

“Mastering Wealth, Not Being Mastered by It”

Ecclesiastes 5:10-20

Barry Noll

5:10 He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. 11 When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? 12 Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.

13 There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, 14 and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. 15 As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. 16 This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind? 17 Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.

18 Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. 19 Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. 20 For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

For Further Reflection:

1. Why do you and/or others believe that wealth and prosperity will bring ultimate joy and happiness in this world? What are the reasons that Solomon says gaining wealth in this life is ultimately unsatisfying (vv. 10-12)?
2. What tragedies befall the rich under the sun according to Solomon (vv. 13-17; Job 1:21; Ps. 127:2)? How does the pursuit of earthly treasure as the be all end all produce worry and anxiety (Matt. 6:19, 24-34)?
3. What is the difference between greed and contentment (Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:6, 8; Heb. 13:5)? What does Solomon say is the key to contentment (vv. 18-20; Ps. 103:1-5; Phil. 4:19)?
4. How is the dishonest manager a model of stewardship with your wealth in this life for the next (Lk. 16:9; Matt. 6:20)? What is one area of your finances and possessions that you are asking God to help you to be a more faithful steward (Lk. 16:11-12)?
5. Why does Jesus say, “You cannot serve God and money” (Lk. 16:13; Matt. 6:24)? How does the expense that Jesus goes to save you free you from slavery to money and all other masters (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-8; Matt. 20:28)?