

**Ecclesiastes 6: 7-12; “What is Good for Man?” Sermon # 43 in the series –
“Remember Your Creator”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on July 22nd, 2018, in Afternoon Worship Service.**

Since these statements of Solomon which I just read to you are showing us important lessons for us to learn if we would truly be satisfied; let us ask ourselves the question of verse 12 – “For who knows what is good for man in life? I believe that we will find the answer to that question if we will receive Solomon’s three major observations on this subject that are given to us here. We will greatly profit from them if we take them to heart. His 1st Observation is this: A wise man has something which is considerably more valuable than a fool. The 2nd Observation is – Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire. And the 3rd Observation is – That a man cannot contend with God, the One who is mightier than he. Let’s think together about these observations for a few minutes and see if we can see the value of living by solid Biblical principles.

1st Observation – A wise man has something which is considerably more valuable than a fool. (verses 7 and 8a)

“All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied.” “For what more has the wise man than the fool?” Solomon is drawing conclusions about this life which anyone who is a thinking person ought to be able to draw. And yet many people do not get as far as he did. Why? It is because they are not wise. They draw wrong conclusions about what it means to be satisfied with their life. In our last study we saw that it is God who gives a person the power to “eat” of whatever degree of wealth, and riches and honor that God has given to him. (Chapter 6 and Verse 2) To “eat”, in that context, we saw, was the power to take pleasure or satisfaction in what you have been given, and what you have worked hard for in the occupation that you have pursued. It is wise to be satisfied with the goodness of God in His having provide you with the strength and the wisdom to do your work as unto Him, and to be satisfied with it for that reason.

We have seen in past studies that some persons never question why their life is the way that it is. Some people look at their life outwardly, and they do not trace things back to their source and try to find the reasons why they are dissatisfied with their life. And some people never really come to understand that it is the soul of man which truly must be satisfied; beyond the satisfactions of eating and drinking, and the bodily pleasures of this life. The Lord would have you to remember that someday you are going to die. And, at that time, the body that God has given to you will wear out and die. You do not know exactly when, or exactly how, but you will lose the body which God has given you; you will be without a body from the time that you die until the Day of the Resurrection when Christ returns. But I hope that you understand from all the teaching of the word of God, that you will continue on in your conscious existence, even so. And since you will continue on, you must ask yourself this question – What will it be like for me, then? For I will either be in heaven or in hell.

I believe that this text is telling you that you will never be happy at all in the next life, unless you have first learned to be spiritually satisfied by God and the wisdom that He alone can bring to you. And, we can further say that you will not be spiritually satisfied now, unless you have learned this valuable lesson of seeking for wisdom now; the idea that your mind and your heart must meditate upon the truth of God in order to find grace and the Biblical wisdom that you must have to be saved. You must seek for this wisdom and take it in regularly, if you would look forward to being eternally happy. Your soul must be satisfied with who God is now, and what God gives now, on a moment by moment basis, for you to be a truly happy and satisfied person. Solomon said in verse 3, “If a man begets a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with goodness, or indeed he has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better than he....” We should not mistake the main issue of this, our life. It is the eternal satisfaction of our soul. We must ask ourselves whether our soul is satisfied in the Lord. And we

must ask whether we are teaching our children the principles of Biblical wisdom so that they will seek wisdom from God for themselves. Look with me over at Proverbs chapter 4, verses 1-9.

“Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law.” “When I was my father’s son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, He also taught me, and said to me: ‘Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live.’ “Get wisdom!” “Get understanding!” “Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth” “Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you.” “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom.” “And in all your getting, get understanding.” “Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her.” “She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you.” You can see here that wisdom is the finest of companions for your heart and mind; able to give to you every good spiritual thing; recommended to you by a godly father. If you exalt her to the highest place in your thinking, she will promote you. If any person lacks wisdom let them ask, and God will give. There is nothing more valuable or useful, or practical than wisdom. And there is nothing more precious to a person when they discover that this wisdom is principally found in the Scriptures. The Scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation and being with other believers, pastor and people, Christ and the wisdom that is found in Him and conveyed to you by His grace will teach you and lead you on the path of righteousness.

This book of Ecclesiastes is a very valuable book of the Bible. It is designed to show us the vanity of life apart from God. God is, as it were, is portrayed by Solomon as hidden from the view of most people. And so He is. Solomon speaks of God in this book as being generally neglected or forgotten by many people in regard to their ultimate satisfaction in life. And so He is. But you and I need to understand that He is the One who ought not to be neglected or forgotten by any person. If He is; it is to their own detriment; both in this life and in the next. We need to be convinced of this ourselves, and we need to convince others if we can. The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. It is man’s experience of life that is focused upon in this book, and because most men generally focus upon themselves and their selfish experience apart from God Himself, they find themselves terribly sad and frustrated in this life, not to mention what will happen to them in the end; the loss of their eternal soul. And the reason for this is spiritual blindness. Who is the man who knows what is good for man in life, it says in verse 12? Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun? No man can. But let us take heart. God can reveal enough to us about this life and the next, that our soul will be satisfied, and we will be happy because of Him. God has revealed these things to us in His Word, and that is what our faith rests upon.

The 2nd Observation is this – If you would be satisfied with your life – Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire. (verses 8b-9)

“What does the poor man have who knows how to walk before the living?” “Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire.” “This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.” Here we see that the wise man is a man who labors. And he labors for “his mouth”, it says. He labors in order to feed himself and his family, in order to care for the needs of all his family. But if he is not satisfied in partaking of those things which his labors have brought to him; if he is always greedy for more, and covetously hoarding what he has, Solomon is asking, “What more has the wise man than the fool?” The fool can look just as good outwardly as the wise man if he has riches as well. He may have inherited his money and not have worked hard for it at all. He may actually be satisfied with those riches and be able to “eat from them” for a time, if he does not fall into covetousness. He may actually come to seem as though he is better off than the wise man.

This continues what I have already explained to you. But now in verse 8b we find that Solomon introduces the poor man who “knows how to walk before the living.” He is poor, but he is wise. He works hard, and he is wise in the way that he lives, but since he doesn’t have much in the way of riches, he cannot accomplish or build much with his life materially. He dreams about the things that he could do and accomplish, but he hasn’t the means to be able to accomplish what he desires.

“Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire.” Better to be satisfied with what you have presently than to be always wandering in your desire for more; whether rich or poor. This is a real problem; always wanting more than what you presently have. And it can become a sinful problem which can easily affect your whole attitude toward life; whether you are rich or poor. And so there is no earthly advantage to either being rich or poor, unless there is contentment. Discontent breeds wandering desire.

But on the other hand, 1st Timothy 6: 6-8 says, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” But listen to Proverbs 19: 1. “Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one who is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.” A person can do very well in the areas of contentment and satisfaction if he knows that he is walking honestly and uprightly in the sight of God and men. The person who is boasting of his riches and his abilities, and is using cleverness or perversity of speech; a person who works to obtain more and more money by that means, will never ultimately be able to find true and lasting contentment and satisfaction in his life. God will not give it to him. It is always better to be poor and a man of integrity, than to compromise good moral and Biblical principles to become rich.

Turn with me to Proverbs Chapter 30, verses 7-9 and we will find Agur’s resolution to this predicament. “Two things I request of You.” (God) “(Deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches – Feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say ‘Who is the Lord?’ “Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.” Agur knew that God was able to answer this prayer and not give him so much that he would be “full and deny the Lord”, and yet He would give him just enough that he would not feel that he needed to steal from others because he was so needy. God is able to give exactly what is right. You say, “How is this possible?”

Well turn with me to Philippians Chapter 4, and verse 10 and you will see how the Apostle Paul did it. “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.” “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound.” “Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” That is how Paul did it. He was able to be content in everything, and to be in either rich or poor circumstances financially, because Christ strengthened him to be able to do both at the time in which it was required. So we must ask ourselves if this is true of us as well? Listen to Philippians 4: 19 as well. “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Have you proven this to be true dear friend?

His 3rd Observation is this – That a man cannot contend with God, the One who is mightier than he. (verses 10-12)

“Whatever one is, he has been named already, for it is known that he is man; and he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he.” “Since there are many things that increase vanity, how is man the better?” “For who knows what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he passes (“he spendeth”, KJV) like a shadow?” “Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun?” Whatever you and I are; we have been named already. God, in other words, has ordained what you are, and what you are to be, and what you will become in the annals of history, by His eternal decree. You need to remember that you are simply a man; you are simply a woman. This ought to humble your pride if you have any, in the matter of your own greatness, or your leaving a lasting impression upon this world. Turn with me to Psalm 75 and you will see this. “We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks!” “For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near.” “When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly.” “The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved; I set up its pillars firmly.” “Selah.” “I said to the boastful, do not deal boastfully.” “And to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up the horn.’ “Do not lift up your horn on high; do not speak with a

stiff neck.” “For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south.” “But God is the Judge; He puts down one, and exalts another.”

It is amazing, is it not, how much time men spend, trying to exalt themselves and their works, when really what they ought to be doing is declaring God’s wondrous works. The exaltation of any man comes from God. Some men He exalts in order that He might demonstrate His power in them, through them, and over them. And some men He exalts because they have humbled themselves to learn to do His will. This is where men have to choose. Will they see themselves as mere men, or will they exalt themselves. Will they submit to God or will they contend with God. Some men contend with God over their position now in this life, and their position in eternity, as though they could overthrow His Holy and wise Counsel, and His giving salvation to His Elect. But turn with me to Romans Chapter 9 and you will see the futility of this. Verse 15 – “For God says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’” “So then it is not of him who wills or him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.” “For the Scripture says, to the Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.’”

You see, my friends, it was God who raised Pharaoh up. But all the while Pharaoh was fighting and contending with God so that his own works might be established; that his own unrighteous will would be established, and not God’s righteous will. Verse 18 says however – “Therefore He has mercy on whom He will, and whom He wills He hardens.” So you see, God is mightier than we are in all things, not just some things. He is the One who knows what is good for man in this life, and what will happen to him after this life. Turn with me over to Isaiah 46 and you will see just how much we need to trust in our God who orders all things for us. Verse 3 – “Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been upheld by Me from birth, who have been carried from the womb: Even to your old age, I am He, and even to the gray hairs I will carry you!” “I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”

Then after reproving those who made idols and tried to pray to them, He says in verse 8, “Remember this, and show yourselves men; recall to mind O you transgressors, remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.’” This is the answer to the question of our text – “For who knows what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow?” “Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun? God will tell him what is good, and God will tell him what will happen to him later, if he will only read and believe the Scriptures. And God will save the person who will trust in the Lord Jesus Christ His Son. Listen to Isaiah 46: 12 and following – “Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted, who are far from righteousness: I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off; My salvation shall not linger, and I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel My glory.” Who is God’s righteousness but the Lord Jesus Christ? And so, I hope that you can see that God has placed the eternal salvation of all His elect, in relation to the gospel which He has given to His Church to preach. And His Church is the glory of Him who fills all-in-all. So let no man pursue the vanities of the idols of the nations, or embrace anything of their false religions. Let us submit to the righteousness of God in giving us Jesus, and we will learn to walk before Him as wise men.