, asking people to finish the sentence that I've used for the title of the sermon. "Money Can't Buy Me...." Some of you may recognize that the title came from a Beatles' song, *Money Can't Buy Me Love*. As I was growing up people were going crazy about the Beatles, and this was one of their popular songs. This is also not an endorsement of the Beatles but notice what this song has to say about money.

I'll buy you a diamond ring, my friend
If it makes you feel all right
I'll get you anything, my friend
If it makes you feel all right
'Cause I don't care too much for money
But money can't buy me love
I'll give you all I've got to give
If you say you love me too
I may not have a lot to give
But what I got I'll give to you
I don't care too much for money
Money can't buy me love
Say you don't need no diamond rings
And I'll be satisfied
Tell me that you want the kind of things
That money just can't buy
I don't care too much for money
Money can't buy me love

So, I decided I would share the title of this message on Facebook and ask people to finish the sentence: "Money can't buy me...."

Here are some of the responses: salvation, love, a mansion in heaven, happiness, peace, everlasting life or anything that lasts, integrity, what you need most, good health, Jesus, contentment, a sound mind, a relationship with Jesus, joy, a true friend, time, security.

Brenda and I went on a little picnic one evening and on the way back we stopped at a creamery to get ice cream. We definitely will be going back there again. I took a picture of this sign:

Money can't buy happiness
But it can buy cows
And cows make milk
And milk makes ice cream
And ice cream makes you

HAPPY

Money is a big deal and is something that people worry about, couples argue about, and can cause a fair amount of stress in our lives. So, what does Solomon have to say about money? There are three things he points out in talking about money, in particular the love of money. When someone loves money, it points to a God problem which leads to a contentment problem which manifests itself in a grace problem. See if you can see what I am referring to as we read this passage in unison.

Ecclesiastes 5:10-20 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the

owner except to feast his eyes on them? The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep. I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him. Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand. This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind? All his days he eats in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger. Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him—for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God. He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

The first thing I see in this passage is:

A GOD PROBLEM

I don't mean that God has a problem but that the person described has a problem with who is God in their lives.

“Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.” Ecclesiastes 5:10

Do you see the problem here? The person is described as “loving money.” This is a very intensive word in the Hebrew. When Jesus was asked by a religious leader what the greatest commandment was, this was His response:

Matthew 22:37–40 Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ **40** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

The one Solomon is writing about has put money in the place of God. Solomon's conclusion is, “This too is meaningless.”

This word, *meaningless*, is translated *vanity* in other versions of the Bible. In past messages we have seen this word can mean vapor, breath, like a puff of smoke coming from a fire or your breath on a cold winter morning.

Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this verse, “Smoke, nothing but smoke. There's nothing to anything – it's all smoke.”

It can carry the idea of things that are *pointless*.

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Solomon is going to tell us why money makes a terrible substitute for God. I want to remind us that the person described is one who “loves money.” Money is not evil in and of itself. The Apostle Paul reminds us of the dangers of loving money.

Problems with making money my God:

1) I am never satisfied with the amount I have

Ecclesiastes 5:10 “Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.”

John D. Rockefeller, the founder of the Standard Oil Company, the first billionaire of the United States of America and once the richest man on Earth was asked by a reporter, “How much money is enough?” He calmly replied, “Just a little bit more”

The contemporary author Jessie O'Neill has diagnosed this spiritual problem. She calls it “affluenza,” which is “an unhealthy relationship with money” or the pursuit of wealth.

2) Others want a piece

You have friends and relatives that you never knew you had.

Ecclesiastes 5:11 As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?

All you get to do is see them and then they're gone. How many times have you heard of money dividing families or families arguing about inheritances after the death of a loved one?

3) Affects my health

Ecclesiastes 5:12 The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep.

The more stuff one has the more they must worry about. Often, wealth is viewed as power, but it can be a chain around one's neck. We may say, "If I only had a million dollars." Or if I only made a portion of what this famous person makes.

When it causes you to lose sleep is it worth it?

Sleep deficiency is linked to many chronic health problems, including heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, obesity, and depression. Sleep deficiency is also linked to a higher chance of injury in adults, teens, and children. National Institute of Health May 2022

- Reduced alertness.
- Shortened attention span.
- Slower than normal reaction time.
- Poorer judgement.
- Reduced awareness of the environment and situation.
- Reduced decision-making skills.
- Poorer memory.
- Reduced concentration.

4) I can lose it quickly

Ecclesiastes 5:13–14 I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, **14** or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him.

Over the years people have invested in what turned out to be Ponzi schemes. A Ponzi scheme is a fraudulent investment operation that pays returns to investors out of their own money or the money paid by subsequent investors, as opposed to money earned by the individual or organization running the scheme.

Some have lost a great deal on business investments or risky ventures in the stock market. Money is not lasting and has no guaranteed return.

5) I can't take it with me when I die

Ecclesiastes 5:15–16 Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand. **16** This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind?

This sounds quite familiar to what Job said after losing all his possessions and his sons and daughters.

Job 1:20–22 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship **21** and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." **22** In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

The Apostle Paul shares the same thing about money:

1 Timothy 6:7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

"If anything is worse than the addiction money brings," writes Derek Kidner, "it is the emptiness it leaves."

With all these things put together, does it really make any sense to make money your god? What guarantees come with money? When you make money your God, you have a God problem that leads to:

A CONTENTMENT PROBLEM

Lack of contentment is one of our huge problems in society today. Loving money only makes it worse.

Ecclesiastes 5:18–19 Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him—for this is his lot. **19** Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God.

When I recognize God for who He is and give my life to Him first, He brings me contentment. I can trust Him to take care of me as one of His children. I look at my job as a provision from God and all that I own is His which He is allowing me to steward.

Whatever enjoyment he finds is God-centered. Without God, life is meaningless and miserable, especially if we are living for money. But when we know the God of joy, even money can be a blessing. (Philip Graham Ryken)

1 Timothy 6:6–8 But godliness with contentment is great gain. **7** For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. **8** But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

We forget that through God we have everything we need. Everyone here, listening on the radio, watching online has more than most others in the world.

Jesus, speaking in the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in Matthew 6:25-34 commands those listening not to be worried or anxious about their life, what they will eat or drink, or what they will wear. Why don't they or we need to worry? He tells them to look at the birds and observe how God takes care of them. He reminds them about how much more valuable than them (created in the image of God). As far as clothing Jesus talks about the flowers who don't work at all and yet, God has made them beautiful even though they aren't here long. Unbelievers worry about all these things, and our heavenly Father knows what we need. Here is the punch line:

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

“seek:” present, active, imperative

Don't rely on your stuff, rely on God, and seek Him first. Every moment we have here on earth is a gift from God, so why would any one of us want to waste any of our time putting all our energy on collecting stuff, being enamored with money.

Someone wrote this in response to my statement, “Money can't buy me....”

“Money will buy a bed but not sleep; books but not brains; food but not appetite; finery but not beauty; a house but not a home; medicine but not health; luxuries but not culture; amusements but not happiness; religion but not salvation; and a passport to anywhere but heaven.”

When a person loves money, he displays a God problem for money becomes his idol. When this happens, it leads to a contentment problem for we will continue to want more. There will never be enough money or possessions to satisfy and there will always be someone who has more. We fail to see God as the one who provides what we need, the one who never loses track of His children, the one who holds, not just the present, but the future. This manifests itself in:

A GRACE PROBLEM

The salvation message is all about grace. We are ALL sinners under the wrath of God, and rightfully so, because we have sinned against Him. We talked about this last week from Ephesians 2 which begins by telling us we are dead in our sins, with no hope of forgiveness or rescue. Verse 4 provides the great reversal:

Ephesians 2:4–5 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Grace is getting what we don't deserve which is further explained, as it relates to salvation, in verses 8-9.

Ephesians 2:8–9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9** not by works, so that no one can boast.

Not only does my salvation come from God through Jesus Christ, but my job, my possessions, my family, my breath: every single moment.

Ephesians 1:7–8 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace **8** that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

When you and I understand the magnificence of God's grace which relates to much more than our salvation, although it begins there. I don't deserve it and neither do you!

The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope. Tim Keller

This allows you and me to be generous people because we don't own anything. When I'm worrying about how much money and stuff I can collect I don't want to share it with anyone. Followers of Jesus should be the most generous people ever.

Ecclesiastes 5:20 He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

This allows me to:

1) Give generously & sacrificially

Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

Luke 10:33–35 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. **34** He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. **35** The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

2) Give joyfully

2 Corinthians 9:6–8 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. **7** Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. **8** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

"God loves a cheerful giver:" literally means to give hilariously. There is no hesitation here but true joy in sharing the resources God has provided. It isn't for show but because you love God and want to share what He has given to you.

3) Give anonymously

Matthew 6:2–4 "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. **3** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

There is no need for anyone else to know. I don't know what anyone gives in this fellowship, and I don't want to know. That's between you and the Lord! I believe there is direction in giving and I believe we should grow in our giving. I challenge each of us to give a greater percentage each year. You can't outgive the Lord!!!

4) Give with eternity in mind

Matthew 6:19–21 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

A true relationship with God brings contentment which leads to me displaying the same grace God has shown me to others.

SO WHAT???

Wealth Doesn't Bring Contentment

In his autobiography *Just As I Am*, Billy Graham recalls a story demonstrating that true greatness is not defined by wealth or fame, but by character.

Some years ago Ruth and I had a vivid illustration of this on an island in the Caribbean. One of the wealthiest men in the world had asked us to come to his lavish home for lunch. He was 75 years old, and throughout the entire meal he seemed close to tears. "I am the most miserable man in the world," he said. "Out there is my yacht. I can go anywhere I want to. I have my private plane, my helicopters. I have everything I want to make my life happy, yet I am as miserable as hell." We talked to him and prayed with him, trying to point him to Christ, who alone gives lasting meaning to life.

Then we went down the hill to a small cottage where we were staying. That afternoon the pastor of the local Baptist church came to call. He was an Englishman, and he too was a widower who spent most of his time taking care of his two invalid sisters. He was full of enthusiasm and love for Christ and others. "I don't have two pounds to my name," he said with a smile, "but I am the happiest man on this island."

Billy Graham relates how he asked his wife Ruth after they left, "Who do you think is the richer man?" She didn't have to reply because they both already knew the answer.

Source: Billy Graham, Just As I Am (Harper Collins, 1999)

Now remember, I didn't say God is against money but money makes a terrible god! When a person loves money: They have a God problem which leads to a contentment problem which manifests itself in a grace problem.

Money can't buy me...

Money can't buy me anything that is eternal.

*Have I begun a personal relationship with the Lord?

-The One who died on the cross and rose again for my sin

-The One who never loses track of His children

-The One who provides for His children

-The One who, in His grace, has given me everything I have

*How can I demonstrate God's grace through generosity with His money, time, and possessions

*What steps will I take?

*What steps will our family take?

*What steps should this church take?