

The Love of Money - Ecclesiastes 5 – (22 March 15)

So we are right now in the book of Ecclesiastes. If you have your Bibles, you can turn it with me to Ecclesiastes and chapter 5, and we will be looking at verses 10 onwards, and I hope this will be a blessing to you.

The book of Ecclesiastes really opens up a theme of exploring life under the sun. Solomon, the author, King Solomon himself, he has a proposition and that is this: he believes that there is no real meaning and satisfaction in life under the sun. In other words, without God, there is no real lasting meaning and satisfaction that can be found in this world today.

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Let me begin with a little illustration. There's a man who is dying and he wanted to have this wish fulfilled after he dies and that is this. He gathered his 3 friends and told them that he is going to give each one of them \$100,000; that's all he has. And he says: "When I die, when I lie in the coffin, my wish is that I could bring the money together with me. So, would each of you be so kind as to put that hundred (should be hundred thousand) dollars back in the coffin after I die?" And so he died.

And the first man, together with his friends, he said to them: "Our friend wanted us to put \$100,000 into the coffin, but I saw that there were many needy children in the orphanage. So I took liberty to take \$60,000 out and gave it to the orphanage." The second man says: "That's strange because I did almost the same thing. I saw people sick in the hospital and I took \$70,000 out from his \$100,000 and gave it to the hospital." The 3rd man then became very upset. "How could you do something like this? We had a promise to honour, you could not do this to our friend. You know what, I kept my promise. I gave him \$100,000 in his coffin. I wrote him a cheque." Well, that man could never cash the cheque; he would pocket the \$100,000. Smart man, isn't it.

But money is so important to us today, people living in this world. There's something about money and we're going to talk today about the love of money. Solomon is going to talk about money here and how this is also, according to his proposition, something that will never satisfy the human soul. He begins and I start right off in verse 10 where he says, he who loves money will not be satisfied with money. This statement is very hard to believe, very hard to believe, very hard for Singaporeans to believe.

He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. (Ecc 5:10 ESV)

I want to emphasize Solomon is not saying that money is useless. He is not saying that money is wicked or evil, no. But he's saying that if you love money as the means, as the source of joy and lasting satisfaction, you will come away very disappointed because it is vanity, it is empty, it is like catching the wind. And this is not unique to Solomon. Many people have been through this journey and come back and told us it is indeed catching the wind. The Romans have a proverb that says: "Money is like sea water. The more you drink, the thirstier you get".

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Henry Ford, the one who gives us Ford Motors today, used to work as a mechanic, rose the ranks to become one of the richest man in America and he says: "I was happier when I was doing a mechanic's job."

Madonna, someone more modern today, she said likewise: "Take it from me... fame and fortune are not what they're cracked up to be." So, Madonna, Henry Ford, the Romans, Solomon, they all say this.

Likewise, John D Rockefeller: "I have made many millions, but they have brought me no happiness." In fact, when someone asked him how much money he wanted, how much more money he wanted, he would always answer, "Just a little bit more." Rockefeller was a very rich fellow, okay. He had \$1 billion in his time during those days, which is a lot of money and he would still say I need just a little bit more to be happy.

Solomon tells us, tells John, tells Madonna, you are right, we would never be satisfied with money. And as the preacher, he gathers us and he tells us, he who loves money will not be satisfied with money (Ecc 5:10). Remember: Solomon is someone who has been all the way to the end, he's been right there. For us, we always feel maybe the next stage of life, maybe the next million dollars will make me happier. Solomon says, I've gone through all that, I've gone to the very end of the pursuit of wealth, I've reached there, I've gone to it. Take it from me, there is nothing there that satisfies you. So hard to believe because we always think, if I am there, it will be different. Solomon says, I've already been there and I tell you, it is vanity.

He goes on to say:

When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? (Ecc 5:11 ESV)

So he gives a very simple reasoning. You think that more money gives you more satisfaction. He tells you more money gives you more parasites, more people will come to you and say: “Eh, friend, can lend me some money or not?” And you’ll suddenly discover when you strike it rich, you have a lot of long-lost relatives. They all turn up at the door. Wah, uncle, auntie, whatever, they will come to you, your friends will come to you and there’ll be people you never knew were your friends, would now suddenly become your friends.

When goods increase, they increase who eat them (Ecc 5:11) – not only for people that you know, but even for people who are working under you. When you have more money, do you realize you need more to maintain that money? You need to pay for bodyguards, security officers, managers, fund distributors. You need all these people, you need to feed them. When more money comes, you don't get it for satisfaction; you support more people, more burdens coming. And he says, what’s the point, what’s the advantage? He has to have so many servants, and that’s where all the money goes.

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He goes on to say:

Sweet is the sleep of a labourer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.(Ecc 5:12 ESV)

Now you have more money you buy more things. So what do you do? You stuff yourself, you stuff yourself with the enjoyment, you stuff yourself with the good solid rich food of this world, but he says it's not necessarily better. It’s better that you work hard and sleep well, rather than you don’t work and you eat a lot. That’s why I hate buffets, such a dilemma. You don’t eat you feel like, you waste the money but once you eat it, you regret it for several hours and maybe for several days as the bulge remains.

And Solomon says, the full stomach of the rich does not actually help him sleep (Ecc 5:12). A lot of rich people can't sleep. They can't, they can't buy sleep. They are so engorged, they are so worried, they are so burdened with so many things, they can't really sleep. Is that really better? Solomon says, no. It's better to sleep sweetly even if you eat little (Ecc 5:12). So he says this is a grievous evil. This is what he has observed. This is what we don't believe, but this is what he experiences, what he

observes that I've seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his own hurt.

There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owners to his hurt, (Ecc 5:13 ESV)

There is a story told of a Frenchman, 62-year-old Frenchman who went to the emergency department one day with severe abdominal pains. They did an x-ray and saw a massive mass in his stomach. It has, it is so heavy it drags the stomach down to between his hips. I mean it is like, stomach is supposed to be higher up, now it sinks down, it's so weighed down. The doctors eventually did a laparotomy, opened up his tummy, opened his abdomen to check what's inside the stomach and they found a huge mass. They thought it might be a huge cancerous growth, but lo and behold, it's not anything cancerous. It is a mass of 350 coins. This man has a strange medical condition that makes him eat money. Well, this man did not survive the operation. The stomach was so distended, the abdomen was so distended that he died after the operation. They say, what a strange man, what a strange medical condition to eat money thinking you'd be satisfied with it.

But aren't we all stricken with this strange spiritual disease that believes that the more money I have, the more money I consume, I enjoy, I accumulate, the happier I will be, not knowing it weighs me down and this riches were kept by his owner to his own hurt? We're not very different from the Frenchman. We have ruined ourselves with the blind pursuit of wealth for the sake of finding satisfaction. So Solomon reasons: there is no satisfaction with wealth and money as a source of meaning for life, but he also goes on to say, not only is there no satisfaction, there is no security.

He says in verse 14:

And those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. (Ecc 5:14 ESV)

So Solomon here is saying money can be lost, just with a bad venture. Oh, you thought you had millions and billions to pat yourself, to give yourself security. All it takes: one bad venture, one bad stock crash, one bad economic crisis, one disaster, one catastrophe. All it takes is one and it can be all lost. You thought as a father, you laid up for your son, but just with that one bad venture, you have nothing left for your children. So if you want to place your hope and your entire life upon money, it is not secure.

In fact, you may say, I don't believe it. I diversify my risks, I've many portfolios, I am well provided for. Then, Solomon tells you, alright, what about death? No matter how you diversify, you cannot diversify the fact that you lose all this material wealth when you die. He says this is the reasoning: when you came, as he came from his mother's womb, he shall go again. In what sense? Because he came naked, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. Naked I came and naked I shall return, in the words of Job.

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. (Ecc 5:15 ESV)

And he says:

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? (Ecc 5:16 ESV)

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Remember the man who died wanting \$300,000 in his coffin? He's not going to bring a single cent. Even if all his friends were true to their promise and put every single cent into the coffin, he cannot bring a single cent with him. You can't bring money with you, no matter how rich you were. Even if you have 1000 billion dollars, you can't bring a single cent with you. Solomon says this is a grievous toil. How silly we can be, when we always somehow just are blinded to the reality we can't bring it, and we still want to accumulate. In fact, someone said this: the only reason why in the coffin you are dressed up is because someone put the dress on you. You can't even dress yourself, you can't bring a single clothing, someone's got to put it on you.

Jesus gave a story. Jesus said there was this man who had great harvest from his crops. He didn't know what to do and so he thought to himself: all right, this is what life is all about. I am going to build a bigger barn so that I can store more grain laid out for my many years to come, and I can now kick back, relax, eat, drink and be merry. What did Jesus say about this man? Wah, you are so smart, man; you really know how to prepare for the future. You're so capable, you're so wise in your life. Did Jesus say that? Jesus said the complete opposite.

What we think is wise in Singapore: wah, that man very wise, rich man, successful, big career, wonderful salary, great company; what we esteem as greatness in Jesus' eyes sometimes is great folly, thou fool. This night, your life will be required of you and Jesus says, this is the folly of it: that he can be rich in everything in this world,

but he's not rich towards God. He has built his life in the wrong place. It's all going to go. He's a fool.

Solomon tells us the pursuit of wealth is not satisfying. It is also not secure, doesn't work. Not only that, he reasons with us it is not sound as well, meaning it's not going to bring you welfare, it's going to hurt you, because he says in verse 17:

Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.

(Ecc 5:17 ESV)

I think this is a picture of Scrooge Ebenezer, that miserly guy who worked his way to the top, trampled on other people and he is now left all alone. So he eats in the dark, nobody with him, why bother? He eats in the dark, so socially he is isolated, psychologically he is frustrated, physically he is sick. I mean he has diabetes, hypertension, cancer, stress, migraine, ulcer, everything you have about stress. He has it all because he is rich, because he wants riches to be his source of meaning, and he is emotionally upset. I mean in every way possible, he has just ruined his life.

John D. Rockefeller was someone like that. At the age of 53, he was so worried, he was so anxious about life that he lost lots of weight. He ate only crackers and milk. I mean he's a rich man. He can eat abalone and bird's nest, if he's a Chinese, every day. But he eats only crackers, he... no appetite, too stressed, too worried, all kinds of medical problems, 53 years old. How much was he earning then? \$1 million a day. We will be lucky if we earn \$1 million in our life. He has it in one day, but is he happy? No, all his days, he eats with darkness and vexation and sickness and anger (Ecc 5:17).

So, the reasoning of Solomon is a very compelling one, but it's not easy for us to believe it. He says money is not satisfying, truly not satisfying. He says money is not secure. He says money is not sound, and this is what many people have discovered as well. Solomon is not alone, as I've mentioned.

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You might have heard of this name Philip Ng, heard of it? You got to know it. Yes, he's one of the richest men in Singapore, alright. He and his brother, Robert, are the sons of the late Ng Teng Fong. And so Philip is the CEO of FEO, Far East Organization. He is a very interesting man. I'm told he's a believer, a fervent follower of Jesus. In fact, after the first service, someone told me that he is a classmate of his, and his life has changed and he knows Jesus. And I'm told also that when he gathers

his associates, his company, his various agents in talks, you would have expected him to give a forecast of the property market and the economy, and so on, but he doesn't. Usually, he uses it to be a Gospel opportunity. He preaches the Bible to people who are gathered and there is this statement that he made that I thought was interesting. He said this:

“The ironic thing about possession is that you don't possess the possessions, the possessions possess you.” - Philip Ng

We all start with life and career thinking, when I have this money, it's mine. You did not realize the possessions are looking and say, you are mine; the possessions possess us. We thought we would use the money but now we are enslaved by the money. That is the route many people have taken, and that is the way many Christians have been shipwrecked in their faith. They that desire to be rich pierce themselves with many sorrows, the Bible says. Why? Because possessions possess you, if you're not careful.

So the conclusion we may make then is: Pastor, you tell us all this, does it mean that I now have to give up all my money, I stop working, and I say money is evil, money is bad, give it all to the church? Is that what you're saying? No, no, no, don't get me wrong, that's not what God has to say. I don't think money is evil. Get this clear: I don't think money is evil. I don't think stuff is bad. I don't think things are bad, but you got to be very careful, because it has a tendency to enslave you. But in and of itself, it's not bad.

And so the Bible is not saying, ah you who are rich, you have to give away everything because every dollar and cent is a wicked thing. No, that's not the point. You're throwing the baby together with the bath water, and that's not right. So we can come to an extreme, we can be someone who is so enamelled and enslaved by riches or we can be someone who says, ah, evil, it's bad. But that's extreme and that's not what Solomon says.

What does Solomon say, therefore? What is the balanced attitude to riches, to wealth, which God has already given you today? Solomon actually says, and this may shock some of us. He says:

Behold, what I've 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. (Ecc 5:18 ESV)

Huh, Solomon actually says go enjoy life, go eat, go drink, go find enjoyment. Woo, are you serious, Solomon? Yeah, because this is what God has given him, for this is his lot. Verse 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.

(Ecc 5:19 ESV)

Wow, this is strange, we say. I thought Christians are supposed to give up his life for Jesus and not live for the things of this world. Solomon seems to bring us to a balanced view. Like I mentioned, there is an extreme that is very dangerous: we love the money so much that we forget God. But there's another extreme that says we must not enjoy anything in this world, only God. Solomon says no, that's somewhere in the middle, where you can enjoy the things of this world, and it does not detract you from the worship and the service towards God.

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Think about it with me. Solomon here is saying, work is a good thing. God gives you the ability to work, to toil. There is a thinking in some Christians today that says, all work is bad. No, no, no, work is not bad. Work is something that God gives to Adam and Eve before they went into sin. So it is a good thing. God said everything that was made then is good, is very good. So work, in and of itself is a good thing. Don't throw out work, don't say Pastor, you say wealth is no good so I don't want to work. No, no, work is a good thing. Money and wealth is also not necessarily a bad thing. It's the love of money that is the root of all evil, but money itself is not a bad thing.

The Bible is not anti-material. The Bible is not against us having stuff like a shirt, like utensils, like a toilet. It's not against you having these things. The Bible is also not against enjoyment. Now, this is where it cuts because we think Christians should only suffer. No, I see in the Bible, God allows us and wants us to enjoy. 1 Timothy 6:16 (should be 6:17): He has given us, richly, all things to enjoy.

There is pleasure available for us in this world – pleasure in food. I'm so thankful for food, aren't you? I mean, you're not? Then I think, okay la, everyday you eat white rice and drink plain water. Now I'm so thankful for food. In fact I think for Christians, one of the great joy is food. Every time we meet, is always food because you can't go disco, you can't go whatever, right? So it's always food, so thank God for food.

Don't you thank God for music? I mean if God doesn't give you music, everything is monotone, super boring. But God gave us music, sounds that really captures our emotions and our hearts. God gives us colours. God gives us friendship. God gives us this world to find pleasure in, and there is nothing wrong when done in the right context. This is the gift of God. So I'm saying, to think that Christian living is all about wealth is absolutely wrong. To think that Christian living is all about suffering is also not balanced. Solomon gives us a balance.

There's this book, recent I think, called "Becoming Worldly Saints". Very strange title – "worldly saints". I can imagine, I can understand if it's called "Becoming Holy Saints". Ah, we all, we can appreciate that; or "Becoming Worldly Unbelievers", we can understand that. But you put worldly saints together, weird, you know? But this picture tells you something. This picture is about someone enjoying life in the beach, under the sun – cool deal. But the glasses reflect the image of the cross. Worldly saints, does it really work?

Before I go into sharing what the author Michael Wittmer has to say, I just want to emphasize that his definition of worldly is not the same definition of what we are used to. Our definition of worldly is someone who loves the world so much he neglects God. That's worldly, that's loving the world. His definition of worldly is just a catchy title. His definition of worldly is to enjoy the world, in the context that God has given. In other words, this is to enjoy the blessings God has placed in this world without idolizing the things in this world. So that's his idea of worldly: living in it, enjoying it, but not replacing God with it.

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So Michael Wittmer says this:

““Worldly Saints” may seem like an oxymoron, but it's the perfect title for what God calls Christians to be. We must be worldly – enjoying creation, loving friends and family, and excelling in our cultural tasks. All things being equal, Christians should make the best humans.

We also must be saints – loving God, fighting sin and making disciples of all nations. Being a saint is more important than being worldly, but we can't have one without the other.”

“Worldly Saints” may seem like an oxymoron – a paradox, a contradiction, but it's the perfect title for what God calls Christians to be. We must be worldly – no, not loving the world as if they are our supreme source of joy, but in a sense, we must live

in the world, enjoying creation, loving friends and family, and excelling in all our cultural tasks. All things being equal, Christians should make the best humans. We also must be saints – loving God, fighting sin and making disciples of all nations. Being a saint is more important than enjoying creation, and so on and so forth, but we can't have one without the other.

So this still may be a bit complex for us, because this may be the first time you read this. So let's ask him some more, “What do you mean, Michael?”

He goes on to explain:

“There are 2 ways to ruin our relationship with the Giver... The 1st is to ignore him and focus entirely on his gifts... The 2nd way is to ignore the gift and focus entirely on the Giver. If the 1st temptation ignores the God who gives, the 2nd refuses to let him be the God who gives.”

So we say, I only want you God, I don't want what you give me. Something wrong. And he (Wittmer) says:

“This latter (2nd) temptation is a subtler form of idolatry. It's idolatry because we are acting as if we know better than God, who gives us “every good and perfect gift” to enjoy..... And it's subtle because it seems exceedingly pious.....”

The 2nd temptation is a subtler form of idolatry. You say why? It's idolatry because we are acting as if we know better than God, who gives us every good and perfect gift to enjoy. So we despise what God gives. We despise food. We despise the pleasure of music. We despise the pleasure of friendship and companionship. We say we don't need these, we only want you God. You don't know, God, I don't need all these things.

It's idolatry, thinking you know better, but this idolatry is also subtle because it seems so pious. Wah, so holy. “Si da jie kong” (Chinese phrase in Buddhism that means the temporal world is illusory, all physical existence is a vanity); with no “qi qing liu yu” (seven emotions and six sensory pleasures literally – referring to various human emotions and desires). Wah, everything also no need, just need God – looks so pious, but it's subtle idolatry.

So, his (Wittmer's) view is that:

“We must see God's gifts of creation as windows into his glory and opportunities to praise him. But we must also find pleasure in them.....”

We must thank God for our daily bread, but it's okay to focus on the flavors of our sandwich while we're eating it. We're even allowed to score a touchdown or hit a home run without pausing to pound our chest and point to heaven.

Our love for Jesus and his world is not a zero sum game. Attention given to creation is not stolen from its Creator. The more we enjoy God's gifts for their own sake, the more we can appreciate him. And thank him for, and love him with. Where will you enjoy God's creation today? Thank God for the privilege of being human and of being here. Then go have some fun."

"We must see God's gifts of creation as windows into his glory." Now don't just enjoy the things and forget God. Enjoy those things and let them be windows into how wonderful, how magnificent, how generous, how wise your father has provided for you. I want my sons to enjoy the gifts I give him. In fact, I am very sad when I give him something and he doesn't enjoy it, he throws it aside. I buy him something, he throws it aside. I buy him something and he says, Papa, I don't need this. Papa, I don't need that. I just want you. Very touching la, but after a while, I find him weird la, this son. Something wrong with him, he's weird. So when we enjoy the gifts of God, we, we let them be windows to see his magnificence, his generosity and we can find pleasure in the things he gives us. There's nothing wrong with that.

So "we must thank God for our daily bread", we must thank God for the food we eat, the music we hear; "but it's also okay to focus on the flavors of our sandwich while we're eating it." Don't feel guilty that it tastes so nice. Wah, so nice, I so guilty, I must only love God. Nobody does that. But if your theology is not wired properly, you may have this false guilt and really, idolatry that may arise within your heart.

So while "we're even allowed to score a touchdown or hit a home run without pausing to pound our chest and point to heaven, our love for Jesus and his world is not a zero sum game. Attention given to creation is not stolen from its Creator." This is a very important statement. If our attention to creation steals from creator, something is wrong: we love the world above God. But when you love God, and you appreciate what he gives you, then that is in the right context, that is proper. So, "the more we enjoy God's gifts for their own sake, the more we can appreciate him. And thank him for, and love him with." So "where will you enjoy God's creation today?"(End of explanation of Wittmer's views)

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So Solomon says, behold, look, what I've seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the work and labour with which one works, or toils or

labours under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot (Ecc 5:18). So don't be covetous. Don't be greedy about what you don't have. Be contented. Be enjoying what God has given you. This is what he has blessed you with. Let these things, let your labour, let your drinks, let your food be windows into His glory and magnificence, and generosity and grace in provision. 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 (Ecc 5:19).

Solomon brings us to a balanced perspective towards money. Let's remember all that has been said. While money is not necessarily bad, and we can enjoy the materials and stuff that God has given us in this world, be very careful not to love money and make it the source of meaning for life. Appreciate the things in this world he has given but hold them loosely; they do not define you.

A story is told of an American tourist, who went to Poland and visited a Jewish Rabbi. He went to this Jewish Rabbi's house and he was shocked at how spartan the room is – not many pieces of furniture at all. And so he asked the Rabbi, “Rabbi, where is your furniture?” The Rabbi then asked him, “Sir, where is your furniture?” The American tourist says, “Of course, I don't have furniture, I'm just passing through.” The Rabbi then says to him, “I'm also just passing through. This is not where our home really is; it's right up there.”

If you think that life is all about loving money and the things of this world, you've got it all wrong. You have become like the rich fool who says, I want to build bigger, have more, eat, drink and be merry and is not rich towards God. What profits a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his soul?

So my friends, you have a question, you have a decision to make today, and I think it is a very important decision. You might have been faced with this question many times, but maybe you have not followed through: “What are you living for?” Someone (Buckminster Fuller) said: “You have to decide whether you want to make money or to make sense because the two are mutually exclusive.” So, what would it be?

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I end with one final painting. I've never really appreciated art in my life, never been exposed, just a science guy, logic, facts. But I'm beginning to appreciate art more and more as a Christian, because I love the communication of truth in forms of art. I was brought to attention to this piece of painting. I want to ask if any Gospeliter knows what this painting is called, and by whom. Anyone? I don't feel so bad now. Many people are just like me, no idea about art. Well, this is a piece of art by this man

called Quentin Matsys. He is a Renaissance age painter, and this painting is called “The Moneylender and His Wife”. Their titles last time: not very fancy, very straightforward.

The Moneylender and His Wife is a very straightforward painting in some way. This is a moneylender who is measuring or weighing his coins to see how much he has – the value of his fortune. His wife, brightly dressed, is our focus of attention. She is actually thumbing through a prayer book. She wants to worship God. She wants to hear from God. She wants to pray to God and she is trying to, but she is failing because her gaze is inadvertently directed or distracted to the measuring of wealth. It's a picture of how we are so easily distracted by wealth. We may want to worship God, but money is a powerful lure. And Matsys lived in Antwerp during his time, which is the centre of business and trade then. And he's reflecting the general living of the people in his time, where they may seem to be pious, they may want to be pious, but they can't really rid themselves of the lures of wealth and money.

But that is not all this painting has. There is a little clue in this painting. There's more than meets the eye. Can anyone tell me what is interesting to you? The mirror. Very good. Look at his part and I'm going to blow it up for you. If you're in the Louvre, by the way, this painting I think is in the Louvre, Paris. If you could see it, you go close, you would see this painting enlarged. Matsys uses a mirror to reflect something that is beyond the frame of the painting. He looks at a window with linings that are like that of a cross and there is a man holding on to the frame of the window as if holding on to the cross. And this man, historians tell us, is painted to be exactly like Matsys himself. In this painting, Matsys is drawing out his sincere desire for devotion to Jesus Christ, in the midst of a world that has gone money mad. There are those who are unashamed about having money as the driving force of their life. There are many people today who want to be religious, who want to love God, but they are so distracted by the lust of this world. And there are those who may not be seen in the general fabric of life, but those who far away, will reject this wealth and hold on to the cross of Jesus. And he praise you, be one of them.

Matsys, together with Solomon, is saying to us, there's something far more precious and is what John was leading us in worship was saying, there is something that we should savour and treasure and value more than the things of this world – the cross of Jesus Christ, where the Son of God came to die, to pay for your sins. A true follower holds on to the old rugged cross. My friends, it's a decision you've to make, the choice of your life. What would you decide: money or real meaning? Would you

be the fool, or would you be the wise man? May Solomon's words lead you back to Jesus Christ.

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Let's bow for a word of prayer together. I think Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes 5 are extremely plain and straightforward, and I have endeavoured to keep it as straightforward as the text presents. That money in this world, whether you believe it or not, will never really satisfy. It is so volatile, it is so unstable and it really hurts you. You may think that this is where you find joy but paradoxically, like heroine, like drugs, it just enslaves you. But don't be too quick to throw everything out just yet. God has a purpose and plan for money, for substance, for stuff in this world. He doesn't want you to live in a spartan way for all of us. He does want you to enjoy. He does want you to find pleasure. He does want you to appreciate creation and all that he gives so that these stuffs, these things may provide new windows into his marvellous grace and glory and generosity.

But my friends, it's so easy for us to treasure stuff above the Saviour. It's so easy for our hearts to be lured away. It's so easy for us to have possessions possess us. My friends, the love of money will never satisfy you; you have to make a choice. Look at how you lived your life. Look at how you spent your 5 years, your 10 years. And look at the years ahead of you: how would you spend the rest of your life, how would you spend it?

My friends, every day we are bombarded with the message of the world: get rich, be someone, climb the ladder and you will be happy. God's Word, like a ray of light, beam of light piercing through the darkness, shines in your heart today and says, love not the world, treasure Jesus, hold on to the cross. This is where you will find satisfaction in life. Would you trust me, would you believe me? Oh no, I'm not telling you not to work. I'm not telling you to forsake wealth, no; they are good and right in its proper context.

I'm talking about your heart today. I'm talking about your love today. I'm talking about your driving motivation today. Who would you serve? Jesus tells us, you cannot serve God and riches. You can't. You've got to make a choice. My friends, God's Word today confronts you, not to harm you, not to make you just feel bad. But God's Word confronts you so that you may be led to real life.

My friends, what are you teaching your kids? What are you raising your kids to be? Successful in career, number 1 in school, get the best job? I'm not saying these things are bad but, are you subtly but powerfully telling them money is the God you should

serve so give your life to it. How are you leading your family? Fathers, mothers, what values do you inculcate? Do you in your life model the treasuring and savouring of Jesus above everything else, or are you just like anyone else in this world who know not the beauty of Jesus? It's a choice. So spend this time savouring, remembering the beauty of Jesus Christ, who he is – a glorious person of God come down as man to give his life for you. Make me a stranger, make me a pilgrim longing for heaven.

Father, we thank you this morning for Your Word and I pray you grant each one of us wisdom not just to know, but to do and to obey. Whatever you're saying to our heart, I pray you will bring it to fruition. Make us willing, to will and to do your good pleasure. Father, I pray today for our friends gathered here for the first time. They may not know Jesus and maybe they've come expecting to be blessed materially. I pray they will see that far more important than material blessings is a spiritual blessing of knowing Jesus Christ and having our sins forgiven. So I pray you grant them repentance and faith to turn from sin and to believe in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, when he died and paid for all our sins. Draw each one of us nearer to you today. We ask all these now in Jesus' name. Amen. God Bless.