

RICH & DEPRESSED, ECCL.5-6

Something Worth Living for #5

♦**Intro:** They were young, passionate, and like many American children, they were driven. Driven to start out with everything their parents had after 40 years of life together. She wanted kids. He wanted a pure-bred Chocolate Lab to train as a bird dog, first! And you know how much money kids suck up! Next on his list was a SUV, the kind that can handle swamps and logs, and ditches –that way they would never have to be concerned about getting stuck in all those shallow puddles in their gated, suburban neighborhood.

♦Did I mention they built a house? Not one of those cheese boxes like Dad and Mom started out with. I mean, something that meets the needs of a modern family; something so big eventually no child had to *share* a room. And of course you have to furnish houses; it just wouldn't do to have a room you *didn't need* go empty. And so... Five years into the marriage thing, they deduced that when kids came along that cottage they were planning on would probably be off the table for perhaps 30 more years! And it may not be as valuable an investment at that time, so it was really an economic act of stewardship to buy it now. They put the family planning thing on hold a bit longer.

♦They both worked non-stop. They both made a lot of money which still seemed to always be somehow kind of “tight”. Ten years into it they decided it was finally baby time. But pause. What if at this point they found out they couldn't have children of

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their own. There's adoption of course. Fertilization too. But at this point *priorities change dramatically*.

◆ We're back in the book of Ecclesiastes, where the Teacher goes through a long list of things as he tries to see what can bring him satisfaction. You could say that our text is a contrast in revering the Eternal God, or the eternally popular Money god. Notice chapter five starts out urging us to stand in awe of the reality of God (v1-7). Then it launches into the typical human tendency of folks to make themselves their own god, by getting to the top of whatever heap they're climbing on (v8-9). Next he wonders how it is that people at the bottom of the "heap" seem to sleep better than those at the top (v10-12). Further observation reveals that you can hoard material but also lose the whole shebang (v13-15)! After all, we are born with no possessions in our non-existent pockets, and when we die we have no possessions either (v15-17). The whole next chapter expounds on the futility of wealth, perhaps one of humanity's greatest drives.

◆ Can the Teacher save us any headache? Can we find something worth living for before we are old and regret wasting our time on things that don't deliver?

◆ **1. The Lies of Wealth:** You may be surprised to discover that we often easily believe some very untrue things about wealth. Here are some myths we often "buy" into.

◆ **A. I need to have a lot.** I hate to pop your bubble, but you don't need to have a lot. This is the Teacher's seven-fold

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“refrain” all through his book. Verse 5:18 is one of those summaries: To eat and drink and find good in your labor, your daily necessity and your daily activity -is a gift straight from Heaven. It MUST be, the Teacher seems to say, because look at all the nonsensical pieces of everything we try. And God’s son, Jesus, our savior taught us to pray only for daily bread, not storehouses of bread.

◆**B.** Here’s another lie: Having makes me secure. It’s not true, but we all believe it until we are *proven* wrong. Verse 13-14 are about the same guy. He hoarded, and BOOM, the stock pile was gone! It is a disturbing evil reality to know that you can plan carefully, be fiscally responsible, stock it up and... the market can crash, a tornado can sweep through, and you can lose it all. The lie is that wealth is a permanent thing. No it isn’t.

◆It was 1923. A group of business tycoons met. They controlled unthinkable sums of wealth. On this day in Chicago, they assembled to enjoy their mutual success. Here’s what happened to them in years that followed. Charles Schwab: president of largest independent steel company, lived on borrowed money the last 5 years of his life, and died penniless. Richard Whitney, president of NY Stock Exchange, served time in Sing Sing Prison. Albert Fall, former member of Presidents Cabinet, was pardoned from prison so he could die at home. Jesse

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Livermore, greatest bear on Wall Street committed suicide. Leon Fraser, president of Bank of International Settlement, committed suicide. Ivar Krueger, head of world's greatest monopoly, committed suicide.

◆ Wealth is not so secure.

◆ *1 Timothy 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is **so uncertain**, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. [Where does enjoyment stem from??]*

◆ **C. Having will make me happy.** This has two evils in it. 1) You can have a lot and want more, thinking that more will make you happy. This is dissatisfaction (5:10). 2) You can have a lot and *not want* more knowing it doesn't really make you happy. This is dispassion (6:2). This is a central deception, namely, that enjoyment necessarily accompanies prosperity! In his autobiography *Just As I Am*, Billy Graham recalls a story demonstrating this.

◆ "Some years ago Ruth and I had a vivid illustration of this on an island in the Caribbean. One of the wealthiest men in the world had asked us to come to his lavish home for lunch. He was 75 years old, and throughout the entire meal he seemed close to tears. "I am the most miserable man in the world," he said. "Out there is my yacht. I can go anywhere I want to. I have

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my private plane, my helicopters. I have everything I want to make my life happy, yet I am as miserable as hell." We talked to him and prayed with him, trying to point him to Christ, who alone gives lasting meaning to life. Then we went down the hill to a small cottage where we were staying. That afternoon the pastor of the local Baptist church came to call. He was an Englishman, and he too was 75—a widower who spent most of his time taking care of his two invalid sisters. He was full of enthusiasm and love for Christ and others. "I don't have two pounds to my name," he said with a smile, "but I am the happiest man on this island."

◆ We have a choice, you and I. We can learn these truths from others, or we can learn them ourselves, the hard, and the slow, and the regretful way.

◆2. How to counter the lies of wealth

◆A. Don't live for something you can lose. Can you lose your ability to run, or play ball? Ok then, are you making ball the center of your life? Make that your life's joy/idol, and you'll be crushed when you can't do it anymore. Good luck with that. Can you lose your house? Of course you can. Can you lose your mate? Don't make your mate your god either. You need something more than he or she can deliver. Better look higher than "under the sun". What cannot be lost, even beyond the

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grave? A relationship with your Maker. And people who have a relationship with the Maker. That's about it.

◆ *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." (Job 1:21, NIV).*

◆ If you know Job's story, you know about his vast wealth, and about how he lost it all. The reason Job wasn't crushed by loss is that his eyes were on what's lasting: his lord. He wasn't living for the stuff. Is anyone here finding that their drive to keep going depends on the hopes of ...paying off the mortgage? ...a bigger commission check this year? ...winning the lottery? Don't let these be your gods. When you pay the mortgage breath a thank-you prayer to God for the gift of him letting you live there this month. When you get your paycheck, thank God for letting you have so much. If you have a vehicle that keeps running, thank God when you get in and drive it, for loaning it to you. You see, you need your daily habits and self-talk to make sure these things don't become your gods, otherwise the loss of them will break you.

◆ **B.** Make a real living through your giving. It is a spiritual truth that as you, like your heavenly father, invest your resources in people for his name sake -so grows your passion for life and the gift of enjoyment.

◆ *1 Timothy 6:18-19 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In*

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this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

◆ You might know that at age of 53, JD Rockefeller was the world's only billionaire, taking in \$1 million per week. But did you know this man, -who began as a humble oil business book-keeper in Cleveland, Ohio and in just seven years rose to control a tenth of the entire US oil business -was very sickly, lived on crackers/milk. "I have made many millions of dollars, but they have brought me no happiness. I would barter all of it for the days I sat on the office stool in Cleveland & counted myself rich living on \$3/week." Seems his Baptist roots got ahold of him. He began giving money away, and his health changed dramatically. He ended up founding several institutions such as the University of Chicago (1892). Eventually gave away \$550 million (billions in today's money). And he died at age 98!]

◆ **Conclusion:** Here's something interesting. Here in the center of Ecclesiastes, the Teacher mentions God repeatedly! Six times in the opening reflection on the real God. Six times in the center conclusion statement after examining the god of wealth. Let's look... Coincidence? I think not. Jesus drew the same parallel.

◆ *Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.*

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◆ The center verse of chapter 5-6 is this: Ecclesiastes 5:20 He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart. How much do you want to be glad in heart? How much do you open your life to God? Have you tried looking for God daily? Have you tried thanking God daily?