

What is money? Have you ever thought about it?

It seems to be paper, with fancy printing that only the government is allowed to make.

Now, money isn't even that! It's numbers in computers somewhere. Is it even there?

It used to be, before I was born, that money was gold and silver. But why is that valuable?

Money is only worth what people think it is. It has no intrinsic value.

But money is useful. You can exchange it for a lot of good stuff.

Of course, you cannot buy everything with money. The most valuable things in life you cannot get with money.

When my kids were young, we used to sing a song in the car, "If I had a million dollars, I'd buy your love."

It's a funny song. It's funny because it's a joke. You cannot buy someone's love.

You cannot buy eternal life.

You cannot buy proven character. Money will not make you a better person. It might make you worse.

Why? Because if you love money too much it will ruin you.

Greed robs money of its goodness.

How can you guard yourself from greed in order to enjoy your money?

It is an unexpected question in our society.

People don't ask this question, and then they wonder what went wrong.

In fact, in our society, sometimes you hear things like, "Greed is good; greed makes capitalism work."

Let me make clear what the Bible says in so many ways.

Greed is sin, an offense against God.

Greed shows that a person does not understand the gifts that God gives.

Our text today is all about money and how one uses it.

After all the commands of Ecclesiastes 5:1-7, Solomon is back to his investigation of life.

He has just taken a break from seeing all the vanity (hebel) that is life...

to tell the worshipper of God what he must do.

"Guard your steps when you come into the house of God." = don't be a fool when you worship.

Don't speak when you ought to listen.

And when you make a promise to God, be sure that you keep it.

He has been talking about worship and essential to worship is the bringing of offerings.

Whether it is in your singing, your listening, your speaking, your giving... Fear God (vs. 7)

And now Solomon turns again to look at the world around him and he sees wickedness and injustice.

This is the opposite of the fear of God.

I. The world is full of economic injustice; you cannot fix it. Ecclesiastes 5:8-9

I spent a good part of this week doing research on injustice and unrighteousness in the world.

My goodness! There were a few times that I felt like crying. Once it made me ill.

I decided last night to cut most of it out. You don't need it. You know.

This world is full of injustices of all kinds.

When people on the right or the left protest against injustice, they're right

They are on to something.

There is a serious problem in the world and they see it.

The problem is that no one knows how to fix it. This is often obvious in the protests.

Usually, the solution that people offer is to give their group more money and power. Of course.

Many people see the world in terms of oppressors and oppressed.

This is not a Biblical view of things, but I get it. When you see it, you tend to see more of it.

The rich get richer. Those who have power defraud those who don't.

And then their solution: Make the oppressed the oppressors. It won't work.

Solomon looks out at the world, and he sees that those with wealth and power...

oppress those who have no wealth and power. We see this everywhere.

And Solomon says in response this: “Do not be amazed” = do not be surprised. It is how the world is. Do you know that the Bible shows us this as well, and tells us why.

It is because of human sin and rebellion against God.

There is no other reasonable explanation.

So, do not be amazed, surprised.

And, moreover, you will not fix it.

There have been 6,000+ years of injustice and unrighteousness and it will continue tomorrow.

Solving injustice is not something that we can do.

Now, the Bible does not advocate doing nothing, giving up, or joining the injustice.

No, in this unjust world, you and I are supposed to be lights shining out into the darkness.

But, what about the injustice? Does it win?

I was talking with Nancy not long ago about all the fraud with the COVID money in 2020.

She asked, “So does anyone know where it went?”

I answered, “Some of it. Not most of it.”

She said, “So the thieves just get away with it?”

“Nope.”

The truth is that some of them have gotten caught, and some will get caught, before they die.

And those who escape justice until they die will answer to God. (vs. 8)

So, you might ask, wouldn't it be better to have no government at all?

Nope. (vs. 9)

Right now, in Haiti, they have been experiencing what anarchy is like. Everyone suffers.

So, governments and stability and the making of money... This is all a good thing... to a degree.

II. He who loves money will not be satisfied with money. Ecclesiastes 5:10-12

Now, when you read these verses, you must begin asking the question, “Is this me?”

Are you someone who loves money? And how do you know?

These are essential questions.

Verse 10 is a bit like a proverb, and one which points again to the vanity (hebel) in the world.

In verse 10, Solomon presents the principle that he will unpack in the following verses.

If you love money, it will never be enough.

Some people spend their whole lives proving his point.

Verse 11 points to this obvious principle, obvious once it is pointed out.

When you have more, you spend more. So, does it really help to have more?

Sure, to have enough to pay basic bills is really nice. But how much do you really need?

This is a picture of the wrong view of money, and it is commonplace.

This is so common we take it for granted. Let me illustrate:

If I make more money, I should live in a bigger house.

If I get more, I should drive a nicer car, have nicer clothes, better things.

Really? Why? Does it need to be this way?

Why is it that when I get more, I eat more?

Verse 12 employs a metaphor to show what it is like.

The person who works hard, whether he eats (consumes) little or much, he sleeps well.

Working is good for people. **Ephesians 4:28**

But what of the greedy rich man? What is his sleep like?

Have you ever eaten a huge meal right before bed? (blah)

Our culture wants to depict people as consumers (eaters).

It is the wrong way to view people.

If you love money. If you see your success in financial terms.

If money is what you seek, it will never be enough.

III. Money can actually destroy you.

Ecclesiastes 5:13-17

Consider verse 13. What does this look like?

How many of you here remember Scrooge McDuck? He was the wealthy uncle of Huey, Dewey, and Louie.

Scrooge would sit there in his huge Money Bin counting his money. That is what he loved.

Or the dragon Smaug in the Hobbit, by JRR Tolkien. How did he spend his time?

He just lay there on his vast pile of treasure.

And when someone took just a little cup from his hoard he flew into an angry fury.

Think about the guy described in verses 13-17.

Here is a guy living for money, and he loses it all. You always will.

Verse 15: He was born with nothing (we all are) and he will die with nothing (we all do).

Verse 16: It's so sad. He was just toiling after the wind. No gain.

Verse 17: All his days he lives in misery. Gaining, eating, then losing it all. He cannot stop it.

Matthew 6:19-21 Where is your treasure? How do you know?

Your treasure is where your heart is. It is what you like to think about. It is what you worry about.

How much are you worth? And if you answer that question in monetary terms, you have a problem.

Luke 12:13-21 What a disaster. This man dies on a pile of treasure, like a dragon. And what about his soul?

"What will it profit a man to gain the whole world but forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36)

Are you rich toward God? How do you get rich toward God?

I will tell you one way. Spend your money on others. You don't want to die on a pile of treasure.

Giving, to others, to family, to the church is how one trains one's heart to love God and not money.

Luke 12:29-34 You cannot take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.

What is the antidote for the love of money? How can you and I cure this illness?

Giving. Giving and contentment. **Hebrews 13:5-6** Contentment, trust in the Lord

IV. He who receives good gifts from God should enjoy those gifts. **Ecclesiastes 5:18-20**

Notice, now, in these verses, that eating is not so much consuming, but enjoying. Why?

Because it is now receiving and enjoying the gift of God.

Three times in these three verses we find the word "gift," and the gift comes from God.

Three times in these three verses we find the word "joy" or "enjoy."

This now is the right view of money and wealth. Here it is:

1. I don't have that many days to live.

I'm planning to die at 85. Don't know if I will, but I think that might be a good guess.

This means I have 8,463 days left. Could be a lot less, maybe a little more.

2. Every day is a gift from God, and I get to use that gift to enjoy Him, His giving, bless others.

I need to not waste a day, an hour, doing dumb stuff.

I should enjoy every moment as if the Lord is right next to me, because He is.

3. I get to work. That is a gift. I might as well enjoy it.

Things certainly could be a lot worse. I get to work with great people, and in South Dakota!

4. God gives me money, sometimes in the form of a paycheck. But it is all gift from God.

There are people in the world who work harder than I and get paid less.

My money is a gift from God, and I should think of it as such.

This means that I use what I need to live and enjoy life, and I give away what I can.

Because this increases the enjoyment of God's gift!

Giving is one of the easiest ways to love my brother.

Listen to this secret: Sharing increases the enjoyment, in almost everything.

How many of you have ever cooked a meal? A good meal? Did you sit down to eat it by yourself? Why not?

You could, you know? And then you would have more for yourself. Why not just eat by yourself? (vs. 17)

Because sharing the meal increases the enjoyment.

You will find that it is the same with all God's gifts, especially money. Sharing increases the joy.