

Seek Satisfaction

July 21, 2013 ~ Ecclesiastes 5.8 – 6.9

Overview of Progress

- ❖ First 2 messages presented opposing worldviews (Ecc 1 to 3)
 - ✧ Vain Repetition from Ecc 1.1 to 2.23
 - ✧ Purpose & Meaning from Ecc 2.24 to 3.22
- ❖ Next 2 messages gave perspectives on relationships (Ecc 4 to 5.7)
 - ✧ Value People in Ecc 4
 - ✧ Revere God in Ecc 5.1-7
- ❖ Today's message appears to center on man
 - ✧ But in reality it centers upon God – in the structure and content of text
 - ✧ Our title reflects an ultimate goal of man ~ the lesson covers how to do it

Structure of Text

- ❖ Normally I don't address technical aspects of a text when preaching on it
 - ✧ 1) Not everyone's interested, 2) it's off topic, and 3) I'm weak in it
 - ✧ But sometimes technical aspects present a beautiful backdrop to content
- ❖ Many have wrestled with the study of Ecclesiastes over the centuries
 - ✧ An "Aha!" moment came in 1989 in an article by Daniel Fredericks
 - ✧ "Chiasm and Parallel Structure in Qoheleth 5.10 – 6.9" ('97 - later 5.8)

Chiasm of Ecclesiastes 5.8 – 6.9

- ❖ **People who cannot be satisfied (5.8-12)**
 - ✧ **People who don't enjoy life (5.13-17)**
 - ◆ **What is good? (5.18-19)**
 - **Enjoy your life (5.20)**
 - ◆ **What is bad? (6.1-2)**
 - ✧ **People who don't enjoy life (6.3-6)**
- ❖ **People who cannot be satisfied (6.7-9)**

Main Points of the Chiasm

1. The pursuit of wealth does not satisfy
2. Dissatisfied people do not enjoy life
3. It is good and fitting (*and possible*) to enjoy life

Xition: Let's walk through texts covering these 3 points . . .

People Who Cannot be Satisfied (part 1) ~ (5.8-12)

- ❖ 5.8 ~ People are rightfully upset by oppression and injustice (3rd ref)
 - ✧ In 3.16 as an example of God's ultimate judgment
 - ✧ In 4.1 as an example of man's inhumanity to man
 - ✧ Here we're not to marvel at oppression & injustice (*don't question God b/of it*)
- ❖ 5.9 ~ Some oppression is to be expected (*king incentivized*)
- ❖ 5.10 ~ More money and property is never enough
 - ✧ !!!: Salaries ~ Russia raised politicians salaries to fight corruption
- ❖ 5.11 ~ Creation of wealth leads to consumption of wealth (good & evil)
 - ✧ **Read Pr 23.4-5** ~ "Do not overwork .. like an eagle towards heaven."
- ❖ 5.12 ~ Lack of property can be a blessing | But role reversal can be true

People Who Cannot be Satisfied (part 2) ~ (6.7-9)

- ❖ 6.7 ~ "mouth" can be all material goods | soul remains empty & hungry
- ❖ 6.8 ~ Two rhetorical questions – 2nd difficult to interpret
 - ✧ What fundamentally distinguishes people isn't stuff / but attitude
- ❖ 6.9 ~ Another "better than" proverb (4.3, 6, 9, 13; 5.5; 6.3)
 - ✧ Does "grasping for the wind" pertain only to "wandering of desire" or both?
 - ✧ Both ~ Neither is of real ultimate value

People Who Don't Enjoy Life (part 1) ~ (5.13-17)

- ❖ 5.13 ~ An evil . . . "riches kept for their owner to his hurt"
 - ✧ hurt = relational – emotional – physical – spiritual
- ❖ 5.14 ~ The riches perish and the family is devastated | lost their identity
- ❖ 5.15 ~ Everyone departs the earth without possessions | But rich more bitter
- ❖ 5.16 ~ This is a "severe evil" in the opinion of the materialist
 - ✧ This is "he who has labored for the wind"
- ❖ 5.17 ~ Again "eats" is a euphemism for all activities in life
 - ✧ Yet he also "has much sorrow and sickness and anger"
 - ✧ People who fall from glory (*wealthy, famous*) often bitter & inconsolable
 - ◇ They dwell in the past – despair in the present – have no hope for future
 - 65% injuries / 25% \$ issues < 1 year / 50% of NFL divorces occur < 1 year
 - 78% unemployed, bankrupt or divorced < 2 years / suicide 6x avg
 - ✧ A great beneficial side-effect embracing God's sovereignty – "no regrets"

Xition: Let's cover remainder of not enjoying life starting in chapter 6 . . .

People Who Don't Enjoy Life (part 2) ~ (6.1-6)

- ❖ 6.1-2 ~ A common evil introduced | A stranger benefits from goods of another
- ❖ 6.3-6 ~ Many children and long life are no guaranty of enjoyment
 - ✧ Historically both were perceived as blessings and imply fulfillment
 - ✧ But neither is always evidence of blessing or received as blessing
 - ✧ We see another “better than” proverb | More like a “worse than”
 - ◇ “Stillborn child” better than “soul not satisfied with goodness” or “no burial”
 - ◇ “No burial” is synonymous with “not loved” or “not respected”

Enjoy Life ~ Ecc 5.18-20

- ❖ 5.18 ~ It is “good and fitting” (right and proper) for one to enjoy life
 - ✧ This may seem like a no-brainer but . . . guilt manipulators abound
 - ◇ Many “on the left” would say we do not deserve joy as long as:
 1. Americans foul the roads with gas-guzzling SUVs
 2. Westerners consume more than their fair-share of the earth’s resources
 3. Global warming places survival of the planet in jeopardy
 4. Man plagues the earth through overpopulation
 5. Criminal trials end with politically incorrect verdicts
 - ◇ Many “on the right” would say we do not deserve joy as long as:
 1. The government runs amok trampling down our inalienable rights
 2. Liberals in Washington remain fiscally and morally out of control
 3. We suffer the plague of human abortion
 4. We do not get this or that politician elected or kicked out
 5. We do not get another conservative supreme court justice
 - ✧ Good God-honoring issues are worth fighting for . . .
 - ◇ But, if we predicate our joy in life on attaining them, they are idols to us
 - Basing our joy on having or attaining anything material is idolatry
 - ✧ “If you have little or no joy in your life then you have idols to destroy”
 - ◇ These idols separate you from God and His blessings in your life . . .
 - ◇ Idols can be good things – good goals – good desires . . .
 - ◇ But if they separate you from God’s joy – they must be destroyed
- ❖ 5.19 ~ Even enjoyment of riches and wealth is good (“gift of God”)
 - ✧ **Pro 10.22** ~ “The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.”
 - ✧
 - ✧

- ❖ 5.20 ~ “For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life”
 - ✧ Some “dwelling” is natural and expected ~ That’s why we take/preserve pictures
 - ✧ But some obsess about the past ~ check out of the present ~ do not hope in future
- ❖ 5.20 ~ “because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart”
 - ✧ “What is the joy of your heart?”
 - ◇ What gives you joy on earth may be different than me..
 - ◇ But God knows us and knows exactly what will make us joyful and content

The Lord Gives . . .

1. 5.18 ~ life / length of days ~ “all the days of his life which God gives him”
 2. 5.19 ~ riches and wealth ~ “God has given him riches and wealth”
 3. 5.19 ~ enjoyment of it ~ “and given him power to eat of it”
 4. 5.19 ~ contentment with lot in life ~ “to receive his heritage”
 5. 5.19 ~ rejoice in labor ~ “and rejoice in his labor”
- ❖ 5.19 ~ “**this is the gift of God**”

The Lord Withholds . . .

- ❖ 6.2 ~ riches and wealth ~ “God has given riches and wealth & honor”
 - ✧ More even than in that above . . .
- ❖ 6.2 ~ he lacks nothing ~ “so that he lacks nothing for himself of all he desires”
- ❖ 6.2 ~ **Yet** God withholds enjoyment ~ “God does not give him power to eat of it”
- ❖ Heritage is not mentioned in this section
 - ✧ Even though the man has 100 children and lives 2,000 years
- ❖ Heritage is not only about length of days and number of children
 - ✧ It is instead a deep sense of contentment
 - ✧ Paul proclaimed his heritage in **2 Tim 4.6-8**
- ❖ God wants you to live life joyfully – not generally – but daily
 - ✧ Don’t predicate your joy on some earthly achievement ~ that is idolatry
 - ✧ Seek satisfaction in life ~ but know it is God’s to give or withhold

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,

And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

To God our Savior, who alone is wise,

Be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.

Amen *pause* Go in peace . . .